**The Best Parts Of War And Peace**

Collected by William M. Stewart

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From

**War and Peace**

By Leo Tolstoy

1869

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*“History, that is, the unconscious, general, hive life of mankind, uses*

*every moment of the life of kings as a tool for its own purposes.”*

- Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace

**Preface**

William M. Stewart

It has been said that to read Tolstoy is to immediately realize that you are in the presence of towering genius. I agree. And it has often also been said that his most famous work *War and Peace* is one of the best books of all time. I also agree.

But it sure is long. At about 550,000 words, most editions of the book are somewhere around 1,400 pages. And all the way through, it is studded with nuggets of beautiful writing and wisdom. This excerpted version collects about 170 of the best of these nuggets, originally prepared so I would be able to review them without reading the entire work again. It’s about 55,000 words, so 10% of the whole book. Most excerpts are short. Towards the end, when Tolstoy becomes grandly philosophical, some longer sections are included.

If you are going to read the entire book, you could skip this excerpted version. But even then, reading this won’t hurt. I finally figured out what was going on at about page 400, and restarted from the beginning. Reading this excerpted version would give you enough of the story that it would be easier to understand if you do read the entire work.

Published in 1869, the book tells the story of the impact on five aristocratic Russian families of Napoleon’s massively destructive rampage across Europe from 1805 to 1812, continuing through the sack of Moscow, followed by his famous defeat by the Russian winter as he was chased back to France. Reading this work, one realizes how the aftereffects of this campaign reverberate through Europe and Russia even today. And throughout this true life saga, Tolstoy observes history, human nature, love, and fate with the sharpest eye.

His writing is reportorial. The battle scenes are quite realistic, since Tolstoy served in the Crimean war. At first, you assume he himself believes in all the views and positions he writes about. After awhile, you realize that he is simply reporting what life was like, and people were like, mostly without personal opinion. Some people were good and thought they were bad. Some were bad and thought they were good. Some had no idea how destructive they were. Others knew, and could not have cared less. Most were struggling to make it through life as best they could. Tolstoy tells his grand story as a largely neutral observer.

But what an observer! Some books written only a few years ago already feel dated when we read them today. *War and Peace* is timeless, an oddly permanently modern work. The excerpts collected here can be read in any order, whenever you wish to sample the observations of one of the most insightful writers we have been blessed to have among us. From a distance of more than 150 years, Tolstoy’s writing still helps us understand the world we live in today.

**Excerpts**

“Well, Prince, so Genoa and Lucca are now just family estates of the Buonapartes. But I warn you, if you don’t tell me that this means war, if you still try to defend the infamies and horrors perpetrated by that Antichrist — I really believe he is Antichrist — I will have nothing more to do with you and you are no longer my friend, no longer my ‘faithful slave,’ as you call yourself! But how do you do? I see I have frightened you — sit down and tell me all the news.”

It was in July, 1805, and the speaker was the well-known Anna Pávlovna Schérer, maid of honor and favorite of the Empress Márya Fëdorovna. With these words she greeted Prince Vasíli Kurágin, a man of high rank and importance, who was the first to arrive at her reception.

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“Heavens! what a virulent attack!” replied the prince, not in the least disconcerted by this reception. He had just entered, wearing an embroidered court uniform, knee breeches, and shoes, and had stars on his breast and a serene expression on his flat face. He spoke in that refined French in which our grandfathers not only spoke but thought, and with the gentle, patronizing intonation natural to a man of importance who had grown old in society and at court. He went up to Anna Pávlovna, kissed her hand, presenting to her his bald, scented, and shining head, and complacently seated himself on the sofa.

“First of all, dear friend, tell me how you are. Set your friend’s mind at rest,” said he without altering his tone, beneath the politeness and affected sympathy of which indifference and even irony could be discerned.

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Prince Vasíli always spoke languidly, like an actor repeating a stale part. Anna Pávlovna Schérer on the contrary, despite her forty years, overflowed with animation and impulsiveness. To be an enthusiast had become her social vocation and, sometimes even when she did not feel like it, she became enthusiastic in order not to disappoint the expectations of those who knew her. The subdued smile which, though it did not suit her faded features, always played round her lips expressed, as in a spoiled child, a continual consciousness of her charming defect, which she neither wished, nor could, nor considered it necessary, to correct.

In the midst of a conversation on political matters Anna Pávlovna burst out:

“Oh, don’t speak to me of Austria. Perhaps I don’t understand things, but Austria never has wished, and does not wish, for war. She is betraying us! Russia alone must save Europe. Our gracious sovereign recognizes his high vocation and will be true to it. That is the one thing I have faith in! Our good and wonderful sovereign has to perform the noblest role on earth, and he is so virtuous and noble that God will not forsake him. He will fulfill his vocation and crush the hydra of revolution, which has become more terrible than ever in the person of this murderer and villain! We alone must avenge the blood of the just one.... Whom, I ask you, can we rely on?... England with her commercial spirit will not and cannot understand the Emperor Alexander’s loftiness of soul. She has refused to evacuate Malta. She wanted to find, and still seeks, some secret motive in our actions. What answer did Novosíltsev get? None. The English have not understood and cannot understand the self-abnegation of our Emperor who wants nothing for himself, but only desires the good of mankind. And what have they promised? Nothing! And what little they have promised they will not perform! Prussia has always declared that Buonaparte is invincible, and that all Europe is powerless before him.... This famous Prussian neutrality is just a trap. I have faith only in God and the lofty destiny of our adored monarch. He will save Europe!”

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Anna Pávlovna’s alarm was justified, for Pierre turned away from the aunt without waiting to hear her speech about Her Majesty’s health. Anna Pávlovna in dismay detained him with the words: “Do you know the Abbé Morio? He is a most interesting man.”

“Yes, I have heard of his scheme for perpetual peace, and it is very interesting but hardly feasible.”

“You think so?” rejoined Anna Pávlovna in order to say something and get away to attend to her duties as hostess. But Pierre now committed a reverse act of impoliteness. First he had left a lady before she had finished speaking to him, and now he continued to speak to another who wished to get away. With his head bent, and his big feet spread apart, he began explaining his reasons for thinking the abbé’s plan chimerical.

“We will talk of it later,” said Anna Pávlovna with a smile.

And having got rid of this young man who did not know how to behave, she resumed her duties as hostess and continued to listen and watch, ready to help at any point where the conversation might happen to flag. As the foreman of a spinning mill, when he has set the hands to work, goes round and notices here a spindle that has stopped or there one that creaks or makes more noise than it should, and hastens to check the machine or set it in proper motion, so Anna Pávlovna moved about her drawing room, approaching now a silent, now a too-noisy group, and by a word or slight rearrangement kept the conversational machine in steady, proper, and regular motion.

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In passing Prince Vasíli seized Pierre’s hand and said to Anna Pávlovna: “Educate this bear for me! He has been staying with me a whole month and this is the first time I have seen him in society. Nothing is so necessary for a young man as the society of clever women.”

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“From what I have heard,” said Pierre, blushing and breaking into the conversation, “almost all the aristocracy has already gone over to Bonaparte’s side.”

“It is the Buonapartists who say that,” replied the vicomte without looking at Pierre. “At the present time it is difficult to know the real state of French public opinion.”

“Bonaparte has said so,” remarked Prince Andrew with a sarcastic smile.

It was evident that he did not like the vicomte and was aiming his remarks at him, though without looking at him.

“‘I showed them the path to glory, but they did not follow it,’” Prince Andrew continued after a short silence, again quoting Napoleon’s words. “‘I opened my antechambers and they crowded in.’ I do not know how far he was justified in saying so.”

“Not in the least,” replied the vicomte. “After the murder of the duc even the most partial ceased to regard him as a hero. If to some people,” he went on, turning to Anna Pávlovna, “he ever was a hero, after the murder of the duc there was one martyr more in heaven and one hero less on earth.”

Before Anna Pávlovna and the others had time to smile their appreciation of the vicomte’s epigram, Pierre again broke into the conversation, and though Anna Pávlovna felt sure he would say something inappropriate, she was unable to stop him.

“The execution of the Duc d’Enghien,” declared Monsieur Pierre, “was a political necessity, and it seems to me that Napoleon showed greatness of soul by not fearing to take on himself the whole responsibility of that deed.”

“Dieu! Mon Dieu!” muttered Anna Pávlovna in a terrified whisper.

“What, Monsieur Pierre... Do you consider that assassination shows greatness of soul?” said the little princess, smiling and drawing her work nearer to her.

“Oh! Oh!” exclaimed several voices.

“Capital!” said Prince Hippolyte in English, and began slapping his knee with the palm of his hand.

The vicomte merely shrugged his shoulders. Pierre looked solemnly at his audience over his spectacles and continued.

“I say so,” he continued desperately, “because the Bourbons fled from the Revolution leaving the people to anarchy, and Napoleon alone understood the Revolution and quelled it, and so for the general good, he could not stop short for the sake of one man’s life.”

“Won’t you come over to the other table?” suggested Anna Pávlovna.

But Pierre continued his speech without heeding her.

“No,” cried he, becoming more and more eager, “Napoleon is great because he rose superior to the Revolution, suppressed its abuses, preserved all that was good in it — equality of citizenship and freedom of speech and of the press — and only for that reason did he obtain power.”

“Yes, if having obtained power, without availing himself of it to commit murder he had restored it to the rightful king, I should have called him a great man,” remarked the vicomte.

“He could not do that. The people only gave him power that he might rid them of the Bourbons and because they saw that he was a great man. The Revolution was a grand thing!” continued Monsieur Pierre, betraying by this desperate and provocative proposition his extreme youth and his wish to express all that was in his mind.

“What? Revolution and regicide a grand thing?... Well, after that... But won’t you come to this other table?” repeated Anna Pávlovna.

“Rousseau’s Contrat Social,” said the vicomte with a tolerant smile.

“I am not speaking of regicide, I am speaking about ideas.”

“Yes: ideas of robbery, murder, and regicide,” again interjected an ironical voice.

“Those were extremes, no doubt, but they are not what is most important. What is important are the rights of man, emancipation from prejudices, and equality of citizenship, and all these ideas Napoleon has retained in full force.”

“Liberty and equality,” said the vicomte contemptuously, as if at last deciding seriously to prove to this youth how foolish his words were, “high-sounding words which have long been discredited. Who does not love liberty and equality? Even our Saviour preached liberty and equality. Have people since the Revolution become happier? On the contrary. We wanted liberty, but Buonaparte has destroyed it.”

Prince Andrew kept looking with an amused smile from Pierre to the vicomte and from the vicomte to their hostess. In the first moment of Pierre’s outburst Anna Pávlovna, despite her social experience, was horror-struck. But when she saw that Pierre’s sacrilegious words had not exasperated the vicomte, and had convinced herself that it was impossible to stop him, she rallied her forces and joined the vicomte in a vigorous attack on the orator.

“But, my dear Monsieur Pierre,” said she, “how do you explain the fact of a great man executing a duc — or even an ordinary man who — is innocent and untried?”

“I should like,” said the vicomte, “to ask how monsieur explains the 18th Brumaire; was not that an imposture? It was a swindle, and not at all like the conduct of a great man!”

“And the prisoners he killed in Africa? That was horrible!” said the little princess, shrugging her shoulders.

“He’s a low fellow, say what you will,” remarked Prince Hippolyte.

Pierre, not knowing whom to answer, looked at them all and smiled. His smile was unlike the half-smile of other people. When he smiled, his grave, even rather gloomy, look was instantaneously replaced by another — a childlike, kindly, even rather silly look, which seemed to ask forgiveness.

The vicomte who was meeting him for the first time saw clearly that this young Jacobin was not so terrible as his words suggested. All were silent.

“How do you expect him to answer you all at once?” said Prince Andrew. “Besides, in the actions of a statesman one has to distinguish between his acts as a private person, as a general, and as an emperor. So it seems to me.”

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And so the anecdote ended. Though it was unintelligible why he had told it, or why it had to be told in Russian, still Anna Pávlovna and the others appreciated Prince Hippolyte’s social tact in so agreeably ending Pierre’s unpleasant and unamiable outburst. After the anecdote the conversation broke up into insignificant small talk about the last and next balls, about theatricals, and who would meet whom, and when and where.

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Pierre was ungainly. Stout, about the average height, broad, with huge red hands; he did not know, as the saying is, how to enter a drawing room and still less how to leave one; that is, how to say something particularly agreeable before going away. Besides this he was absent-minded. When he rose to go, he took up instead of his own, the general’s three-cornered hat, and held it, pulling at the plume, till the general asked him to restore it. All his absent-mindedness and inability to enter a room and converse in it was, however, redeemed by his kindly, simple, and modest expression. Anna Pávlovna turned toward him and, with a Christian mildness that expressed forgiveness of his indiscretion, nodded and said: “I hope to see you again, but I also hope you will change your opinions, my dear Monsieur Pierre.”

When she said this, he did not reply and only bowed, but again everybody saw his smile, which said nothing, unless perhaps, “Opinions are opinions, but you see what a capital, good-natured fellow I am.” And everyone, including Anna Pávlovna, felt this.

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The only young people remaining in the drawing room, not counting the young lady visitor and the countess’ eldest daughter (who was four years older than her sister and behaved already like a grown-up person), were Nicholas and Sónya, the niece. Sónya was a slender little brunette with a tender look in her eyes which were veiled by long lashes, thick black plaits coiling twice round her head, and a tawny tint in her complexion and especially in the color of her slender but graceful and muscular arms and neck. By the grace of her movements, by the softness and flexibility of her small limbs, and by a certain coyness and reserve of manner, she reminded one of a pretty, half-grown kitten which promises to become a beautiful little cat.

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“Yes,” said the countess when the brightness these young people had brought into the room had vanished; and as if answering a question no one had put but which was always in her mind, “and how much suffering, how much anxiety one has had to go through that we might rejoice in them now! And yet really the anxiety is greater now than the joy. One is always, always anxious! Especially just at this age, so dangerous both for girls and boys.”

“It all depends on the bringing up,” remarked the visitor.

“Yes, you’re quite right,” continued the countess. “Till now I have always, thank God, been my children’s friend and had their full confidence,” said she, repeating the mistake of so many parents who imagine that their children have no secrets from them.

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Anna Mikháylovna was already embracing her and weeping. The countess wept too. They wept because they were friends, and because they were kindhearted, and because they — friends from childhood — had to think about such a base thing as money, and because their youth was over.... But those tears were pleasant to them both.

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They were expecting Márya Dmítrievna Akhrosímova, known in society as le terrible dragon, a lady distinguished not for wealth or rank, but for common sense and frank plainness of speech. Márya Dmítrievna was known to the Imperial family as well as to all Moscow and Petersburg, and both cities wondered at her, laughed privately at her rudenesses, and told good stories about her, while none the less all without exception respected and feared her.

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Berg always spoke quietly, politely, and with great precision. His conversation always related entirely to himself; he would remain calm and silent when the talk related to any topic that had no direct bearing on himself. He could remain silent for hours without being at all put out of countenance himself or making others uncomfortable, but as soon as the conversation concerned himself he would begin to talk circumstantially and with evident satisfaction.

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The count danced well and knew it. But his partner could not and did not want to dance well. Her enormous figure stood erect, her powerful arms hanging down (she had handed her reticule to the countess), and only her stern but handsome face really joined in the dance. What was expressed by the whole of the count’s plump figure, in Márya Dmítrievna found expression only in her more and more beaming face and quivering nose. But if the count, getting more and more into the swing of it, charmed the spectators by the unexpectedness of his adroit maneuvers and the agility with which he capered about on his light feet, Márya Dmítrievna produced no less impression by slight exertions — the least effort to move her shoulders or bend her arms when turning, or stamp her foot — which everyone appreciated in view of her size and habitual severity.

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The princess smiled as people do who think they know more about the subject under discussion than those they are talking with.

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As regularity is a prime condition facilitating activity, regularity in his household was carried to the highest point of exactitude.

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But the princess never saw the beautiful expression of her own eyes — the look they had when she was not thinking of herself. As with everyone, her face assumed a forced unnatural expression as soon as she looked in a glass.

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This young man, of whom I spoke to you last summer, is so noble-minded and full of that real youthfulness which one seldom finds nowadays among our old men of twenty and, particularly, he is so frank and has so much heart.

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Only it seems to me that Christian love, love of one’s neighbor, love of one’s enemy, is worthier, sweeter, and better than the feelings which the beautiful eyes of a young man can inspire in a romantic and loving young girl like yourself.

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Not only where you are — at the heart of affairs and of the world — is the talk all of war, even here amid fieldwork and the calm of nature — which townsfolk consider characteristic of the country — rumors of war are heard and painfully felt. My father talks of nothing but marches and countermarches, things of which I understand nothing; and the day before yesterday during my daily walk through the village I witnessed a heartrending scene.... It was a convoy of conscripts enrolled from our people and starting to join the army. You should have seen the state of the mothers, wives, and children of the men who were going and should have heard the sobs. It seems as though mankind has forgotten the laws of its divine Saviour, Who preached love and forgiveness of injuries — and that men attribute the greatest merit to skill in killing one another.

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The prince again laughed his frigid laugh. “Buonaparte was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He has got splendid soldiers. Besides he began by attacking Germans. And only idlers have failed to beat the Germans. Since the world began everybody has beaten the Germans. They beat no one — except one another. He made his reputation fighting them.”

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“One must be indulgent to little weaknesses; who is free from them, Andrew? Don’t forget that she has grown up and been educated in society, and so her position now is not a rosy one. We should enter into everyone’s situation. Tout comprendre, c’est tout pardonner. To understand all is to forgive all.”

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Though not much time had passed since Prince Andrew had left Russia, he had changed greatly during that period. In the expression of his face, in his movements, in his walk, scarcely a trace was left of his former affected languor and indolence. He now looked like a man who has time to think of the impression he makes on others, but is occupied with agreeable and interesting work. His face expressed more satisfaction with himself and those around him, his smile and glance were brighter and more attractive.

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It was a warm, rainy, autumnal day. The wide expanse that opened out before the heights on which the Russian batteries stood guarding the bridge was at times veiled by a diaphanous curtain of slanting rain, and then, suddenly spread out in the sunlight, far-distant objects could be clearly seen glittering as though freshly varnished. Down below, the little town could be seen with its white, red-roofed houses, its cathedral, and its bridge, on both sides of which streamed jostling masses of Russian troops. At the bend of the Danube, vessels, an island, and a castle with a park surrounded by the waters of the confluence of the Enns and the Danube became visible, and the rocky left bank of the Danube covered with pine forests, with a mystic background of green treetops and bluish gorges. The turrets of a convent stood out beyond a wild virgin pine forest, and far away on the other side of the Enns the enemy’s horse patrols could be discerned.

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Then followed a cart unlike any that had gone before. It was a German cart with a pair of horses led by a German, and seemed loaded with a whole houseful of effects. A fine brindled cow with a large udder was attached to the cart behind. A woman with an unweaned baby, an old woman, and a healthy German girl with bright red cheeks were sitting on some feather beds. Evidently these fugitives were allowed to pass by special permission. The eyes of all the soldiers turned toward the women, and while the vehicle was passing at foot pace all the soldiers’ remarks related to the two young ones. Every face bore almost the same smile, expressing unseemly thoughts about the women.

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“Take it if you like,” said the officer, giving the girl an apple.

The girl smiled and took it. Nesvítski like the rest of the men on the bridge did not take his eyes off the women till they had passed.

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An empty space of some seven hundred yards was all that separated them. The enemy ceased firing, and that stern, threatening, inaccessible, and intangible line which separates two hostile armies was all the more clearly felt.

“One step beyond that boundary line which resembles the line dividing the living from the dead lies uncertainty, suffering, and death. And what is there? Who is there? — there beyond that field, that tree, that roof lit up by the sun? No one knows, but one wants to know. You fear and yet long to cross that line, and know that sooner or later it must be crossed and you will have to find out what is there, just as you will inevitably have to learn what lies the other side of death. But you are strong, healthy, cheerful, and excited, and are surrounded by other such excitedly animated and healthy men.” So thinks, or at any rate feels, anyone who comes in sight of the enemy, and that feeling gives a particular glamour and glad keenness of impression to everything that takes place at such moments.

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Prince Andrew’s joyous feeling was considerably weakened as he approached the door of the minister’s room. He felt offended, and without his noticing it the feeling of offense immediately turned into one of disdain which was quite uncalled for. His fertile mind instantly suggested to him a point of view which gave him a right to despise the adjutant and the minister. “Away from the smell of powder, they probably think it easy to gain victories!” he thought. His eyes narrowed disdainfully, he entered the room of the Minister of War with peculiarly deliberate steps. This feeling of disdain was heightened when he saw the minister seated at a large table reading some papers and making pencil notes on them, and for the first two or three minutes taking no notice of his arrival. A wax candle stood at each side of the minister’s bent bald head with its gray temples. He went on reading to the end, without raising his eyes at the opening of the door and the sound of footsteps.

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Bilíbin liked conversation as he liked work, only when it could be made elegantly witty. In society he always awaited an opportunity to say something striking and took part in a conversation only when that was possible. His conversation was always sprinkled with wittily original, finished phrases of general interest. These sayings were prepared in the inner laboratory of his mind in a portable form as if intentionally, so that insignificant society people might carry them from drawing room to drawing room.

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He closed his eyes, and immediately a sound of cannonading, of musketry and the rattling of carriage wheels seemed to fill his ears, and now again drawn out in a thin line the musketeers were descending the hill, the French were firing, and he felt his heart palpitating as he rode forward beside Schmidt with the bullets merrily whistling all around, and he experienced tenfold the joy of living, as he had not done since childhood.

He woke up...

“Yes, that all happened!” he said, and, smiling happily to himself like a child, he fell into a deep, youthful slumber.

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“Get in,” said Kutúzov, and noticing that Bolkónski still delayed, he added: “I need good officers myself, need them myself!”

They got into the carriage and drove for a few minutes in silence.

“There is still much, much before us,” he said, as if with an old man’s penetration he understood all that was passing in Bolkónski’s mind. “If a tenth part of his detachment returns I shall thank God,” he added as if speaking to himself.

Prince Andrew glanced at Kutúzov’s face only a foot distant from him and involuntarily noticed the carefully washed seams of the scar near his temple, where an Ismail bullet had pierced his skull, and the empty eye socket. “Yes, he has a right to speak so calmly of those men’s death,” thought Bolkónski.

“That is why I beg to be sent to that detachment,” he said.

Kutúzov did not reply. He seemed to have forgotten what he had been saying, and sat plunged in thought. Five minutes later, gently swaying on the soft springs of the carriage, he turned to Prince Andrew. There was not a trace of agitation on his face. With delicate irony he questioned Prince Andrew about the details of his interview with the Emperor, about the remarks he had heard at court concerning the Krems affair, and about some ladies they both knew.

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Prince Andrew listened attentively to Bagratión’s colloquies with the commanding officers and the orders he gave them and, to his surprise, found that no orders were really given, but that Prince Bagratión tried to make it appear that everything done by necessity, by accident, or by the will of subordinate commanders was done, if not by his direct command, at least in accord with his intentions. Prince Andrew noticed, however, that though what happened was due to chance and was independent of the commander’s will, owing to the tact Bagratión showed, his presence was very valuable. Officers who approached him with disturbed countenances became calm; soldiers and officers greeted him gaily, grew more cheerful in his presence, and were evidently anxious to display their courage before him.

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“Who are these men?” thought Rostóv, scarcely believing his eyes. “Can they be French?” He looked at the approaching Frenchmen, and though but a moment before he had been galloping to get at them and hack them to pieces, their proximity now seemed so awful that he could not believe his eyes. “Who are they? Why are they running? Can they be coming at me? And why? To kill me? Me whom everyone is so fond of?” He remembered his mother’s love for him, and his family’s, and his friends’, and the enemy’s intention to kill him seemed impossible. “But perhaps they may do it!” For more than ten seconds he stood not moving from the spot or realizing the situation. The foremost Frenchman, the one with the hooked nose, was already so close that the expression of his face could be seen. And the excited, alien face of that man, his bayonet hanging down, holding his breath, and running so lightly, frightened Rostóv. He seized his pistol and, instead of firing it, flung it at the Frenchman and ran with all his might toward the bushes. He did not now run with the feeling of doubt and conflict with which he had trodden the Enns bridge, but with the feeling of a hare fleeing from the hounds. One single sentiment, that of fear for his young and happy life, possessed his whole being. Rapidly leaping the furrows, he fled across the field with the impetuosity he used to show at catchplay, now and then turning his good-natured, pale, young face to look back. A shudder of terror went through him: “No, better not look,” he thought, but having reached the bushes he glanced round once more. The French had fallen behind, and just as he looked round the first man changed his run to a walk and, turning, shouted something loudly to a comrade farther back. Rostóv paused. “No, there’s some mistake,” thought he. “They can’t have wanted to kill me.” But at the same time, his left arm felt as heavy as if a seventy-pound weight were tied to it. He could run no more. The Frenchman also stopped and took aim. Rostóv closed his eyes and stooped down. One bullet and then another whistled past him. He mustered his last remaining strength, took hold of his left hand with his right, and reached the bushes. Behind these were some Russian sharpshooters.

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Having galloped safely through the French, he reached a field behind the copse across which our men, regardless of orders, were running and descending the valley. That moment of moral hesitation which decides the fate of battles had arrived. Would this disorderly crowd of soldiers attend to the voice of their commander, or would they, disregarding him, continue their flight? Despite his desperate shouts that used to seem so terrible to the soldiers, despite his furious purple countenance distorted out of all likeness to his former self, and the flourishing of his saber, the soldiers all continued to run, talking, firing into the air, and disobeying orders. The moral hesitation which decided the fate of battles was evidently culminating in a panic.

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Owing to the terrible uproar and the necessity for concentration and activity, Túshin did not experience the slightest unpleasant sense of fear, and the thought that he might be killed or badly wounded never occurred to him. On the contrary, he became more and more elated. It seemed to him that it was a very long time ago, almost a day, since he had first seen the enemy and fired the first shot, and that the corner of the field he stood on was well-known and familiar ground. Though he thought of everything, considered everything, and did everything the best of officers could do in his position, he was in a state akin to feverish delirium or drunkenness.

From the deafening sounds of his own guns around him, the whistle and thud of the enemy’s cannon balls, from the flushed and perspiring faces of the crew bustling round the guns, from the sight of the blood of men and horses, from the little puffs of smoke on the enemy’s side (always followed by a ball flying past and striking the earth, a man, a gun, a horse), from the sight of all these things a fantastic world of his own had taken possession of his brain and at that moment afforded him pleasure. The enemy’s guns were in his fancy not guns but pipes from which occasional puffs were blown by an invisible smoker.

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“When I saw, your excellency, that their first battalion was disorganized, I stopped in the road and thought: ‘I’ll let them come on and will meet them with the fire of the whole battalion’ — and that’s what I did.”

The general had so wished to do this and was so sorry he had not managed to do it that it seemed to him as if it had really happened. Perhaps it might really have been so? Could one possibly make out amid all that confusion what did or did not happen?

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“I saw the Pávlograd hussars attack there, your excellency,” chimed in Zherkóv, looking uneasily around. He had not seen the hussars all that day, but had heard about them from an infantry officer. “They broke up two squares, your excellency.”

Several of those present smiled at Zherkóv’s words, expecting one of his usual jokes, but noticing that what he was saying redounded to the glory of our arms and of the day’s work, they assumed a serious expression, though many of them knew that what he was saying was a lie devoid of any foundation.

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“Your excellency!” Prince Andrew broke the silence with his abrupt voice, “you were pleased to send me to Captain Túshin’s battery. I went there and found two thirds of the men and horses knocked out, two guns smashed, and no supports at all.”

Prince Bagratión and Túshin looked with equal intentness at Bolkónski, who spoke with suppressed agitation.

“And, if your excellency will allow me to express my opinion,” he continued, “we owe today’s success chiefly to the action of that battery and the heroic endurance of Captain Túshin and his company,” and without awaiting a reply, Prince Andrew rose and left the table.

Prince Bagratión looked at Túshin, evidently reluctant to show distrust in Bolkónski’s emphatic opinion yet not feeling able fully to credit it, bent his head, and told Túshin that he could go. Prince Andrew went out with him.

“Thank you; you saved me, my dear fellow!” said Túshin.

Prince Andrew gave him a look, but said nothing and went away. He felt sad and depressed. It was all so strange, so unlike what he had hoped.

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 “Who are they? Why are they here? What do they want? And when will all this end?” thought Rostóv, looking at the changing shadows before him. The pain in his arm became more and more intense. Irresistible drowsiness overpowered him, red rings danced before his eyes, and the impression of those voices and faces and a sense of loneliness merged with the physical pain. It was they, these soldiers — wounded and unwounded — it was they who were crushing, weighing down, and twisting the sinews and scorching the flesh of his sprained arm and shoulder. To rid himself of them he closed his eyes.

For a moment he dozed, but in that short interval innumerable things appeared to him in a dream: his mother and her large white hand, Sónya’s thin little shoulders, Natásha’s eyes and laughter, Denísov with his voice and mustache, and Telyánin and all that affair with Telyánin and Bogdánich. That affair was the same thing as this soldier with the harsh voice, and it was that affair and this soldier that were so agonizingly, incessantly pulling and pressing his arm and always dragging it in one direction. He tried to get away from them, but they would not for an instant let his shoulder move a hair’s breadth. It would not ache — it would be well — if only they did not pull it, but it was impossible to get rid of them.

He opened his eyes and looked up. The black canopy of night hung less than a yard above the glow of the charcoal. Flakes of falling snow were fluttering in that light. Túshin had not returned, the doctor had not come. He was alone now, except for a soldier who was sitting naked at the other side of the fire, warming his thin yellow body.

“Nobody wants me!” thought Rostóv. “There is no one to help me or pity me. Yet I was once at home, strong, happy, and loved.” He sighed and, doing so, groaned involuntarily.

“Eh, is anything hurting you?” asked the soldier, shaking his shirt out over the fire, and not waiting for an answer he gave a grunt and added: “What a lot of men have been crippled today — frightful!”

Rostóv did not listen to the soldier. He looked at the snowflakes fluttering above the fire and remembered a Russian winter at his warm, bright home, his fluffy fur coat, his quickly gliding sleigh, his healthy body, and all the affection and care of his family. “And why did I come here?” he wondered.

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Prince Vasíli was not a man who deliberately thought out his plans. Still less did he think of injuring anyone for his own advantage. He was merely a man of the world who had got on and to whom getting on had become a habit. Schemes and devices for which he never rightly accounted to himself, but which formed the whole interest of his life, were constantly shaping themselves in his mind, arising from the circumstances and persons he met. Of these plans he had not merely one or two in his head but dozens, some only beginning to form themselves, some approaching achievement, and some in course of disintegration. He did not, for instance, say to himself: “This man now has influence, I must gain his confidence and friendship and through him obtain a special grant.” Nor did he say to himself: “Pierre is a rich man, I must entice him to marry my daughter and lend me the forty thousand rubles I need.” But when he came across a man of position his instinct immediately told him that this man could be useful, and without any premeditation Prince Vasíli took the first opportunity to gain his confidence, flatter him, become intimate with him, and finally make his request.

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It seemed so natural to Pierre that everyone should like him, and it would have seemed so unnatural had anyone disliked him, that he could not but believe in the sincerity of those around him. Besides, he had no time to ask himself whether these people were sincere or not. He was always busy and always felt in a state of mild and cheerful intoxication. He felt as though he were the center of some important and general movement; that something was constantly expected of him, that if he did not do it he would grieve and disappoint many people, but if he did this and that, all would be well; and he did what was demanded of him, but still that happy result always remained in the future.

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He half rose, meaning to go round, but the aunt handed him the snuffbox, passing it across Hélène’s back. Hélène stooped forward to make room, and looked round with a smile. She was, as always at evening parties, wearing a dress such as was then fashionable, cut very low at front and back. Her bust, which had always seemed like marble to Pierre, was so close to him that his shortsighted eyes could not but perceive the living charm of her neck and shoulders, so near to his lips that he need only have bent his head a little to have touched them. He was conscious of the warmth of her body, the scent of perfume, and the creaking of her corset as she moved. He did not see her marble beauty forming a complete whole with her dress, but all the charm of her body only covered by her garments. And having once seen this he could not help being aware of it, just as we cannot renew an illusion we have once seen through.

“So you have never noticed before how beautiful I am?” Hélène seemed to say. “You had not noticed that I am a woman? Yes, I am a woman who may belong to anyone — to you too,” said her glance. And at that moment Pierre felt that Hélène not only could, but must, be his wife, and that it could not be otherwise.

He knew this at that moment as surely as if he had been standing at the altar with her. How and when this would be he did not know, he did not even know if it would be a good thing (he even felt, he knew not why, that it would be a bad thing), but he knew it would happen.

Pierre dropped his eyes, lifted them again, and wished once more to see her as a distant beauty far removed from him, as he had seen her every day until then, but he could no longer do it. He could not, any more than a man who has been looking at a tuft of steppe grass through the mist and taking it for a tree can again take it for a tree after he has once recognized it to be a tuft of grass. She was terribly close to him. She already had power over him, and between them there was no longer any barrier except the barrier of his own will.

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Everybody laughed a great deal. At the head of the table, where the honored guests sat, everyone seemed to be in high spirits and under the influence of a variety of exciting sensations. Only Pierre and Hélène sat silently side by side almost at the bottom of the table, a suppressed smile brightening both their faces, a smile that had nothing to do with Sergéy Kuzmích — a smile of bashfulness at their own feelings. But much as all the rest laughed, talked, and joked, much as they enjoyed their Rhine wine, sauté, and ices, and however they avoided looking at the young couple, and heedless and unobservant as they seemed of them, one could feel by the occasional glances they gave that the story about Sergéy Kuzmích, the laughter, and the food were all a pretense, and that the whole attention of that company was directed to — Pierre and Hélène.

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Into the insignificant, trifling, and artificial interests uniting that society had entered the simple feeling of the attraction of a healthy and handsome young man and woman for one another. And this human feeling dominated everything else and soared above all their affected chatter. Jests fell flat, news was not interesting, and the animation was evidently forced. Not only the guests but even the footmen waiting at table seemed to feel this, and they forgot their duties as they looked at the beautiful Hélène with her radiant face and at the red, broad, and happy though uneasy face of Pierre. It seemed as if the very light of the candles was focused on those two happy faces alone.

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“Hélène!” he said aloud and paused.

“Something special is always said in such cases,” he thought, but could not remember what it was that people say. He looked at her face. She drew nearer to him. Her face flushed.

“Oh, take those off... those...” she said, pointing to his spectacles.

Pierre took them off, and his eyes, besides the strange look eyes have from which spectacles have just been removed, had also a frightened and inquiring look. He was about to stoop over her hand and kiss it, but with a rapid, almost brutal movement of her head, she intercepted his lips and met them with her own. Her face struck Pierre, by its altered, unpleasantly excited expression.

“It is too late now, it’s done; besides I love her,” thought Pierre.

“Je vous aime!” “I love you!” he said, remembering what has to be said at such moments: but his words sounded so weak that he felt ashamed of himself.

Six weeks later he was married, and settled in Count Bezúkhov’s large, newly furnished Petersburg house, the happy possessor, as people said, of a wife who was a celebrated beauty and of millions of money.

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When she looked up at him she was struck by his beauty. Anatole stood with his right thumb under a button of his uniform, his chest expanded and his back drawn in, slightly swinging one foot, and, with his head a little bent, looked with beaming face at the princess without speaking and evidently not thinking about her at all. Anatole was not quick-witted, nor ready or eloquent in conversation, but he had the faculty, so invaluable in society, of composure and imperturbable self-possession. If a man lacking in self-confidence remains dumb on a first introduction and betrays a consciousness of the impropriety of such silence and an anxiety to find something to say, the effect is bad. But Anatole was dumb, swung his foot, and smilingly examined the princess’ hair. It was evident that he could be silent in this way for a very long time. “If anyone finds this silence inconvenient, let him talk, but I don’t want to,” he seemed to say. Besides this, in his behavior to women Anatole had a manner which particularly inspires in them curiosity, awe, and even love — a supercilious consciousness of his own superiority.

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She met Prince Vasíli with that playful manner often employed by lively chatty people, and consisting in the assumption that between the person they so address and themselves there are some semi-private, long-established jokes and amusing reminiscences, though no such reminiscences really exist — just as none existed in this case. Prince Vasíli readily adopted her tone and the little princess also drew Anatole, whom she hardly knew, into these amusing recollections of things that had never occurred.

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“And so you’ve had him educated abroad, Prince Vasíli, haven’t you?” said the old prince to Prince Vasíli.

“I have done my best for him, and I can assure you the education there is much better than ours.”

“Yes, everything is different nowadays, everything is changed.”

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As always happens when women lead lonely lives for any length of time without male society, on Anatole’s appearance all the three women of Prince Bolkónski’s household felt that their life had not been real till then. Their powers of reasoning, feeling, and observing immediately increased tenfold, and their life, which seemed to have been passed in darkness, was suddenly lit up by a new brightness, full of significance.

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Anna Mikháylovna, in a few words, told her the contents of the letter, on condition that she should tell no one.

“No, on my true word of honor,” said Natásha, crossing herself, “I won’t tell anyone!” and she ran off at once to Sónya.

“Nikólenka... wounded... a letter,” she announced in gleeful triumph.

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How strange, how extraordinary, how joyful it seemed, that her son, the scarcely perceptible motion of whose tiny limbs she had felt twenty years ago within her, that son about whom she used to have quarrels with the too indulgent count, that son who had first learned to say “pear” and then “granny,” that this son should now be away in a foreign land amid strange surroundings, a manly warrior doing some kind of man’s work of his own, without help or guidance. The universal experience of ages, showing that children do grow imperceptibly from the cradle to manhood, did not exist for the countess. Her son’s growth toward manhood, at each of its stages, had seemed as extraordinary to her as if there had never existed the millions of human beings who grew up in the same way. As twenty years before, it seemed impossible that the little creature who lived somewhere under her heart would ever cry, suck her breast, and begin to speak, so now she could not believe that that little creature could be this strong, brave man, this model son and officer that, judging by this letter, he now was.

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They had not met for nearly half a year and, being at the age when young men take their first steps on life’s road, each saw immense changes in the other, quite a new reflection of the society in which they had taken those first steps. Both had changed greatly since they last met and both were in a hurry to show the changes that had taken place in them.

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But Borís noticed that he was preparing to make fun of Berg, and skillfully changed the subject. He asked him to tell them how and where he got his wound. This pleased Rostóv and he began talking about it, and as he went on became more and more animated. He told them of his Schön Grabern affair, just as those who have taken part in a battle generally do describe it, that is, as they would like it to have been, as they have heard it described by others, and as sounds well, but not at all as it really was. Rostóv was a truthful young man and would on no account have told a deliberate lie. He began his story meaning to tell everything just as it happened, but imperceptibly, involuntarily, and inevitably he lapsed into falsehood. If he had told the truth to his hearers — who like himself had often heard stories of attacks and had formed a definite idea of what an attack was and were expecting to hear just such a story — they would either not have believed him or, still worse, would have thought that Rostóv was himself to blame since what generally happens to the narrators of cavalry attacks had not happened to him. He could not tell them simply that everyone went at a trot and that he fell off his horse and sprained his arm and then ran as hard as he could from a Frenchman into the wood. Besides, to tell everything as it really happened, it would have been necessary to make an effort of will to tell only what happened. It is very difficult to tell the truth, and young people are rarely capable of it. His hearers expected a story of how beside himself and all aflame with excitement, he had flown like a storm at the square, cut his way in, slashed right and left, how his saber had tasted flesh and he had fallen exhausted, and so on. And so he told them all that.

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And, having glanced round the room, Prince Andrew turned to Rostóv, whose state of unconquerable childish embarrassment now changing to anger he did not condescend to notice, and said: “I think you were talking of the Schön Grabern affair? Were you there?”

“I was there,” said Rostóv angrily, as if intending to insult the aide-de-camp.

Bolkónski noticed the hussar’s state of mind, and it amused him. With a slightly contemptuous smile, he said: “Yes, there are many stories now told about that affair!”

“Yes, stories!” repeated Rostóv loudly, looking with eyes suddenly grown furious, now at Borís, now at Bolkónski. “Yes, many stories! But our stories are the stories of men who have been under the enemy’s fire! Our stories have some weight, not like the stories of those fellows on the staff who get rewards without doing anything!”

“Of whom you imagine me to be one?” said Prince Andrew, with a quiet and particularly amiable smile.

A strange feeling of exasperation and yet of respect for this man’s self-possession mingled at that moment in Rostóv’s soul.

“I am not talking about you,” he said, “I don’t know you and, frankly, I don’t want to. I am speaking of the staff in general.”

“And I will tell you this,” Prince Andrew interrupted in a tone of quiet authority, “you wish to insult me, and I am ready to agree with you that it would be very easy to do so if you haven’t sufficient self-respect, but admit that the time and place are very badly chosen. In a day or two we shall all have to take part in a greater and more serious duel, and besides, Drubetskóy, who says he is an old friend of yours, is not at all to blame that my face has the misfortune to displease you. However,” he added rising, “you know my name and where to find me, but don’t forget that I do not regard either myself or you as having been at all insulted, and as a man older than you, my advice is to let the matter drop.”

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Not only the generals in full parade uniforms, with their thin or thick waists drawn in to the utmost, their red necks squeezed into their stiff collars, and wearing scarves and all their decorations, not only the elegant, pomaded officers, but every soldier with his freshly washed and shaven face and his weapons clean and polished to the utmost, and every horse groomed till its coat shone like satin and every hair of its wetted mane lay smooth — felt that no small matter was happening, but an important and solemn affair. Every general and every soldier was conscious of his own insignificance, aware of being but a drop in that ocean of men, and yet at the same time was conscious of his strength as a part of that enormous whole.

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Rostóv was not far from the trumpeters, and with his keen sight had recognized the Tsar and watched his approach. When he was within twenty paces, and Nicholas could clearly distinguish every detail of his handsome, happy young face, he experienced a feeling of tenderness and ecstasy such as he had never before known. Every trait and every movement of the Tsar’s seemed to him enchanting.

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“I am very sorry you did not find me in yesterday. I was fussing about with Germans all day. We went with Weyrother to survey the dispositions. When Germans start being accurate, there’s no end to it!”

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By evening, the adjutants had spread it to all ends and parts of the army, and in the night from the nineteenth to the twentieth, the whole eighty thousand allied troops rose from their bivouacs to the hum of voices, and the army swayed and started in one enormous mass six miles long.

The concentrated activity which had begun at the Emperor’s headquarters in the morning and had started the whole movement that followed was like the first movement of the main wheel of a large tower clock. One wheel slowly moved, another was set in motion, and a third, and wheels began to revolve faster and faster, levers and cogwheels to work, chimes to play, figures to pop out, and the hands to advance with regular motion as a result of all that activity.

Just as in the mechanism of a clock, so in the mechanism of the military machine, an impulse once given leads to the final result; and just as indifferently quiescent till the moment when motion is transmitted to them are the parts of the mechanism which the impulse has not yet reached. Wheels creak on their axles as the cogs engage one another and the revolving pulleys whirr with the rapidity of their movement, but a neighboring wheel is as quiet and motionless as though it were prepared to remain so for a hundred years; but the moment comes when the lever catches it and obeying the impulse that wheel begins to creak and joins in the common motion the result and aim of which are beyond its ken.

Just as in a clock, the result of the complicated motion of innumerable wheels and pulleys is merely a slow and regular movement of the hands which show the time, so the result of all the complicated human activities of 160,000 Russians and French — all their passions, desires, remorse, humiliations, sufferings, outbursts of pride, fear, and enthusiasm — was only the loss of the battle of Austerlitz, the so-called battle of the three Emperors — that is to say, a slow movement of the hand on the dial of human history.

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Kutúzov here woke up, coughed heavily, and looked round at the generals.

“Gentlemen, the dispositions for tomorrow — or rather for today, for it is past midnight — cannot now be altered,” said he. “You have heard them, and we shall all do our duty. But before a battle, there is nothing more important...” he paused, “than to have a good sleep.”

He moved as if to rise. The generals bowed and retired. It was past midnight. Prince Andrew went out.

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But Prince Andrew did not see how it ended. It seemed to him as though one of the soldiers near him hit him on the head with the full swing of a bludgeon. It hurt a little, but the worst of it was that the pain distracted him and prevented his seeing what he had been looking at.

“What’s this? Am I falling? My legs are giving way,” thought he, and fell on his back. He opened his eyes, hoping to see how the struggle of the Frenchmen with the gunners ended, whether the red-haired gunner had been killed or not and whether the cannon had been captured or saved. But he saw nothing. Above him there was now nothing but the sky — the lofty sky, not clear yet still immeasurably lofty, with gray clouds gliding slowly across it. “How quiet, peaceful, and solemn; not at all as I ran,” thought Prince Andrew — “not as we ran, shouting and fighting, not at all as the gunner and the Frenchman with frightened and angry faces struggled for the mop: how differently do those clouds glide across that lofty infinite sky! How was it I did not see that lofty sky before? And how happy I am to have found it at last! Yes! All is vanity, all falsehood, except that infinite sky. There is nothing, nothing, but that. But even it does not exist, there is nothing but quiet and peace. Thank God!...”

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But as a youth in love trembles, is unnerved, and dares not utter the thoughts he has dreamed of for nights, but looks around for help or a chance of delay and flight when the longed-for moment comes and he is alone with her, so Rostóv, now that he had attained what he had longed for more than anything else in the world, did not know how to approach the Emperor, and a thousand reasons occurred to him why it would be inconvenient, unseemly, and impossible to do so.

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On the narrow Augesd Dam where for so many years the old miller had been accustomed to sit in his tasseled cap peacefully angling, while his grandson, with shirt sleeves rolled up, handled the floundering silvery fish in the watering can, on that dam over which for so many years Moravians in shaggy caps and blue jackets had peacefully driven their two-horse carts loaded with wheat and had returned dusty with flour whitening their carts — on that narrow dam amid the wagons and the cannon, under the horses’ hoofs and between the wagon wheels, men disfigured by fear of death now crowded together, crushing one another, dying, stepping over the dying and killing one another, only to move on a few steps and be killed themselves in the same way.

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On the Pratzen Heights, where he had fallen with the flagstaff in his hand, lay Prince Andrew Bolkónski bleeding profusely and unconsciously uttering a gentle, piteous, and childlike moan.

Toward evening he ceased moaning and became quite still. He did not know how long his unconsciousness lasted. Suddenly he again felt that he was alive and suffering from a burning, lacerating pain in his head.

“Where is it, that lofty sky that I did not know till now, but saw today?” was his first thought. “And I did not know this suffering either,” he thought. “Yes, I did not know anything, anything at all till now. But where am I?”

He listened and heard the sound of approaching horses, and voices speaking French

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“That’s a fine death!” said Napoleon as he gazed at Bolkónski.

Prince Andrew understood that this was said of him and that it was Napoleon who said it. He heard the speaker addressed as Sire. But he heard the words as he might have heard the buzzing of a fly. Not only did they not interest him, but he took no notice of them and at once forgot them. His head was burning, he felt himself bleeding to death, and he saw above him the remote, lofty, and everlasting sky. He knew it was Napoleon — his hero — but at that moment Napoleon seemed to him such a small, insignificant creature compared with what was passing now between himself and that lofty infinite sky with the clouds flying over it. At that moment it meant nothing to him who might be standing over him, or what was said of him; he was only glad that people were standing near him and only wished that they would help him and bring him back to life, which seemed to him so beautiful now that he had today learned to understand it so differently. He collected all his strength, to stir and utter a sound. He feebly moved his leg and uttered a weak, sickly groan which aroused his own pity.

“Ah! He is alive,” said Napoleon. “Lift this young man up and carry him to the dressing station.”

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Prince Andrew, who had also been brought forward before the Emperor’s eyes to complete the show of prisoners, could not fail to attract his attention. Napoleon apparently remembered seeing him on the battlefield and, addressing him, again used the epithet “young man” that was connected in his memory with Prince Andrew.

“Well, and you, young man,” said he. “How do you feel, mon brave?”

Though five minutes before, Prince Andrew had been able to say a few words to the soldiers who were carrying him, now with his eyes fixed straight on Napoleon, he was silent.... So insignificant at that moment seemed to him all the interests that engrossed Napoleon, so mean did his hero himself with his paltry vanity and joy in victory appear, compared to the lofty, equitable, and kindly sky which he had seen and understood, that he could not answer him.

Everything seemed so futile and insignificant in comparison with the stern and solemn train of thought that weakness from loss of blood, suffering, and the nearness of death aroused in him. Looking into Napoleon’s eyes Prince Andrew thought of the insignificance of greatness, the unimportance of life which no one could understand, and the still greater unimportance of death, the meaning of which no one alive could understand or explain.

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On the first arrival of the news of the battle of Austerlitz, Moscow had been bewildered. At that time, the Russians were so used to victories that on receiving news of the defeat some would simply not believe it, while others sought some extraordinary explanation of so strange an event. In the English Club, where all who were distinguished, important, and well informed foregathered when the news began to arrive in December, nothing was said about the war and the last battle, as though all were in a conspiracy of silence. The men who set the tone in conversation — Count Rostopchín, Prince Yúri Dolgorúkov, Valúev, Count Markóv, and Prince Vyázemski — did not show themselves at the club, but met in private houses in intimate circles, and the Moscovites who took their opinions from others — Ilyá Rostóv among them — remained for a while without any definite opinion on the subject of the war and without leaders. The Moscovites felt that something was wrong and that to discuss the bad news was difficult, and so it was best to be silent. But after a while, just as a jury comes out of its room, the bigwigs who guided the club’s opinion reappeared, and everybody began speaking clearly and definitely. Reasons were found for the incredible, unheard-of, and impossible event of a Russian defeat, everything became clear, and in all corners of Moscow the same things began to be said. These reasons were the treachery of the Austrians, a defective commissariat, the treachery of the Pole Przebyszéwski and of the Frenchman Langeron, Kutúzov’s incapacity, and (it was whispered) the youth and inexperience of the sovereign, who had trusted worthless and insignificant people. But the army, the Russian army, everyone declared, was extraordinary and had achieved miracles of valor.

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the words of Rostopchín, that French soldiers have to be incited to battle by highfalutin words, and Germans by logical arguments to show them that it is more dangerous to run away than to advance, but that Russian soldiers only need to be restrained and held back!

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On that third of March, all the rooms in the English Club were filled with a hum of conversation, like the hum of bees swarming in springtime. The members and guests of the club wandered hither and thither, sat, stood, met, and separated, some in uniform and some in evening dress, and a few here and there with powdered hair and in Russian kaftáns. Powdered footmen, in livery with buckled shoes and smart stockings, stood at every door anxiously noting visitors’ every movement in order to offer their services. Most of those present were elderly, respected men with broad, self-confident faces, fat fingers, and resolute gestures and voices. This class of guests and members sat in certain habitual places and met in certain habitual groups. A minority of those present were casual guests — chiefly young men, among whom were Denísov, Rostóv, and Dólokhov — who was now again an officer in the Semënov regiment. The faces of these young people, especially those who were military men, bore that expression of condescending respect for their elders which seems to say to the older generation, “We are prepared to respect and honor you, but all the same remember that the future belongs to us.”

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Everyone rose, feeling that dinner was more important than verses, and Bagratión, again preceding all the rest, went in to dinner. He was seated in the place of honor between two Alexanders — Bekleshëv and Narýshkin — which was a significant allusion to the name of the sovereign. Three hundred persons took their seats in the dining room, according to their rank and importance: the more important nearer to the honored guest, as naturally as water flows deepest where the land lies lowest.

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“Bad! But it’s not that, my friend — ” said Dólokhov with a gasping voice. “Where are we? In Moscow, I know. I don’t matter, but I have killed her, killed... She won’t get over it! She won’t survive....”

“Who?” asked Rostóv.

“My mother! My mother, my angel, my adored angel mother,” and Dólokhov pressed Rostóv’s hand and burst into tears.

When he had become a little quieter, he explained to Rostóv that he was living with his mother, who, if she saw him dying, would not survive it. He implored Rostóv to go on and prepare her.

Rostóv went on ahead to do what was asked, and to his great surprise learned that Dólokhov the brawler, Dólokhov the bully, lived in Moscow with an old mother and a hunchback sister, and was the most affectionate of sons and brothers.

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Natásha fell in love the very moment she entered the ballroom. She was not in love with anyone in particular, but with everyone. Whatever person she happened to look at she was in love with for that moment.

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The Mason smiled with his gentle fatherly smile.

“The highest wisdom and truth are like the purest liquid we may wish to imbibe,” he said. “Can I receive that pure liquid into an impure vessel and judge of its purity? Only by the inner purification of myself can I retain in some degree of purity the liquid I receive.”

“Yes, yes, that is so,” said Pierre joyfully.

“The highest wisdom is not founded on reason alone, not on those worldly sciences of physics, history, chemistry, and the like, into which intellectual knowledge is divided. The highest wisdom is one. The highest wisdom has but one science — the science of the whole — the science explaining the whole creation and man’s place in it. To receive that science it is necessary to purify and renew one’s inner self, and so before one can know, it is necessary to believe and to perfect one’s self. And to attain this end, we have the light called conscience that God has implanted in our souls.”

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“And now, in token of candor, I ask you to reveal to me your chief passion,” said the latter.

“My passion! I have had so many,” replied Pierre.

“That passion which more than all others caused you to waver on the path of virtue,” said the Mason.

Pierre paused, seeking a reply.

“Wine? Gluttony? Idleness? Laziness? Irritability? Anger? Women?” He went over his vices in his mind, not knowing to which of them to give the pre-eminence.

“Women,” he said in a low, scarcely audible voice.

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Thanks to Anna Mikháylovna’s efforts, his own tastes, and the peculiarities of his reserved nature, Borís had managed during his service to place himself very advantageously. He was aide-de-camp to a very important personage, had been sent on a very important mission to Prussia, and had just returned from there as a special messenger. He had become thoroughly conversant with that unwritten code with which he had been so pleased at Olmütz and according to which an ensign might rank incomparably higher than a general, and according to which what was needed for success in the service was not effort or work, or courage, or perseverance, but only the knowledge of how to get on with those who can grant rewards, and he was himself often surprised at the rapidity of his success and at the inability of others to understand these things. In consequence of this discovery his whole manner of life, all his relations with old friends, all his plans for his future, were completely altered. He was not rich, but would spend his last groat to be better dressed than others, and would rather deprive himself of many pleasures than allow himself to be seen in a shabby equipage or appear in the streets of Petersburg in an old uniform. He made friends with and sought the acquaintance of only those above him in position and who could therefore be of use to him. He liked Petersburg and despised Moscow. The remembrance of the Rostóvs’ house and of his childish love for Natásha was unpleasant to him and he had not once been to see the Rostóvs since the day of his departure for the army. To be in Anna Pávlovna’s drawing room he considered an important step up in the service, and he at once understood his role, letting his hostess make use of whatever interest he had to offer. He himself carefully scanned each face, appraising the possibilities of establishing intimacy with each of those present, and the advantages that might accrue. He took the seat indicated to him beside the fair Hélène and listened to the general conversation.

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“Ah, my dear vicomte,” put in Anna Pávlovna, “L’Urope” (for some reason she called it Urope as if that were a specially refined French pronunciation which she could allow herself when conversing with a Frenchman), “L’Urope ne sera jamais notre alliée sincère.” “Europe will never be our sincere ally.”

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Bilíbin was now at army headquarters in a diplomatic capacity, and though he wrote in French and used French jests and French idioms, he described the whole campaign with a fearless self-censure and self-derision genuinely Russian.

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What Pierre did not know was that the place where they presented him with bread and salt and wished to build a chantry in honor of Peter and Paul was a market village where a fair was held on St. Peter’s day, and that the richest peasants (who formed the deputation) had begun the chantry long before, but that nine tenths of the peasants in that villages were in a state of the greatest poverty. He did not know that since the nursing mothers were no longer sent to work on his land, they did still harder work on their own land. He did not know that the priest who met him with the cross oppressed the peasants by his exactions, and that the pupils’ parents wept at having to let him take their children and secured their release by heavy payments. He did not know that the brick buildings, built to plan, were being built by serfs whose manorial labor was thus increased, though lessened on paper. He did not know that where the steward had shown him in the accounts that the serfs’ payments had been diminished by a third, their obligatory manorial work had been increased by a half. And so Pierre was delighted with his visit to his estates and quite recovered the philanthropic mood in which he had left Petersburg, and wrote enthusiastic letters to his “brother-instructor” as he called the Grand Master.

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The steward promised to do all in his power to carry out the count’s wishes, seeing clearly that not only would the count never be able to find out whether all measures had been taken for the sale of the land and forests and to release them from the Land Bank, but would probably never even inquire and would never know that the newly erected buildings were standing empty and that the serfs continued to give in money and work all that other people’s serfs gave — that is to say, all that could be got out of them.

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Prince Andrew grew more and more animated. His eyes glittered feverishly while he tried to prove to Pierre that in his actions there was no desire to do good to his neighbor.

“There now, you wish to liberate your serfs,” he continued; “that is a very good thing, but not for you — I don’t suppose you ever had anyone flogged or sent to Siberia — and still less for your serfs. If they are beaten, flogged, or sent to Siberia, I don’t suppose they are any the worse off. In Siberia they lead the same animal life, and the stripes on their bodies heal, and they are happy as before. But it is a good thing for proprietors who perish morally, bring remorse upon themselves, stifle this remorse and grow callous, as a result of being able to inflict punishments justly and unjustly. It is those people I pity, and for their sake I should like to liberate the serfs. You may not have seen, but I have seen, how good men brought up in those traditions of unlimited power, in time when they grow more irritable, become cruel and harsh, are conscious of it, but cannot restrain themselves and grow more and more miserable.”

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“You say you can’t see a reign of goodness and truth on earth. Nor could I, and it cannot be seen if one looks on our life here as the end of everything. On earth, here on this earth” (Pierre pointed to the fields), “there is no truth, all is false and evil; but in the universe, in the whole universe there is a kingdom of truth, and we who are now the children of earth are — eternally — children of the whole universe. Don’t I feel in my soul that I am part of this vast harmonious whole? Don’t I feel that I form one link, one step, between the lower and higher beings, in this vast harmonious multitude of beings in whom the Deity — the Supreme Power if you prefer the term — is manifest? If I see, clearly see, that ladder leading from plant to man, why should I suppose it breaks off at me and does not go farther and farther? I feel that I cannot vanish, since nothing vanishes in this world, but that I shall always exist and always have existed. I feel that beyond me and above me there are spirits, and that in this world there is truth.”

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When Pierre had gone and the members of the household met together, they began to express their opinions of him as people always do after a new acquaintance has left, but as seldom happens, no one said anything but what was good of him.

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The Pávlograd regiment had had only two men wounded in action, but had lost nearly half its men from hunger and sickness. In the hospitals, death was so certain that soldiers suffering from fever, or the swelling that came from bad food, preferred to remain on duty, and hardly able to drag their legs went to the front rather than to the hospitals. When spring came on, the soldiers found a plant just showing out of the ground that looked like asparagus, which, for some reason, they called “Máshka’s sweet root.” It was very bitter, but they wandered about the fields seeking it and dug it out with their sabers and ate it, though they were ordered not to do so, as it was a noxious plant. That spring a new disease broke out among the soldiers, a swelling of the arms, legs, and face, which the doctors attributed to eating this root. But in spite of all this, the soldiers of Denísov’s squadron fed chiefly on “Máshka’s sweet root,” because it was the second week that the last of the biscuits were being doled out at the rate of half a pound a man and the last potatoes received had sprouted and frozen.

The horses also had been fed for a fortnight on straw from the thatched roofs and had become terribly thin, though still covered with tufts of felty winter hair.

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They were bivouacking. Denísov and Rostóv were living in an earth hut, dug out for them by the soldiers and roofed with branches and turf. The hut was made in the following manner, which had then come into vogue. A trench was dug three and a half feet wide, four feet eight inches deep, and eight feet long. At one end of the trench, steps were cut out and these formed the entrance and vestibule. The trench itself was the room, in which the lucky ones, such as the squadron commander, had a board, lying on piles at the end opposite the entrance, to serve as a table. On each side of the trench, the earth was cut out to a breadth of about two and a half feet, and this did duty for bedsteads and couches. The roof was so constructed that one could stand up in the middle of the trench and could even sit up on the beds if one drew close to the table. Denísov, who was living luxuriously because the soldiers of his squadron liked him, had also a board in the roof at the farther end, with a piece of (broken but mended) glass in it for a window. When it was very cold, embers from the soldiers’ campfire were placed on a bent sheet of iron on the steps in the “reception room” — as Denísov called that part of the hut — and it was then so warm that the officers, of whom there were always some with Denísov and Rostóv, sat in their shirt sleeves.

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Borís, hearing a strange voice in the anteroom, came out to meet him. An expression of annoyance showed itself for a moment on his face on first recognizing Rostóv.

“Ah, it’s you? Very glad, very glad to see you,” he said, however, coming toward him with a smile. But Rostóv had noticed his first impulse.

“I’ve come at a bad time I think. I should not have come, but I have business,” he said coldly.

“No, I only wonder how you managed to get away from your regiment. Dans un moment je suis à vous,” he said, answering someone who called him. “In a minute I shall be at your disposal.”

“I see I’m intruding,” Rostóv repeated.

The look of annoyance had already disappeared from Borís’ face: having evidently reflected and decided how to act, he very quietly took both Rostóv’s hands and led him into the next room. His eyes, looking serenely and steadily at Rostóv, seemed to be veiled by something, as if screened by blue spectacles of conventionality. So it seemed to Rostóv.

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All the suite drew back and Rostóv saw the general talking for some time to the Emperor.

The Emperor said a few words to him and took a step toward his horse. Again the crowd of members of the suite and street gazers (among whom was Rostóv) moved nearer to the Emperor. Stopping beside his horse, with his hand on the saddle, the Emperor turned to the cavalry general and said in a loud voice, evidently wishing to be heard by all:

“I cannot do it, General. I cannot, because the law is stronger than I,” and he raised his foot to the stirrup.

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Rostóv stood at that corner for a long time, watching the feast from a distance. In his mind, a painful process was going on which he could not bring to a conclusion. Terrible doubts rose in his soul. Now he remembered Denísov with his changed expression, his submission, and the whole hospital, with arms and legs torn off and its dirt and disease. So vividly did he recall that hospital stench of dead flesh that he looked round to see where the smell came from. Next he thought of that self-satisfied Bonaparte, with his small white hand, who was now an Emperor, liked and respected by Alexander. Then why those severed arms and legs and those dead men?... Then again he thought of Lázarev rewarded and Denísov punished and unpardoned. He caught himself harboring such strange thoughts that he was frightened.

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Suddenly, on one of the officers’ saying that it was humiliating to look at the French, Rostóv began shouting with uncalled-for wrath, and therefore much to the surprise of the officers:

“How can you judge what’s best?” he cried, the blood suddenly rushing to his face. “How can you judge the Emperor’s actions? What right have we to argue? We cannot comprehend either the Emperor’s aims or his actions!”

“But I never said a word about the Emperor!” said the officer, justifying himself, and unable to understand Rostóv’s outburst, except on the supposition that he was drunk.

But Rostóv did not listen to him.

“We are not diplomatic officials, we are soldiers and nothing more,” he went on. “If we are ordered to die, we must die. If we’re punished, it means that we have deserved it, it’s not for us to judge. If the Emperor pleases to recognize Bonaparte as Emperor and to conclude an alliance with him, it means that that is the right thing to do. If once we begin judging and arguing about everything, nothing sacred will be left! That way we shall be saying there is no God — nothing!” shouted Nicholas, banging the table — very little to the point as it seemed to his listeners, but quite relevantly to the course of his own thoughts.

“Our business is to do our duty, to fight and not to think! That’s all....” said he.

“And to drink,” said one of the officers, not wishing to quarrel.

“Yes, and to drink,” assented Nicholas. “Hullo there! Another bottle!” he shouted.

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In 1809 the intimacy between “the world’s two arbiters,” as Napoleon and Alexander were called, was such that when Napoleon declared war on Austria a Russian corps crossed the frontier to co-operate with our old enemy Bonaparte against our old ally the Emperor of Austria, and in court circles the possibility of marriage between Napoleon and one of Alexander’s sisters was spoken of. But besides considerations of foreign policy, the attention of Russian society was at that time keenly directed on the internal changes that were being undertaken in all the departments of government.

Life meanwhile — real life, with its essential interests of health and sickness, toil and rest, and its intellectual interests in thought, science, poetry, music, love, friendship, hatred, and passions — went on as usual, independently of and apart from political friendship or enmity with Napoleon Bonaparte and from all the schemes of reconstruction.

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Peter the footman made some remark to the coachman; the latter assented. But apparently the coachman’s sympathy was not enough for Peter, and he turned on the box toward his master.

“How pleasant it is, your excellency!” he said with a respectful smile.

“What?”

“It’s pleasant, your excellency!”

“What is he talking about?” thought Prince Andrew. “Oh, the spring, I suppose,” he thought as he turned round. “Yes, really everything is green already.... How early! The birches and cherry and alders too are coming out.... But the oaks show no sign yet. Ah, here is one oak!”

At the edge of the road stood an oak. Probably ten times the age of the birches that formed the forest, it was ten times as thick and twice as tall as they. It was an enormous tree, its girth twice as great as a man could embrace, and evidently long ago some of its branches had been broken off and its bark scarred. With its huge ungainly limbs sprawling unsymmetrically, and its gnarled hands and fingers, it stood an aged, stern, and scornful monster among the smiling birch trees. Only the dead-looking evergreen firs dotted about in the forest, and this oak, refused to yield to the charm of spring or notice either the spring or the sunshine.

“Spring, love, happiness!” this oak seemed to say. “Are you not weary of that stupid, meaningless, constantly repeated fraud? Always the same and always a fraud? There is no spring, no sun, no happiness! Look at those cramped dead firs, ever the same, and at me too, sticking out my broken and barked fingers just where they have grown, whether from my back or my sides: as they have grown so I stand, and I do not believe in your hopes and your lies.”

As he passed through the forest Prince Andrew turned several times to look at that oak, as if expecting something from it. Under the oak, too, were flowers and grass, but it stood among them scowling, rigid, misshapen, and grim as ever.

“Yes, the oak is right, a thousand times right,” thought Prince Andrew. “Let others — the young — yield afresh to that fraud, but we know life, our life is finished!”

A whole sequence of new thoughts, hopeless but mournfully pleasant, rose in his soul in connection with that tree. During this journey he, as it were, considered his life afresh and arrived at his old conclusion, restful in its hopelessness: that it was not for him to begin anything anew — but that he must live out his life, content to do no harm, and not disturbing himself or desiring anything.

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“If it were hot,” Prince Andrew would reply at such times very dryly to his sister, “he could go out in his smock, but as it is cold he must wear warm clothes, which were designed for that purpose. That is what follows from the fact that it is cold; and not that a child who needs fresh air should remain at home,” he would add with extreme logic, as if punishing someone for those secret illogical emotions that stirred within him.

At such moments Princess Mary would think how intellectual work dries men up.

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Speránski did not shift his eyes from one face to another as people involuntarily do on entering a large company and was in no hurry to speak. He spoke slowly, with assurance that he would be listened to, and he looked only at the person with whom he was conversing.

Prince Andrew followed Speránski’s every word and movement with particular attention. As happens to some people, especially to men who judge those near to them severely, he always on meeting anyone new — especially anyone whom, like Speránski, he knew by reputation — expected to discover in him the perfection of human qualities.

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To Bolkónski so many people appeared contemptible and insignificant creatures, and he so longed to find in someone the living ideal of that perfection toward which he strove, that he readily believed that in Speránski he had found this ideal of a perfectly rational and virtuous man. Had Speránski sprung from the same class as himself and possessed the same breeding and traditions, Bolkónski would soon have discovered his weak, human, unheroic sides; but as it was, Speránski’s strange and logical turn of mind inspired him with respect all the more because he did not quite understand him. Moreover, Speránski, either because he appreciated the other’s capacity or because he considered it necessary to win him to his side, showed off his dispassionate calm reasonableness before Prince Andrew and flattered him with that subtle flattery which goes hand in hand with self-assurance and consists in a tacit assumption that one’s companion is the only man besides oneself capable of understanding the folly of the rest of mankind and the reasonableness and profundity of one’s own ideas.

During their long conversation on Wednesday evening, Speránski more than once remarked: “We regard everything that is above the common level of rooted custom...” or, with a smile: “But we want the wolves to be fed and the sheep to be safe...” or: “They cannot understand this...” and all in a way that seemed to say: “We, you and I, understand what they are and who we are.”

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Everything was right and everything was as it should be: only one thing disconcerted Prince Andrew. This was Speránski’s cold, mirrorlike look, which did not allow one to penetrate to his soul, and his delicate white hands, which Prince Andrew involuntarily watched as one does watch the hands of those who possess power.

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In general the trait of Speránski’s mentality which struck Prince Andrew most was his absolute and unshakable belief in the power and authority of reason. It was evident that the thought could never occur to him which to Prince Andrew seemed so natural, namely, that it is after all impossible to express all one thinks; and that he had never felt the doubt, “Is not all I think and believe nonsense?” And it was just this peculiarity of Speránski’s mind that particularly attracted Prince Andrew.

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Like all men who have grown up in society, Prince Andrew liked meeting someone there not of the conventional society stamp. And such was Natásha, with her surprise, her delight, her shyness, and even her mistakes in speaking French. With her he behaved with special care and tenderness, sitting beside her and talking of the simplest and most unimportant matters; he admired her shy grace. In the middle of the cotillion, having completed one of the figures, Natásha, still out of breath, was returning to her seat when another dancer chose her. She was tired and panting and evidently thought of declining, but immediately put her hand gaily on the man’s shoulder, smiling at Prince Andrew.

“I’d be glad to sit beside you and rest: I’m tired; but you see how they keep asking me, and I’m glad of it, I’m happy and I love everybody, and you and I understand it all,” and much, much more was said in her smile. When her partner left her Natásha ran across the room to choose two ladies for the figure.

“If she goes to her cousin first and then to another lady, she will be my wife,” said Prince Andrew to himself quite to his own surprise, as he watched her. She did go first to her cousin.

“What rubbish sometimes enters one’s head!” thought Prince Andrew, “but what is certain is that that girl is so charming, so original, that she won’t be dancing here a month before she will be married.... Such as she are rare here,” he thought, as Natásha, readjusting a rose that was slipping on her bodice, settled herself beside him.

When the cotillion was over the old count in his blue coat came up to the dancers. He invited Prince Andrew to come and see them, and asked his daughter whether she was enjoying herself. Natásha did not answer at once but only looked up with a smile that said reproachfully: “How can you ask such a question?”

“I have never enjoyed myself so much before!” she said, and Prince Andrew noticed how her thin arms rose quickly as if to embrace her father and instantly dropped again. Natásha was happier than she had ever been in her life. She was at that height of bliss when one becomes completely kind and good and does not believe in the possibility of evil, unhappiness, or sorrow.

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After dinner Natásha, at Prince Andrew’s request, went to the clavichord and began singing. Prince Andrew stood by a window talking to the ladies and listened to her. In the midst of a phrase he ceased speaking and suddenly felt tears choking him, a thing he had thought impossible for him. He looked at Natásha as she sang, and something new and joyful stirred in his soul. He felt happy and at the same time sad. He had absolutely nothing to weep about yet he was ready to weep. What about? His former love? The little princess? His disillusionments?... His hopes for the future?... Yes and no. The chief reason was a sudden, vivid sense of the terrible contrast between something infinitely great and illimitable within him and that limited and material something that he, and even she, was. This contrast weighed on and yet cheered him while she sang.

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Prince Andrew left the Rostóvs’ late in the evening. He went to bed from habit, but soon realized that he could not sleep. Having lit his candle he sat up in bed, then got up, then lay down again not at all troubled by his sleeplessness: his soul was as fresh and joyful as if he had stepped out of a stuffy room into God’s own fresh air. It did not enter his head that he was in love with Natásha; he was not thinking about her, but only picturing her to himself, and in consequence all life appeared in a new light. “Why do I strive, why do I toil in this narrow, confined frame, when life, all life with all its joys, is open to me?” said he to himself. And for the first time for a very long while he began making happy plans for the future. He decided that he must attend to his son’s education by finding a tutor and putting the boy in his charge, then he ought to retire from the service and go abroad, and see England, Switzerland and Italy. “I must use my freedom while I feel so much strength and youth in me,” he said to himself. “Pierre was right when he said one must believe in the possibility of happiness in order to be happy, and now I do believe in it. Let the dead bury their dead, but while one has life one must live and be happy!” thought he.

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In their new, clean, and light study with its small busts and pictures and new furniture sat Berg and his wife. Berg, closely buttoned up in his new uniform, sat beside his wife explaining to her that one always could and should be acquainted with people above one, because only then does one get satisfaction from acquaintances.

“You can get to know something, you can ask for something. See how I managed from my first promotion.” (Berg measured his life not by years but by promotions.) “My comrades are still nobodies, while I am only waiting for a vacancy to command a regiment, and have the happiness to be your husband.” (He rose and kissed Véra’s hand, and on the way to her straightened out a turned-up corner of the carpet.) “And how have I obtained all this? Chiefly by knowing how to choose my aquaintances. It goes without saying that one must be conscientious and methodical.”

Berg smiled with a sense of his superiority over a weak woman, and paused, reflecting that this dear wife of his was after all but a weak woman who could not understand all that constitutes a man’s dignity, what it was ein Mann zu sein, to be a man. Véra at the same time smiling with a sense of superiority over her good, conscientious husband, who all the same understood life wrongly, as according to Véra all men did. Berg, judging by his wife, thought all women weak and foolish. Véra, judging only by her husband and generalizing from that observation, supposed that all men, though they understand nothing and are conceited and selfish, ascribe common sense to themselves alone.

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“Yes, that is true, Prince. In our days,” continued Véra — mentioning “our days” as people of limited intelligence are fond of doing, imagining that they have discovered and appraised the peculiarities of “our days” and that human characteristics change with the times — “in our days a girl has so much freedom that the pleasure of being courted often stifles real feeling in her.

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But at that moment Berg came to Pierre and began insisting that he should take part in an argument between the general and the colonel on the affairs in Spain.

Berg was satisfied and happy. The smile of pleasure never left his face. The party was very successful and quite like other parties he had seen. Everything was similar: the ladies’ subtle talk, the cards, the general raising his voice at the card table, and the samovar and the tea cakes; only one thing was lacking that he had always seen at the evening parties he wished to imitate. They had not yet had a loud conversation among the men and a dispute about something important and clever. Now the general had begun such a discussion and so Berg drew Pierre to it.

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The longer she lived, the more experience and observation she had of life, the greater was her wonder at the short-sightedness of men who seek enjoyment and happiness here on earth: toiling, suffering, struggling, and harming one another, to obtain that impossible, visionary, sinful happiness. Prince Andrew had loved his wife, she died, but that was not enough: he wanted to bind his happiness to another woman. Her father objected to this because he wanted a more distinguished and wealthier match for Andrew. And they all struggled and suffered and tormented one another and injured their souls, their eternal souls, for the attainment of benefits which endure but for an instant. Not only do we know this ourselves, but Christ, the Son of God, came down to earth and told us that this life is but for a moment and is a probation; yet we cling to it and think to find happiness in it. “How is it that no one realizes this?” thought Princess Mary.

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The Bible legend tells us that the absence of labor — idleness — was a condition of the first man’s blessedness before the Fall. Fallen man has retained a love of idleness, but the curse weighs on the race not only because we have to seek our bread in the sweat of our brows, but because our moral nature is such that we cannot be both idle and at ease. An inner voice tells us we are in the wrong if we are idle. If man could find a state in which he felt that though idle he was fulfilling his duty, he would have found one of the conditions of man’s primitive blessedness.

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But instead of all that — here he was, the wealthy husband of an unfaithful wife, a retired gentleman-in-waiting, fond of eating and drinking and, as he unbuttoned his waistcoat, of abusing the government a bit, a member of the Moscow English Club, and a universal favorite in Moscow society. For a long time he could not reconcile himself to the idea that he was one of those same retired Moscow gentlemen-in-waiting he had so despised seven years before.

Sometimes he consoled himself with the thought that he was only living this life temporarily; but then he was shocked by the thought of how many, like himself, had entered that life and that club temporarily, with all their teeth and hair, and had only left it when not a single tooth or hair remained.

In moments of pride, when he thought of his position it seemed to him that he was quite different and distinct from those other retired gentlemen-in-waiting he had formerly despised: they were empty, stupid, contented fellows, satisfied with their position, “while I am still discontented and want to do something for mankind. But perhaps all these comrades of mine struggled just like me and sought something new, a path in life of their own, and like me were brought by force of circumstances, society, and race — by that elemental force against which man is powerless — to the condition I am in,” said he to himself in moments of humility; and after living some time in Moscow he no longer despised, but began to grow fond of, to respect, and to pity his comrades in destiny, as he pitied himself.

Pierre no longer suffered moments of despair, hypochondria, and disgust with life, but the malady that had formerly found expression in such acute attacks was driven inwards and never left him for a moment. “What for? Why? What is going on in the world?” he would ask himself in perplexity several times a day, involuntarily beginning to reflect anew on the meaning of the phenomena of life; but knowing by experience that there were no answers to these questions he made haste to turn away from them, and took up a book, or hurried off to the club or to Apollón Nikoláevich’s, to exchange the gossip of the town.

“Hélène, who has never cared for anything but her own body and is one of the stupidest women in the world,” thought Pierre, “is regarded by people as the acme of intelligence and refinement, and they pay homage to her. Napoleon Bonaparte was despised by all as long as he was great, but now that he has become a wretched comedian the Emperor Francis wants to offer him his daughter in an illegal marriage. The Spaniards, through the Catholic clergy, offer praise to God for their victory over the French on the fourteenth of June, and the French, also through the Catholic clergy, offer praise because on that same fourteenth of June they defeated the Spaniards. My brother Masons swear by the blood that they are ready to sacrifice everything for their neighbor, but they do not give a ruble each to the collections for the poor, and they intrigue, the Astraea Lodge against the Manna Seekers, and fuss about an authentic Scotch carpet and a charter that nobody needs, and the meaning of which the very man who wrote it does not understand. We all profess the Christian law of forgiveness of injuries and love of our neighbors, the law in honor of which we have built in Moscow forty times forty churches — but yesterday a deserter was knouted to death and a minister of that same law of love and forgiveness, a priest, gave the soldier a cross to kiss before his execution.” So thought Pierre, and the whole of this general deception which everyone accepts, accustomed as he was to it, astonished him each time as if it were something new. “I understand the deception and confusion,” he thought, “but how am I to tell them all that I see? I have tried, and have always found that they too in the depths of their souls understand it as I do, and only try not to see it. So it appears that it must be so! But I — what is to become of me?” thought he. He had the unfortunate capacity many men, especially Russians, have of seeing and believing in the possibility of goodness and truth, but of seeing the evil and falsehood of life too clearly to be able to take a serious part in it. Every sphere of work was connected, in his eyes, with evil and deception. Whatever he tried to be, whatever he engaged in, the evil and falsehood of it repulsed him and blocked every path of activity. Yet he had to live and to find occupation. It was too dreadful to be under the burden of these insoluble problems, so he abandoned himself to any distraction in order to forget them. He frequented every kind of society, drank much, bought pictures, engaged in building, and above all — read.

He read, and read everything that came to hand. On coming home, while his valets were still taking off his things, he picked up a book and began to read. From reading he passed to sleeping, from sleeping to gossip in drawing rooms of the club, from gossip to carousals and women; from carousals back to gossip, reading, and wine. Drinking became more and more a physical and also a moral necessity. Though the doctors warned him that with his corpulence wine was dangerous for him, he drank a great deal. He was only quite at ease when having poured several glasses of wine mechanically into his large mouth he felt a pleasant warmth in his body, an amiability toward all his fellows, and a readiness to respond superficially to every idea without probing it deeply. Only after emptying a bottle or two did he feel dimly that the terribly tangled skein of life which previously had terrified him was not as dreadful as he had thought. He was always conscious of some aspect of that skein, as with a buzzing in his head after dinner or supper he chatted or listened to conversation or read. But under the influence of wine he said to himself: “It doesn’t matter. I’ll get it unraveled. I have a solution ready, but have no time now — I’ll think it all out later on!” But the later on never came.

In the morning, on an empty stomach, all the old questions appeared as insoluble and terrible as ever, and Pierre hastily picked up a book, and if anyone came to see him he was glad.

Sometimes he remembered how he had heard that soldiers in war when entrenched under the enemy’s fire, if they have nothing to do, try hard to find some occupation the more easily to bear the danger. To Pierre all men seemed like those soldiers, seeking refuge from life: some in ambition, some in cards, some in framing laws, some in women, some in toys, some in horses, some in politics, some in sport, some in wine, and some in governmental affairs. “Nothing is trivial, and nothing is important, it’s all the same — only to save oneself from it as best one can,” thought Pierre. “Only not to see it, that dreadful it!”

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Another lately added sorrow arose from the lessons she gave her six year-old nephew. To her consternation she detected in herself in relation to little Nicholas some symptoms of her father’s irritability. However often she told herself that she must not get irritable when teaching her nephew, almost every time that, pointer in hand, she sat down to show him the French alphabet, she so longed to pour her own knowledge quickly and easily into the child — who was already afraid that Auntie might at any moment get angry — that at his slightest inattention she trembled, became flustered and heated, raised her voice, and sometimes pulled him by the arm and put him in the corner. Having put him in the corner she would herself begin to cry over her cruel, evil nature, and little Nicholas, following her example, would sob, and without permission would leave his corner, come to her, pull her wet hands from her face, and comfort her.

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The tone of the conversation was such as indicated that no one approved of what was being done in the political world. Incidents were related evidently confirming the opinion that everything was going from bad to worse.

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Prince Nicholas grew more animated and expressed his views on the impending war.

He said that our wars with Bonaparte would be disastrous so long as we sought alliances with the Germans and thrust ourselves into European affairs, into which we had been drawn by the Peace of Tilsit. “We ought not to fight either for or against Austria. Our political interests are all in the East, and in regard to Bonaparte the only thing is to have an armed frontier and a firm policy, and he will never dare to cross the Russian frontier, as was the case in 1807!”

“How can we fight the French, Prince?” said Count Rostopchín. “Can we arm ourselves against our teachers and divinities? Look at our youths, look at our ladies! The French are our Gods: Paris is our Kingdom of Heaven.”

He began speaking louder, evidently to be heard by everyone.

“French dresses, French ideas, French feelings! There now, you turned Métivier out by the scruff of his neck because he is a Frenchman and a scoundrel, but our ladies crawl after him on their knees. I went to a party last night, and there out of five ladies three were Roman Catholics and had the Pope’s indulgence for doing woolwork on Sundays. And they themselves sit there nearly naked, like the signboards at our Public Baths if I may say so. Ah, when one looks at our young people, Prince, one would like to take Peter the Great’s old cudgel out of the museum and belabor them in the Russian way till all the nonsense jumps out of them.”

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“And do you know the new way of courting?” said Pierre with an amused smile, evidently in that cheerful mood of good humored raillery for which he so often reproached himself in his diary.

“No,” replied Princess Mary.

“To please Moscow girls nowadays one has to be melancholy. He is very melancholy with Mademoiselle Karágina,” said Pierre.

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After her life in the country, and in her present serious mood, all this seemed grotesque and amazing to Natásha. She could not follow the opera nor even listen to the music; she saw only the painted cardboard and the queerly dressed men and women who moved, spoke, and sang so strangely in that brilliant light. She knew what it was all meant to represent, but it was so pretentiously false and unnatural that she first felt ashamed for the actors and then amused at them. She looked at the faces of the audience, seeking in them the same sense of ridicule and perplexity she herself experienced, but they all seemed attentive to what was happening on the stage, and expressed delight which to Natásha seemed feigned. “I suppose it has to be like this!” she thought. She kept looking round in turn at the rows of pomaded heads in the stalls and then at the seminude women in the boxes, especially at Hélène in the next box, who — apparently quite unclothed — sat with a quiet tranquil smile, not taking her eyes off the stage. And feeling the bright light that flooded the whole place and the warm air heated by the crowd, Natásha little by little began to pass into a state of intoxication she had not experienced for a long while. She did not realize who and where she was, nor what was going on before her. As she looked and thought, the strangest fancies unexpectedly and disconnectedly passed through her mind: the idea occurred to her of jumping onto the edge of the box and singing the aria the actress was singing, then she wished to touch with her fan an old gentleman sitting not far from her, then to lean over to Hélène and tickle her.

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Countess Bezúkhova quite deserved her reputation of being a fascinating woman. She could say what she did not think — especially what was flattering — quite simply and naturally.

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The conversation was about Speránski — the news of whose sudden exile and alleged treachery had just reached Moscow.

“Now he is censured and accused by all who were enthusiastic about him a month ago,” Prince Andrew was saying, “and by those who were unable to understand his aims. To judge a man who is in disfavor and to throw on him all the blame of other men’s mistakes is very easy, but I maintain that if anything good has been accomplished in this reign it was done by him, by him alone.”

He paused at the sight of Pierre. His face quivered and immediately assumed a vindictive expression.

“Posterity will do him justice,” he concluded, and at once turned to Pierre.

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“If there were treason, or proofs of secret relations with Napoleon, they would have been made public,” he said with warmth and haste. “I do not, and never did, like Speránski personally, but I like justice!”

Pierre now recognized in his friend a need with which he was only too familiar, to get excited and to have arguments about extraneous matters in order to stifle thoughts that were too oppressive and too intimate.

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She began to cry and a still greater sense of pity, tenderness, and love welled up in Pierre. He felt the tears trickle under his spectacles and hoped they would not be noticed.

“We won’t speak of it any more, my dear,” said Pierre, and his gentle, cordial tone suddenly seemed very strange to Natásha.

“We won’t speak of it, my dear — I’ll tell him everything; but one thing I beg of you, consider me your friend and if you want help, advice, or simply to open your heart to someone — not now, but when your mind is clearer--think of me!” He took her hand and kissed it. “I shall be happy if it’s in my power...”

Pierre grew confused.

“Don’t speak to me like that. I am not worth it!” exclaimed Natásha and turned to leave the room, but Pierre held her hand.

He knew he had something more to say to her. But when he said it he was amazed at his own words.

“Stop, stop! You have your whole life before you,” said he to her.

“Before me? No! All is over for me,” she replied with shame and self-abasement.

“All over?” he repeated. “If I were not myself, but the handsomest, cleverest, and best man in the world, and were free, I would this moment ask on my knees for your hand and your love!”

For the first time for many days Natásha wept tears of gratitude and tenderness, and glancing at Pierre she went out of the room.

Pierre too when she had gone almost ran into the anteroom, restraining tears of tenderness and joy that choked him, and without finding the sleeves of his fur cloak threw it on and got into his sleigh.

“Where to now, your excellency?” asked the coachman.

“Where to?” Pierre asked himself. “Where can I go now? Surely not to the Club or to pay calls?” All men seemed so pitiful, so poor, in comparison with this feeling of tenderness and love he experienced: in comparison with that softened, grateful, last look she had given him through her tears.

“Home!” said Pierre, and despite twenty-two degrees of frost Fahrenheit he threw open the bearskin cloak from his broad chest and inhaled the air with joy.

It was clear and frosty. Above the dirty, ill-lit streets, above the black roofs, stretched the dark starry sky. Only looking up at the sky did Pierre cease to feel how sordid and humiliating were all mundane things compared with the heights to which his soul had just been raised. At the entrance to the Arbát Square an immense expanse of dark starry sky presented itself to his eyes. Almost in the center of it, above the Prechístenka Boulevard, surrounded and sprinkled on all sides by stars but distinguished from them all by its nearness to the earth, its white light, and its long uplifted tail, shone the enormous and brilliant comet of 1812 — the comet which was said to portend all kinds of woes and the end of the world. In Pierre, however, that comet with its long luminous tail aroused no feeling of fear. On the contrary he gazed joyfully, his eyes moist with tears, at this bright comet which, having traveled in its orbit with inconceivable velocity through immeasurable space, seemed suddenly — like an arrow piercing the earth — to remain fixed in a chosen spot, vigorously holding its tail erect, shining and displaying its white light amid countless other scintillating stars. It seemed to Pierre that this comet fully responded to what was passing in his own softened and uplifted soul, now blossoming into a new life.

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From the close of the year 1811 an intensified arming and concentrating of the forces of Western Europe began, and in 1812 these forces — millions of men, reckoning those transporting and feeding the army — moved from the west eastwards to the Russian frontier, toward which since 1811 Russian forces had been similarly drawn. On the twelfth of June, 1812, the forces of Western Europe crossed the Russian frontier and war began, that is, an event took place opposed to human reason and to human nature. Millions of men perpetrated against one another such innumerable crimes, frauds, treacheries, thefts, forgeries, issues of false money, burglaries, incendiarisms, and murders as in whole centuries are not recorded in the annals of all the law courts of the world, but which those who committed them did not at the time regard as being crimes.

What produced this extraordinary occurrence? What were its causes? The historians tell us with naïve assurance that its causes were the wrongs inflicted on the Duke of Oldenburg, the nonobservance of the Continental System, the ambition of Napoleon, the firmness of Alexander, the mistakes of the diplomatists, and so on.

Consequently, it would only have been necessary for Metternich, Rumyántsev, or Talleyrand, between a levee and an evening party, to have taken proper pains and written a more adroit note, or for Napoleon to have written to Alexander: “My respected Brother, I consent to restore the duchy to the Duke of Oldenburg” — and there would have been no war.

We can understand that the matter seemed like that to contemporaries. It naturally seemed to Napoleon that the war was caused by England’s intrigues (as in fact he said on the island of St. Helena). It naturally seemed to members of the English Parliament that the cause of the war was Napoleon’s ambition; to the Duke of Oldenburg, that the cause of the war was the violence done to him; to businessmen that the cause of the war was the Continental System which was ruining Europe; to the generals and old soldiers that the chief reason for the war was the necessity of giving them employment; to the legitimists of that day that it was the need of re-establishing les bons principes, and to the diplomatists of that time that it all resulted from the fact that the alliance between Russia and Austria in 1809 had not been sufficiently well concealed from Napoleon, and from the awkward wording of Memorandum No. 178. It is natural that these and a countless and infinite quantity of other reasons, the number depending on the endless diversity of points of view, presented themselves to the men of that day; but to us, to posterity who view the thing that happened in all its magnitude and perceive its plain and terrible meaning, these causes seem insufficient. To us it is incomprehensible that millions of Christian men killed and tortured each other either because Napoleon was ambitious or Alexander was firm, or because England’s policy was astute or the Duke of Oldenburg wronged. We cannot grasp what connection such circumstances have with the actual fact of slaughter and violence: why because the Duke was wronged, thousands of men from the other side of Europe killed and ruined the people of Smolénsk and Moscow and were killed by them.

To us, their descendants, who are not historians and are not carried away by the process of research and can therefore regard the event with unclouded common sense, an incalculable number of causes present themselves. The deeper we delve in search of these causes the more of them we find; and each separate cause or whole series of causes appears to us equally valid in itself and equally false by its insignificance compared to the magnitude of the events, and by its impotence — apart from the cooperation of all the other coincident causes — to occasion the event. To us, the wish or objection of this or that French corporal to serve a second term appears as much a cause as Napoleon’s refusal to withdraw his troops beyond the Vistula and to restore the duchy of Oldenburg; for had he not wished to serve, and had a second, a third, and a thousandth corporal and private also refused, there would have been so many less men in Napoleon’s army and the war could not have occurred.

Had Napoleon not taken offense at the demand that he should withdraw beyond the Vistula, and not ordered his troops to advance, there would have been no war; but had all his sergeants objected to serving a second term then also there could have been no war. Nor could there have been a war had there been no English intrigues and no Duke of Oldenburg, and had Alexander not felt insulted, and had there not been an autocratic government in Russia, or a Revolution in France and a subsequent dictatorship and Empire, or all the things that produced the French Revolution, and so on. Without each of these causes nothing could have happened. So all these causes — myriads of causes — coincided to bring it about. And so there was no one cause for that occurrence, but it had to occur because it had to. Millions of men, renouncing their human feelings and reason, had to go from west to east to slay their fellows, just as some centuries previously hordes of men had come from the east to the west, slaying their fellows.

The actions of Napoleon and Alexander, on whose words the event seemed to hang, were as little voluntary as the actions of any soldier who was drawn into the campaign by lot or by conscription. This could not be otherwise, for in order that the will of Napoleon and Alexander (on whom the event seemed to depend) should be carried out, the concurrence of innumerable circumstances was needed without any one of which the event could not have taken place. It was necessary that millions of men in whose hands lay the real power — the soldiers who fired, or transported provisions and guns — should consent to carry out the will of these weak individuals, and should have been induced to do so by an infinite number of diverse and complex causes.

We are forced to fall back on fatalism as an explanation of irrational events (that is to say, events the reasonableness of which we do not understand). The more we try to explain such events in history reasonably, the more unreasonable and incomprehensible do they become to us.

Each man lives for himself, using his freedom to attain his personal aims, and feels with his whole being that he can now do or abstain from doing this or that action; but as soon as he has done it, that action performed at a certain moment in time becomes irrevocable and belongs to history, in which it has not a free but a predestined significance.

There are two sides to the life of every man, his individual life, which is the more free the more abstract its interests, and his elemental hive life in which he inevitably obeys laws laid down for him.

Man lives consciously for himself, but is an unconscious instrument in the attainment of the historic, universal, aims of humanity. A deed done is irrevocable, and its result coinciding in time with the actions of millions of other men assumes an historic significance. The higher a man stands on the social ladder, the more people he is connected with and the more power he has over others, the more evident is the predestination and inevitability of his every action.

“The king’s heart is in the hands of the Lord.”

A king is history’s slave.

History, that is, the unconscious, general, hive life of mankind, uses every moment of the life of kings as a tool for its own purposes.

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When an apple has ripened and falls, why does it fall? Because of its attraction to the earth, because its stalk withers, because it is dried by the sun, because it grows heavier, because the wind shakes it, or because the boy standing below wants to eat it?

Nothing is the cause. All this is only the coincidence of conditions in which all vital organic and elemental events occur. And the botanist who finds that the apple falls because the cellular tissue decays and so forth is equally right with the child who stands under the tree and says the apple fell because he wanted to eat it and prayed for it. Equally right or wrong is he who says that Napoleon went to Moscow because he wanted to, and perished because Alexander desired his destruction, and he who says that an undermined hill weighing a million tons fell because the last navvy struck it for the last time with his mattock. In historic events the so-called great men are labels giving names to events, and like labels they have but the smallest connection with the event itself.

Every act of theirs, which appears to them an act of their own will, is in an historical sense involuntary and is related to the whole course of history and predestined from eternity.

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Balashëv found Davout seated on a barrel in the shed of a peasant’s hut, writing — he was auditing accounts. Better quarters could have been found him, but Marshal Davout was one of those men who purposely put themselves in most depressing conditions to have a justification for being gloomy. For the same reason they are always hard at work and in a hurry. “How can I think of the bright side of life when, as you see, I am sitting on a barrel and working in a dirty shed?” the expression of his face seemed to say. The chief pleasure and necessity of such men, when they encounter anyone who shows animation, is to flaunt their own dreary, persistent activity.

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He entered briskly, with a jerk at every step and his head slightly thrown back. His whole short corpulent figure with broad thick shoulders, and chest and stomach involuntarily protruding, had that imposing and stately appearance one sees in men of forty who live in comfort. It was evident, too, that he was in the best of spirits that day.

He nodded in answer to Balashëv’s low and respectful bow, and coming up to him at once began speaking like a man who values every moment of his time and does not condescend to prepare what he has to say but is sure he will always say the right thing and say it well.

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It was plain that Balashëv’s personality did not interest him at all. Evidently only what took place within his own mind interested him. Nothing outside himself had any significance for him, because everything in the world, it seemed to him, depended entirely on his will.

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Besides these Russians and foreigners who propounded new and unexpected ideas every day — especially the foreigners, who did so with a boldness characteristic of people employed in a country not their own — there were many secondary personages accompanying the army because their principals were there.

Among the opinions and voices in this immense, restless, brilliant, and proud sphere, Prince Andrew noticed the following sharply defined subdivisions of tendencies and parties:

The first party consisted of Pfuel and his adherents — military theorists who believed in a science of war with immutable laws — laws of oblique movements, outflankings, and so forth. Pfuel and his adherents demanded a retirement into the depths of the country in accordance with precise laws defined by a pseudo-theory of war, and they saw only barbarism, ignorance, or evil intention in every deviation from that theory. To this party belonged the foreign nobles, Wolzogen, Wintzingerode, and others, chiefly Germans.

The second party was directly opposed to the first; one extreme, as always happens, was met by representatives of the other. The members of this party were those who had demanded an advance from Vílna into Poland and freedom from all prearranged plans. Besides being advocates of bold action, this section also represented nationalism, which made them still more one-sided in the dispute. They were Russians: Bagratión, Ermólov (who was beginning to come to the front), and others. At that time a famous joke of Ermólov’s was being circulated, that as a great favor he had petitioned the Emperor to make him a German. The men of that party, remembering Suvórov, said that what one had to do was not to reason, or stick pins into maps, but to fight, beat the enemy, keep him out of Russia, and not let the army get discouraged.

To the third party — in which the Emperor had most confidence — belonged the courtiers who tried to arrange compromises between the other two. The members of this party, chiefly civilians and to whom Arakchéev belonged, thought and said what men who have no convictions but wish to seem to have some generally say. They said that undoubtedly war, particularly against such a genius as Bonaparte (they called him Bonaparte now), needs most deeply devised plans and profound scientific knowledge and in that respect Pfuel was a genius, but at the same time it had to be acknowledged that the theorists are often one-sided, and therefore one should not trust them absolutely, but should also listen to what Pfuel’s opponents and practical men of experience in warfare had to say, and then choose a middle course. They insisted on the retention of the camp at Drissa, according to Pfuel’s plan, but on changing the movements of the other armies. Though, by this course, neither one aim nor the other could be attained, yet it seemed best to the adherents of this third party.

Of a fourth opinion the most conspicuous representative was the Tsarévich, who could not forget his disillusionment at Austerlitz, where he had ridden out at the head of the Guards, in his casque and cavalry uniform as to a review, expecting to crush the French gallantly; but unexpectedly finding himself in the front line had narrowly escaped amid the general confusion. The men of this party had both the quality and the defect of frankness in their opinions. They feared Napoleon, recognized his strength and their own weakness, and frankly said so. They said: “Nothing but sorrow, shame, and ruin will come of all this! We have abandoned Vílna and Vítebsk and shall abandon Drissa. The only reasonable thing left to do is to conclude peace as soon as possible, before we are turned out of Petersburg.”

This view was very general in the upper army circles and found support also in Petersburg and from the chancellor, Rumyántsev, who, for other reasons of state, was in favor of peace.

The fifth party consisted of those who were adherents of Barclay de Tolly, not so much as a man but as minister of war and commander in chief. “Be he what he may” (they always began like that), “he is an honest, practical man and we have nobody better. Give him real power, for war cannot be conducted successfully without unity of command, and he will show what he can do, as he did in Finland. If our army is well organized and strong and has withdrawn to Drissa without suffering any defeats, we owe this entirely to Barclay. If Barclay is now to be superseded by Bennigsen all will be lost, for Bennigsen showed his incapacity already in 1807.”

The sixth party, the Bennigsenites, said, on the contrary, that at any rate there was no one more active and experienced than Bennigsen: “and twist about as you may, you will have to come to Bennigsen eventually. Let the others make mistakes now!” said they, arguing that our retirement to Drissa was a most shameful reverse and an unbroken series of blunders. “The more mistakes that are made the better. It will at any rate be understood all the sooner that things cannot go on like this. What is wanted is not some Barclay or other, but a man like Bennigsen, who made his mark in 1807, and to whom Napoleon himself did justice — a man whose authority would be willingly recognized, and Bennigsen is the only such man.”

The seventh party consisted of the sort of people who are always to be found, especially around young sovereigns, and of whom there were particularly many round Alexander — generals and imperial aides-de-camp passionately devoted to the Emperor, not merely as a monarch but as a man, adoring him sincerely and disinterestedly, as Rostóv had done in 1805, and who saw in him not only all the virtues but all human capabilities as well. These men, though enchanted with the sovereign for refusing the command of the army, yet blamed him for such excessive modesty, and only desired and insisted that their adored sovereign should abandon his diffidence and openly announce that he would place himself at the head of the army, gather round him a commander in chief’s staff, and, consulting experienced theoreticians and practical men where necessary, would himself lead the troops, whose spirits would thereby be raised to the highest pitch.

The eighth and largest group, which in its enormous numbers was to the others as ninety-nine to one, consisted of men who desired neither peace nor war, neither an advance nor a defensive camp at the Drissa or anywhere else, neither Barclay nor the Emperor, neither Pfuel nor Bennigsen, but only the one most essential thing — as much advantage and pleasure for themselves as possible. In the troubled waters of conflicting and intersecting intrigues that eddied about the Emperor’s headquarters, it was possible to succeed in many ways unthinkable at other times. A man who simply wished to retain his lucrative post would today agree with Pfuel, tomorrow with his opponent, and the day after, merely to avoid responsibility or to please the Emperor, would declare that he had no opinion at all on the matter. Another who wished to gain some advantage would attract the Emperor’s attention by loudly advocating the very thing the Emperor had hinted at the day before, and would dispute and shout at the council, beating his breast and challenging those who did not agree with him to duels, thereby proving that he was prepared to sacrifice himself for the common good. A third, in the absence of opponents, between two councils would simply solicit a special gratuity for his faithful services, well knowing that at that moment people would be too busy to refuse him. A fourth while seemingly overwhelmed with work would often come accidentally under the Emperor’s eye. A fifth, to achieve his long-cherished aim of dining with the Emperor, would stubbornly insist on the correctness or falsity of some newly emerging opinion and for this object would produce arguments more or less forcible and correct.

All the men of this party were fishing for rubles, decorations, and promotions, and in this pursuit watched only the weathercock of imperial favor, and directly they noticed it turning in any direction, this whole drone population of the army began blowing hard that way, so that it was all the harder for the Emperor to turn it elsewhere. Amid the uncertainties of the position, with the menace of serious danger giving a peculiarly threatening character to everything, amid this vortex of intrigue, egotism, conflict of views and feelings, and the diversity of race among these people — this eighth and largest party of those preoccupied with personal interests imparted great confusion and obscurity to the common task. Whatever question arose, a swarm of these drones, without having finished their buzzing on a previous theme, flew over to the new one and by their hum drowned and obscured the voices of those who were disputing honestly.

From among all these parties, just at the time Prince Andrew reached the army, another, a ninth party, was being formed and was beginning to raise its voice. This was the party of the elders, reasonable men experienced and capable in state affairs, who, without sharing any of those conflicting opinions, were able to take a detached view of what was going on at the staff at headquarters and to consider means of escape from this muddle, indecision, intricacy, and weakness.

The men of this party said and thought that what was wrong resulted chiefly from the Emperor’s presence in the army with his military court and from the consequent presence there of an indefinite, conditional, and unsteady fluctuation of relations, which is in place at court but harmful in an army; that a sovereign should reign but not command the army, and that the only way out of the position would be for the Emperor and his court to leave the army; that the mere presence of the Emperor paralyzed the action of fifty thousand men required to secure his personal safety, and that the worst commander in chief, if independent, would be better than the very best one trammeled by the presence and authority of the monarch.

Just at the time Prince Andrew was living unoccupied at Drissa, Shishkóv, the Secretary of State and one of the chief representatives of this party, wrote a letter to the Emperor which Arakchéev and Balashëv agreed to sign. In this letter, availing himself of permission given him by the Emperor to discuss the general course of affairs, he respectfully suggested — on the plea that it was necessary for the sovereign to arouse a warlike spirit in the people of the capital — that the Emperor should leave the army.

That arousing of the people by their sovereign and his call to them to defend their country — the very incitement which was the chief cause of Russia’s triumph in so far as it was produced by the Tsar’s personal presence in Moscow — was suggested to the Emperor, and accepted by him, as a pretext for quitting the army.

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Pfuel was one of those hopelessly and immutably self-confident men, self-confident to the point of martyrdom as only Germans are, because only Germans are self-confident on the basis of an abstract notion — science, that is, the supposed knowledge of absolute truth. A Frenchman is self-assured because he regards himself personally, both in mind and body, as irresistibly attractive to men and women. An Englishman is self-assured, as being a citizen of the best-organized state in the world, and therefore as an Englishman always knows what he should do and knows that all he does as an Englishman is undoubtedly correct. An Italian is self-assured because he is excitable and easily forgets himself and other people. A Russian is self-assured just because he knows nothing and does not want to know anything, since he does not believe that anything can be known. The German’s self-assurance is worst of all, stronger and more repulsive than any other, because he imagines that he knows the truth — science — which he himself has invented but which is for him the absolute truth.

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Rostóv, with his keen sportsman’s eye, was one of the first to catch sight of these blue French dragoons pursuing our Uhlans. Nearer and nearer in disorderly crowds came the Uhlans and the French dragoons pursuing them. He could already see how these men, who looked so small at the foot of the hill, jostled and overtook one another, waving their arms and their sabers in the air.

Rostóv gazed at what was happening before him as at a hunt. He felt instinctively that if the hussars struck at the French dragoons now, the latter could not withstand them, but if a charge was to be made it must be done now, at that very moment, or it would be too late. He looked around. A captain, standing beside him, was gazing like himself with eyes fixed on the cavalry below them.

“Andrew Sevastyánych!” said Rostóv. “You know, we could crush them....”

“A fine thing too!” replied the captain, “and really...”

Rostóv, without waiting to hear him out, touched his horse, galloped to the front of his squadron, and before he had time to finish giving the word of command, the whole squadron, sharing his feeling, was following him. Rostóv himself did not know how or why he did it. He acted as he did when hunting, without reflecting or considering. He saw the dragoons near and that they were galloping in disorder; he knew they could not withstand an attack — knew there was only that moment and that if he let it slip it would not return. The bullets were whining and whistling so stimulatingly around him and his horse was so eager to go that he could not restrain himself. He touched his horse, gave the word of command, and immediately, hearing behind him the tramp of the horses of his deployed squadron, rode at full trot downhill toward the dragoons. Hardly had they reached the bottom of the hill before their pace instinctively changed to a gallop, which grew faster and faster as they drew nearer to our Uhlans and the French dragoons who galloped after them. The dragoons were now close at hand. On seeing the hussars, the foremost began to turn, while those behind began to halt. With the same feeling with which he had galloped across the path of a wolf, Rostóv gave rein to his Donéts horse and galloped to intersect the path of the dragoons’ disordered lines. One Uhlan stopped, another who was on foot flung himself to the ground to avoid being knocked over, and a riderless horse fell in among the hussars. Nearly all the French dragoons were galloping back. Rostóv, picking out one on a gray horse, dashed after him. On the way he came upon a bush, his gallant horse cleared it, and almost before he had righted himself in his saddle he saw that he would immediately overtake the enemy he had selected. That Frenchman, by his uniform an officer, was going at a gallop, crouching on his gray horse and urging it on with his saber. In another moment Rostóv’s horse dashed its breast against the hindquarters of the officer’s horse, almost knocking it over, and at the same instant Rostóv, without knowing why, raised his saber and struck the Frenchman with it.

The instant he had done this, all Rostóv’s animation vanished. The officer fell, not so much from the blow — which had but slightly cut his arm above the elbow — as from the shock to his horse and from fright. Rostóv reined in his horse, and his eyes sought his foe to see whom he had vanquished. The French dragoon officer was hopping with one foot on the ground, the other being caught in the stirrup. His eyes, screwed up with fear as if he every moment expected another blow, gazed up at Rostóv with shrinking terror. His pale and mud-stained face — fair and young, with a dimple in the chin and light-blue eyes — was not an enemy’s face at all suited to a battlefield, but a most ordinary, homelike face. Before Rostóv had decided what to do with him, the officer cried, “I surrender!” He hurriedly but vainly tried to get his foot out of the stirrup and did not remove his frightened blue eyes from Rostóv’s face. Some hussars who galloped up disengaged his foot and helped him into the saddle. On all sides, the hussars were busy with the dragoons; one was wounded, but though his face was bleeding, he would not give up his horse; another was perched up behind an hussar with his arms round him; a third was being helped by an hussar to mount his horse. In front, the French infantry were firing as they ran. The hussars galloped hastily back with their prisoners. Rostóv galloped back with the rest, aware of an unpleasant feeling of depression in his heart. Something vague and confused, which he could not at all account for, had come over him with the capture of that officer and the blow he had dealt him.

Count Ostermann-Tolstóy met the returning hussars, sent for Rostóv, thanked him, and said he would report his gallant deed to the Emperor and would recommend him for a St. George’s Cross. When sent for by Count Ostermann, Rostóv, remembering that he had charged without orders, felt sure his commander was sending for him to punish him for breach of discipline. Ostermann’s flattering words and promise of a reward should therefore have struck him all the more pleasantly, but he still felt that same vaguely disagreeable feeling of moral nausea. “But what on earth is worrying me?” he asked himself as he rode back from the general. “Ilyín? No, he’s safe. Have I disgraced myself in any way? No, that’s not it.” Something else, resembling remorse, tormented him. “Yes, oh yes, that French officer with the dimple. And I remember how my arm paused when I raised it.”

Rostóv saw the prisoners being led away and galloped after them to have a look at his Frenchman with the dimple on his chin. He was sitting in his foreign uniform on an hussar packhorse and looked anxiously about him. The sword cut on his arm could scarcely be called a wound. He glanced at Rostóv with a feigned smile and waved his hand in greeting. Rostóv still had the same indefinite feeling, as of shame.

All that day and the next his friends and comrades noticed that Rostóv, without being dull or angry, was silent, thoughtful, and preoccupied. He drank reluctantly, tried to remain alone, and kept turning something over in his mind.

Rostóv was always thinking about that brilliant exploit of his, which to his amazement had gained him the St. George’s Cross and even given him a reputation for bravery, and there was something he could not at all understand. “So others are even more afraid than I am!” he thought. “So that’s all there is in what is called heroism! And did I do it for my country’s sake? And how was he to blame, with his dimple and blue eyes? And how frightened he was! He thought that I should kill him. Why should I kill him? My hand trembled. And they have given me a St. George’s Cross.... I can’t make it out at all.”

But while Nicholas was considering these questions and still could reach no clear solution of what puzzled him so, the wheel of fortune in the service, as often happens, turned in his favor. After the affair at Ostróvna he was brought into notice, received command of an hussar battalion, and when a brave officer was needed he was chosen.

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This simple thought could not occur to the doctors (as it cannot occur to a wizard that he is unable to work his charms) because the business of their lives was to cure, and they received money for it and had spent the best years of their lives on that business. But, above all, that thought was kept out of their minds by the fact that they saw they were really useful, as in fact they were to the whole Rostóv family. Their usefulness did not depend on making the patient swallow substances for the most part harmful (the harm was scarcely perceptible, as they were given in small doses), but they were useful, necessary, and indispensable because they satisfied a mental need of the invalid and of those who loved her — and that is why there are, and always will be, pseudo-healers, wise women, homeopaths, and allopaths. They satisfied that eternal human need for hope of relief, for sympathy, and that something should be done, which is felt by those who are suffering. They satisfied the need seen in its most elementary form in a child, when it wants to have a place rubbed that has been hurt. A child knocks itself and runs at once to the arms of its mother or nurse to have the aching spot rubbed or kissed, and it feels better when this is done. The child cannot believe that the strongest and wisest of its people have no remedy for its pain, and the hope of relief and the expression of its mother’s sympathy while she rubs the bump comforts it. The doctors were of use to Natásha because they kissed and rubbed her bump, assuring her that it would soon pass if only the coachman went to the chemist’s in the Arbát and got a powder and some pills in a pretty box for a ruble and seventy kopeks, and if she took those powders in boiled water at intervals of precisely two hours, neither more nor less.

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Napoleon began the war with Russia because he could not resist going to Dresden, could not help having his head turned by the homage he received, could not help donning a Polish uniform and yielding to the stimulating influence of a June morning, and could not refrain from bursts of anger in the presence of Kurákin and then of Balashëv.

Alexander refused negotiations because he felt himself to be personally insulted. Barclay de Tolly tried to command the army in the best way, because he wished to fulfill his duty and earn fame as a great commander. Rostóv charged the French because he could not restrain his wish for a gallop across a level field; and in the same way the innumerable people who took part in the war acted in accord with their personal characteristics, habits, circumstances, and aims. They were moved by fear or vanity, rejoiced or were indignant, reasoned, imagining that they knew what they were doing and did it of their own free will, but they all were involuntary tools of history, carrying on a work concealed from them but comprehensible to us. Such is the inevitable fate of men of action, and the higher they stand in the social hierarchy the less are they free.

The actors of 1812 have long since left the stage, their personal interests have vanished leaving no trace, and nothing remains of that time but its historic results.

Providence compelled all these men, striving to attain personal aims, to further the accomplishment of a stupendous result no one of them at all expected — neither Napoleon, nor Alexander, nor still less any of those who did the actual fighting.

The cause of the destruction of the French army in 1812 is clear to us now. No one will deny that that cause was, on the one hand, its advance into the heart of Russia late in the season without any preparation for a winter campaign and, on the other, the character given to the war by the burning of Russian towns and the hatred of the foe this aroused among the Russian people. But no one at the time foresaw (what now seems so evident) that this was the only way an army of eight hundred thousand men — the best in the world and led by the best general — could be destroyed in conflict with a raw army of half its numerical strength, and led by inexperienced commanders as the Russian army was. Not only did no one see this, but on the Russian side every effort was made to hinder the only thing that could save Russia, while on the French side, despite Napoleon’s experience and so-called military genius, every effort was directed to pushing on to Moscow at the end of the summer, that is, to doing the very thing that was bound to lead to destruction.

In historical works on the year 1812 French writers are very fond of saying that Napoleon felt the danger of extending his line, that he sought a battle and that his marshals advised him to stop at Smolénsk, and of making similar statements to show that the danger of the campaign was even then understood. Russian authors are still fonder of telling us that from the commencement of the campaign a Scythian war plan was adopted to lure Napoleon into the depths of Russia, and this plan some of them attribute to Pfuel, others to a certain Frenchman, others to Toll, and others again to Alexander himself — pointing to notes, projects, and letters which contain hints of such a line of action. But all these hints at what happened, both from the French side and the Russian, are advanced only because they fit in with the event. Had that event not occurred these hints would have been forgotten, as we have forgotten the thousands and millions of hints and expectations to the contrary which were current then but have now been forgotten because the event falsified them. There are always so many conjectures as to the issue of any event that however it may end there will always be people to say: “I said then that it would be so,” quite forgetting that amid their innumerable conjectures many were to quite the contrary effect.

Conjectures as to Napoleon’s awareness of the danger of extending his line, and (on the Russian side) as to luring the enemy into the depths of Russia, are evidently of that kind, and only by much straining can historians attribute such conceptions to Napoleon and his marshals, or such plans to the Russian commanders. All the facts are in flat contradiction to such conjectures. During the whole period of the war not only was there no wish on the Russian side to draw the French into the heart of the country, but from their first entry into Russia everything was done to stop them. And not only was Napoleon not afraid to extend his line, but he welcomed every step forward as a triumph and did not seek battle as eagerly as in former campaigns, but very lazily.

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Smolénsk was abandoned contrary to the wishes of the Emperor and of the whole people. But Smolénsk was burned by its own inhabitants who had been misled by their governor. And these ruined inhabitants, setting an example to other Russians, went to Moscow thinking only of their own losses but kindling hatred of the foe. Napoleon advanced farther and we retired, thus arriving at the very result which caused his destruction.

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From Smolénsk the troops continued to retreat, followed by the enemy. On the tenth of August the regiment Prince Andrew commanded was marching along the highroad past the avenue leading to Bald Hills. Heat and drought had continued for more than three weeks. Each day fleecy clouds floated across the sky and occasionally veiled the sun, but toward evening the sky cleared again and the sun set in reddish-brown mist. Heavy night dews alone refreshed the earth. The unreaped corn was scorched and shed its grain. The marshes dried up. The cattle lowed from hunger, finding no food on the sun-parched meadows. Only at night and in the forests while the dew lasted was there any freshness. But on the road, the highroad along which the troops marched, there was no such freshness even at night or when the road passed through the forest; the dew was imperceptible on the sandy dust churned up more than six inches deep. As soon as day dawned the march began. The artillery and baggage wagons moved noiselessly through the deep dust that rose to the very hubs of the wheels, and the infantry sank ankle-deep in that soft, choking, hot dust that never cooled even at night. Some of this dust was kneaded by the feet and wheels, while the rest rose and hung like a cloud over the troops, settling in eyes, ears, hair, and nostrils, and worst of all in the lungs of the men and beasts as they moved along that road. The higher the sun rose the higher rose that cloud of dust, and through the screen of its hot fine particles one could look with naked eye at the sun, which showed like a huge crimson ball in the unclouded sky. There was no wind, and the men choked in that motionless atmosphere. They marched with handkerchiefs tied over their noses and mouths. When they passed through a village they all rushed to the wells and fought for the water and drank it down to the mud.

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The old man was still sitting in the ornamental garden, like a fly impassive on the face of a loved one who is dead, tapping the last on which he was making the bast shoe, and two little girls, running out from the hot house carrying in their skirts plums they had plucked from the trees there, came upon Prince Andrew. On seeing the young master, the elder one with frightened look clutched her younger companion by the hand and hid with her behind a birch tree, not stopping to pick up some green plums they had dropped.

Prince Andrew turned away with startled haste, unwilling to let them see that they had been observed. He was sorry for the pretty frightened little girl, was afraid of looking at her, and yet felt an irresistible desire to do so. A new sensation of comfort and relief came over him when, seeing these girls, he realized the existence of other human interests entirely aloof from his own and just as legitimate as those that occupied him. Evidently these girls passionately desired one thing — to carry away and eat those green plums without being caught — and Prince Andrew shared their wish for the success of their enterprise. He could not resist looking at them once more. Believing their danger past, they sprang from their ambush and, chirruping something in their shrill little voices and holding up their skirts, their bare little sunburned feet scampered merrily and quickly across the meadow grass.

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Until Prince Andrew settled in Boguchárovo its owners had always been absentees, and its peasants were of quite a different character from those of Bald Hills. They differed from them in speech, dress, and disposition. They were called steppe peasants. The old prince used to approve of them for their endurance at work when they came to Bald Hills to help with the harvest, or to dig ponds and ditches, but he disliked them for their boorishness.

Prince Andrew’s last stay at Boguchárovo, when he introduced hospitals and schools and reduced the quitrent the peasants had to pay, had not softened their disposition but had on the contrary strengthened in them the traits of character the old prince called boorishness. Various obscure rumors were always current among them: at one time a rumor that they would all be enrolled as Cossacks; at another of a new religion to which they were all to be converted; then of some proclamation of the Tsar’s and of an oath to the Tsar Paul in 1797 (in connection with which it was rumored that freedom had been granted them but the landowners had stopped it), then of Peter Fëdorovich’s return to the throne in seven years’ time, when everything would be made free and so “simple” that there would be no restrictions. Rumors of the war with Bonaparte and his invasion were connected in their minds with the same sort of vague notions of Antichrist, the end of the world, and “pure freedom.”

In the vicinity of Boguchárovo were large villages belonging to the crown or to owners whose serfs paid quitrent and could work where they pleased. There were very few resident landlords in the neighborhood and also very few domestic or literate serfs, and in the lives of the peasantry of those parts the mysterious undercurrents in the life of the Russian people, the causes and meaning of which are so baffling to contemporaries, were more clearly and strongly noticeable than among others. One instance, which had occurred some twenty years before, was a movement among the peasants to emigrate to some unknown “warm rivers.” Hundreds of peasants, among them the Boguchárovo folk, suddenly began selling their cattle and moving in whole families toward the southeast. As birds migrate to somewhere beyond the sea, so these men with their wives and children streamed to the southeast, to parts where none of them had ever been. They set off in caravans, bought their freedom one by one or ran away, and drove or walked toward the “warm rivers.” Many of them were punished, some sent to Siberia, many died of cold and hunger on the road, many returned of their own accord, and the movement died down of itself just as it had sprung up, without apparent reason. But such undercurrents still existed among the people and gathered new forces ready to manifest themselves just as strangely, unexpectedly, and at the same time simply, naturally, and forcibly. Now in 1812, to anyone living in close touch with these people it was apparent that these undercurrents were acting strongly and nearing an eruption.

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He smiled at the recollection of that time and of his love for Natásha, and passed at once to what now interested him passionately and exclusively. This was a plan of campaign he had devised while serving at the outposts during the retreat. He had proposed that plan to Barclay de Tolly and now wished to propose it to Kutúzov. The plan was based on the fact that the French line of operation was too extended, and it proposed that instead of, or concurrently with, action on the front to bar the advance of the French, we should attack their line of communication. He began explaining his plan to Prince Andrew.

“They can’t hold all that line. It’s impossible. I will undertake to bweak thwough. Give me five hundwed men and I will bweak the line, that’s certain! There’s only one way — guewilla warfare!”

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At those words Kutúzov looked round. He was listening to the general’s report — which consisted chiefly of a criticism of the position at Tsárevo-Zaymíshche — as he had listened to Denísov, and seven years previously had listened to the discussion at the Austerlitz council of war. He evidently listened only because he had ears which, though there was a piece of tow in one of them, could not help hearing; but it was evident that nothing the general could say would surprise or even interest him, that he knew all that would be said beforehand, and heard it all only because he had to, as one has to listen to the chanting of a service of prayer. All that Denísov had said was clever and to the point. What the general was saying was even more clever and to the point, but it was evident that Kutúzov despised knowledge and cleverness, and knew of something else that would decide the matter — something independent of cleverness and knowledge. Prince Andrew watched the commander in chief’s face attentively, and the only expression he could see there was one of boredom, curiosity as to the meaning of the feminine whispering behind the door, and a desire to observe propriety. It was evident that Kutúzov despised cleverness and learning and even the patriotic feeling shown by Denísov, but despised them not because of his own intellect, feelings, or knowledge — he did not try to display any of these — but because of something else. He despised them because of his old age and experience of life.

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Prince Andrew could not have explained how or why it was, but after that interview with Kutúzov he went back to his regiment reassured as to the general course of affairs and as to the man to whom it had been entrusted. The more he realized the absence of all personal motive in that old man — in whom there seemed to remain only the habit of passions, and in place of an intellect (grouping events and drawing conclusions) only the capacity calmly to contemplate the course of events — the more reassured he was that everything would be as it should. “He will not bring in any plan of his own. He will not devise or undertake anything,” thought Prince Andrew, “but he will hear everything, remember everything, and put everything in its place. He will not hinder anything useful nor allow anything harmful. He understands that there is something stronger and more important than his own will — the inevitable course of events, and he can see them and grasp their significance, and seeing that significance can refrain from meddling and renounce his personal wish directed to something else.

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With the enemy’s approach to Moscow, the Moscovites’ view of their situation did not grow more serious but on the contrary became even more frivolous, as always happens with people who see a great danger approaching. At the approach of danger there are always two voices that speak with equal power in the human soul: one very reasonably tells a man to consider the nature of the danger and the means of escaping it; the other, still more reasonably, says that it is too depressing and painful to think of the danger, since it is not in man’s power to foresee everything and avert the general course of events, and it is therefore better to disregard what is painful till it comes, and to think about what is pleasant. In solitude a man generally listens to the first voice, but in society to the second. So it was now with the inhabitants of Moscow. It was long since people had been as gay in Moscow as that year.

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If the commanders had been guided by reason, it would seem that it must have been obvious to Napoleon that by advancing thirteen hundred miles and giving battle with a probability of losing a quarter of his army, he was advancing to certain destruction, and it must have been equally clear to Kutúzov that by accepting battle and risking the loss of a quarter of his army he would certainly lose Moscow. For Kutúzov this was mathematically clear, as it is that if when playing draughts I have one man less and go on exchanging, I shall certainly lose, and therefore should not exchange. When my opponent has sixteen men and I have fourteen, I am only one eighth weaker than he, but when I have exchanged thirteen more men he will be three times as strong as I am.

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On that bright evening of August 25, Prince Andrew lay leaning on his elbow in a broken-down shed in the village of Knyazkóvo at the further end of his regiment’s encampment. Through a gap in the broken wall he could see, beside the wooden fence, a row of thirty-year-old birches with their lower branches lopped off, a field on which shocks of oats were standing, and some bushes near which rose the smoke of campfires — the soldiers’ kitchens.

Narrow and burdensome and useless to anyone as his life now seemed to him, Prince Andrew on the eve of battle felt agitated and irritable as he had done seven years before at Austerlitz.

He had received and given the orders for next day’s battle and had nothing more to do. But his thoughts — the simplest, clearest, and therefore most terrible thoughts — would give him no peace. He knew that tomorrow’s battle would be the most terrible of all he had taken part in, and for the first time in his life the possibility of death presented itself to him — not in relation to any worldly matter or with reference to its effect on others, but simply in relation to himself, to his own soul — vividly, plainly, terribly, and almost as a certainty. And from the height of this perception all that had previously tormented and preoccupied him suddenly became illumined by a cold white light without shadows, without perspective, without distinction of outline. All life appeared to him like magic-lantern pictures at which he had long been gazing by artificial light through a glass. Now he suddenly saw those badly daubed pictures in clear daylight and without a glass. “Yes, yes! There they are, those false images that agitated, enraptured, and tormented me,” said he to himself, passing in review the principal pictures of the magic lantern of life and regarding them now in the cold white daylight of his clear perception of death. “There they are, those rudely painted figures that once seemed splendid and mysterious. Glory, the good of society, love of a woman, the Fatherland itself — how important these pictures appeared to me, with what profound meaning they seemed to be filled! And it is all so simple, pale, and crude in the cold white light of this morning which I feel is dawning for me.” The three great sorrows of his life held his attention in particular: his love for a woman, his father’s death, and the French invasion which had overrun half Russia. “Love... that little girl who seemed to me brimming over with mystic forces! Yes, indeed, I loved her. I made romantic plans of love and happiness with her! Oh, what a boy I was!” he said aloud bitterly. “Ah me! I believed in some ideal love which was to keep her faithful to me for the whole year of my absence! Like the gentle dove in the fable she was to pine apart from me.... But it was much simpler really.... It was all very simple and horrible.”

“When my father built Bald Hills he thought the place was his: his land, his air, his peasants. But Napoleon came and swept him aside, unconscious of his existence, as he might brush a chip from his path, and his Bald Hills and his whole life fell to pieces. Princess Mary says it is a trial sent from above. What is the trial for, when he is not here and will never return? He is not here! For whom then is the trial intended? The Fatherland, the destruction of Moscow! And tomorrow I shall be killed, perhaps not even by a Frenchman but by one of our own men, by a soldier discharging a musket close to my ear as one of them did yesterday, and the French will come and take me by head and heels and fling me into a hole that I may not stink under their noses, and new conditions of life will arise, which will seem quite ordinary to others and about which I shall know nothing. I shall not exist....”

He looked at the row of birches shining in the sunshine, with their motionless green and yellow foliage and white bark. “To die... to be killed tomorrow... That I should not exist... That all this should still be, but no me....”

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“A skillful commander?” replied Pierre. “Why, one who foresees all contingencies... and foresees the adversary’s intentions.”

“But that’s impossible,” said Prince Andrew as if it were a matter settled long ago.

Pierre looked at him in surprise.

“And yet they say that war is like a game of chess?” he remarked.

“Yes,” replied Prince Andrew, “but with this little difference, that in chess you may think over each move as long as you please and are not limited for time, and with this difference too, that a knight is always stronger than a pawn, and two pawns are always stronger than one, while in war a battalion is sometimes stronger than a division and sometimes weaker than a company. The relative strength of bodies of troops can never be known to anyone. Believe me,” he went on, “if things depended on arrangements made by the staff, I should be there making arrangements, but instead of that I have the honor to serve here in the regiment with these gentlemen, and I consider that on us tomorrow’s battle will depend and not on those others.... Success never depends, and never will depend, on position, or equipment, or even on numbers, and least of all on position.”

“But on what then?”

“On the feeling that is in me and in him,” he pointed to Timókhin, “and in each soldier.”

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“So you think we shall win tomorrow’s battle?” asked Pierre.

“Yes, yes,” answered Prince Andrew absently. “One thing I would do if I had the power,” he began again, “I would not take prisoners. Why take prisoners? It’s chivalry! The French have destroyed my home and are on their way to destroy Moscow, they have outraged and are outraging me every moment. They are my enemies. In my opinion they are all criminals. And so thinks Timókhin and the whole army. They should be executed! Since they are my foes they cannot be my friends, whatever may have been said at Tilsit.”

“Yes, yes,” muttered Pierre, looking with shining eyes at Prince Andrew. “I quite agree with you!”

The question that had perturbed Pierre on the Mozháysk hill and all that day now seemed to him quite clear and completely solved. He now understood the whole meaning and importance of this war and of the impending battle. All he had seen that day, all the significant and stern expressions on the faces he had seen in passing, were lit up for him by a new light. He understood that latent heat (as they say in physics) of patriotism which was present in all these men he had seen, and this explained to him why they all prepared for death calmly, and as it were lightheartedly.

“Not take prisoners,” Prince Andrew continued: “That by itself would quite change the whole war and make it less cruel. As it is we have played at war — that’s what’s vile! We play at magnanimity and all that stuff. Such magnanimity and sensibility are like the magnanimity and sensibility of a lady who faints when she sees a calf being killed: she is so kindhearted that she can’t look at blood, but enjoys eating the calf served up with sauce. They talk to us of the rules of war, of chivalry, of flags of truce, of mercy to the unfortunate and so on. It’s all rubbish! I saw chivalry and flags of truce in 1805; they humbugged us and we humbugged them. They plunder other people’s houses, issue false paper money, and worst of all they kill my children and my father, and then talk of rules of war and magnanimity to foes! Take no prisoners, but kill and be killed! He who has come to this as I have through the same sufferings...”

Prince Andrew, who had thought it was all the same to him whether or not Moscow was taken as Smolénsk had been, was suddenly checked in his speech by an unexpected cramp in his throat. He paced up and down a few times in silence, but his eyes glittered feverishly and his lips quivered as he began speaking.

“If there was none of this magnanimity in war, we should go to war only when it was worth while going to certain death, as now. Then there would not be war because Paul Ivánovich had offended Michael Ivánovich. And when there was a war, like this one, it would be war! And then the determination of the troops would be quite different. Then all these Westphalians and Hessians whom Napoleon is leading would not follow him into Russia, and we should not go to fight in Austria and Prussia without knowing why. War is not courtesy but the most horrible thing in life; and we ought to understand that and not play at war. We ought to accept this terrible necessity sternly and seriously. It all lies in that: get rid of falsehood and let war be war and not a game. As it is now, war is the favorite pastime of the idle and frivolous. The military calling is the most highly honored.

“But what is war? What is needed for success in warfare? What are the habits of the military? The aim of war is murder; the methods of war are spying, treachery, and their encouragement, the ruin of a country’s inhabitants, robbing them or stealing to provision the army, and fraud and falsehood termed military craft. The habits of the military class are the absence of freedom, that is, discipline, idleness, ignorance, cruelty, debauchery, and drunkenness. And in spite of all this it is the highest class, respected by everyone. All the kings, except the Chinese, wear military uniforms, and he who kills most people receives the highest rewards.

“They meet, as we shall meet tomorrow, to murder one another; they kill and maim tens of thousands, and then have thanksgiving services for having killed so many people (they even exaggerate the number), and they announce a victory, supposing that the more people they have killed the greater their achievement. How does God above look at them and hear them?” exclaimed Prince Andrew in a shrill, piercing voice. “Ah, my friend, it has of late become hard for me to live. I see that I have begun to understand too much. And it doesn’t do for man to taste of the tree of knowledge of good and evil....”

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An attendant came in with punch. Napoleon ordered another glass to be brought for Rapp, and silently sipped his own.

“I have neither taste nor smell,” he remarked, sniffing at his glass. “This cold is tiresome. They talk about medicine — what is the good of medicine when it can’t cure a cold!”

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From the battlefield adjutants he had sent out, and orderlies from his marshals, kept galloping up to Napoleon with reports of the progress of the action, but all these reports were false, both because it was impossible in the heat of battle to say what was happening at any given moment and because many of the adjutants did not go to the actual place of conflict but reported what they had heard from others; and also because while an adjutant was riding more than a mile to Napoleon circumstances changed and the news he brought was already becoming false. Thus an adjutant galloped up from Murat with tidings that Borodinó had been occupied and the bridge over the Kolochá was in the hands of the French. The adjutant asked whether Napoleon wished the troops to cross it? Napoleon gave orders that the troops should form up on the farther side and wait. But before that order was given — almost as soon in fact as the adjutant had left Borodinó — the bridge had been retaken by the Russians and burned, in the very skirmish at which Pierre had been present at the beginning of the battle.

An adjutant galloped up from the flèches with a pale and frightened face and reported to Napoleon that their attack had been repulsed, Campan wounded, and Davout killed; yet at the very time the adjutant had been told that the French had been repulsed, the flèches had in fact been recaptured by other French troops, and Davout was alive and only slightly bruised. On the basis of these necessarily untrustworthy reports Napoleon gave his orders, which had either been executed before he gave them or could not be and were not executed.

The marshals and generals, who were nearer to the field of battle but, like Napoleon, did not take part in the actual fighting and only occasionally went within musket range, made their own arrangements without asking Napoleon and issued orders where and in what direction to fire and where cavalry should gallop and infantry should run. But even their orders, like Napoleon’s, were seldom carried out, and then but partially. For the most part things happened contrary to their orders. Soldiers ordered to advance ran back on meeting grapeshot; soldiers ordered to remain where they were, suddenly, seeing Russians unexpectedly before them, sometimes rushed back and sometimes forward, and the cavalry dashed without orders in pursuit of the flying Russians. In this way two cavalry regiments galloped through the Semënovsk hollow and as soon as they reached the top of the incline turned round and galloped full speed back again. The infantry moved in the same way, sometimes running to quite other places than those they were ordered to go to. All orders as to where and when to move the guns, when to send infantry to shoot or horsemen to ride down the Russian infantry — all such orders were given by the officers on the spot nearest to the units concerned, without asking either Ney, Davout, or Murat, much less Napoleon. They did not fear getting into trouble for not fulfilling orders or for acting on their own initiative, for in battle what is at stake is what is dearest to man — his own life — and it sometimes seems that safety lies in running back, sometimes in running forward; and these men who were right in the heat of the battle acted according to the mood of the moment. In reality, however, all these movements forward and backward did not improve or alter the position of the troops. All their rushing and galloping at one another did little harm, the harm of disablement and death was caused by the balls and bullets that flew over the fields on which these men were floundering about. As soon as they left the place where the balls and bullets were flying about, their superiors, located in the background, re-formed them and brought them under discipline and under the influence of that discipline led them back to the zone of fire, where under the influence of fear of death they lost their discipline and rushed about according to the chance promptings of the throng.

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Kutúzov was in Górki, near the center of the Russian position. The attack directed by Napoleon against our left flank had been several times repulsed. In the center the French had not got beyond Borodinó, and on their left flank Uvárov’s cavalry had put the French to flight.

Toward three o’clock the French attacks ceased. On the faces of all who came from the field of battle, and of those who stood around him, Kutúzov noticed an expression of extreme tension. He was satisfied with the day’s success — a success exceeding his expectations, but the old man’s strength was failing him. Several times his head dropped low as if it were falling and he dozed off. Dinner was brought him.

Adjutant General Wolzogen, the man who when riding past Prince Andrew had said, “the war should be extended widely,” and whom Bagratión so detested, rode up while Kutúzov was at dinner. Wolzogen had come from Barclay de Tolly to report on the progress of affairs on the left flank. The sagacious Barclay de Tolly, seeing crowds of wounded men running back and the disordered rear of the army, weighed all the circumstances, concluded that the battle was lost, and sent his favorite officer to the commander in chief with that news.

Kutúzov was chewing a piece of roast chicken with difficulty and glanced at Wolzogen with eyes that brightened under their puckering lids.

Wolzogen, nonchalantly stretching his legs, approached Kutúzov with a half-contemptuous smile on his lips, scarcely touching the peak of his cap.

He treated his Serene Highness with a somewhat affected nonchalance intended to show that, as a highly trained military man, he left it to Russians to make an idol of this useless old man, but that he knew whom he was dealing with. “Der alte Herr” (as in their own set the Germans called Kutúzov) “is making himself very comfortable,” thought Wolzogen, and looking severely at the dishes in front of Kutúzov he began to report to “the old gentleman” the position of affairs on the left flank as Barclay had ordered him to and as he himself had seen and understood it.

“All the points of our position are in the enemy’s hands and we cannot dislodge them for lack of troops, the men are running away and it is impossible to stop them,” he reported.

Kutúzov ceased chewing and fixed an astonished gaze on Wolzogen, as if not understanding what was said to him. Wolzogen, noticing “the old gentleman’s” agitation, said with a smile:

“I have not considered it right to conceal from your Serene Highness what I have seen. The troops are in complete disorder....”

“You have seen? You have seen?...” Kutúzov shouted. Frowning and rising quickly, he went up to Wolzogen.

“How... how dare you!...” he shouted, choking and making a threatening gesture with his trembling arms: “How dare you, sir, say that to me? You know nothing about it. Tell General Barclay from me that his information is incorrect and that the real course of the battle is better known to me, the commander in chief, than to him.”

Wolzogen was about to make a rejoinder, but Kutúzov interrupted him.

“The enemy has been repulsed on the left and defeated on the right flank. If you have seen amiss, sir, do not allow yourself to say what you don’t know! Be so good as to ride to General Barclay and inform him of my firm intention to attack the enemy tomorrow,” said Kutúzov sternly.

All were silent, and the only sound audible was the heavy breathing of the panting old general.

“They are repulsed everywhere, for which I thank God and our brave army! The enemy is beaten, and tomorrow we shall drive him from the sacred soil of Russia,” said Kutúzov crossing himself, and he suddenly sobbed as his eyes filled with tears.

Wolzogen, shrugging his shoulders and curling his lips, stepped silently aside, marveling at “the old gentleman’s” conceited stupidity.

“Ah, here he is, my hero!” said Kutúzov to a portly, handsome, dark-haired general who was just ascending the knoll.

This was Raévski, who had spent the whole day at the most important part of the field of Borodinó.

Raévski reported that the troops were firmly holding their ground and that the French no longer ventured to attack.

After hearing him, Kutúzov said in French:

“Then you do not think, like some others, that we must retreat?”

“On the contrary, your Highness, in indecisive actions it is always the most stubborn who remain victors,” replied Raévski, “and in my opinion...”

“Kaysárov!” Kutúzov called to his adjutant. “Sit down and write out the order of the day for tomorrow. And you,” he continued, addressing another, “ride along the line and announce that tomorrow we attack.”

While Kutúzov was talking to Raévski and dictating the order of the day, Wolzogen returned from Barclay and said that General Barclay wished to have written confirmation of the order the field marshal had given.

Kutúzov, without looking at Wolzogen, gave directions for the order to be written out which the former commander in chief, to avoid personal responsibility, very judiciously wished to receive.

And by means of that mysterious indefinable bond which maintains throughout an army one and the same temper, known as “the spirit of the army,” and which constitutes the sinew of war, Kutúzov’s words, his order for a battle next day, immediately became known from one end of the army to the other.

It was far from being the same words or the same order that reached the farthest links of that chain. The tales passing from mouth to mouth at different ends of the army did not even resemble what Kutúzov had said, but the sense of his words spread everywhere because what he said was not the outcome of cunning calculations, but of a feeling that lay in the commander in chief’s soul as in that of every Russian.

And on learning that tomorrow they were to attack the enemy, and hearing from the highest quarters a confirmation of what they wanted to believe, the exhausted, wavering men felt comforted and inspirited.

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The terrible spectacle of the battlefield covered with dead and wounded, together with the heaviness of his head and the news that some twenty generals he knew personally had been killed or wounded, and the consciousness of the impotence of his once mighty arm, produced an unexpected impression on Napoleon who usually liked to look at the killed and wounded, thereby, he considered, testing his strength of mind. This day the horrible appearance of the battlefield overcame that strength of mind which he thought constituted his merit and his greatness. He rode hurriedly from the battlefield and returned to the Shevárdino knoll, where he sat on his campstool, his sallow face swollen and heavy, his eyes dim, his nose red, and his voice hoarse, involuntarily listening, with downcast eyes, to the sounds of firing. With painful dejection he awaited the end of this action, in which he regarded himself as a participant and which he was unable to arrest. A personal, human feeling for a brief moment got the better of the artificial phantasm of life he had served so long. He felt in his own person the sufferings and death he had witnessed on the battlefield. The heaviness of his head and chest reminded him of the possibility of suffering and death for himself. At that moment he did not desire Moscow, or victory, or glory (what need had he for any more glory?). The one thing he wished for was rest, tranquillity, and freedom. But when he had been on the Semënovsk heights the artillery commander had proposed to him to bring several batteries of artillery up to those heights to strengthen the fire on the Russian troops crowded in front of Knyazkóvo. Napoleon had assented and had given orders that news should be brought to him of the effect those batteries produced.

An adjutant came now to inform him that the fire of two hundred guns had been concentrated on the Russians, as he had ordered, but that they still held their ground.

“Our fire is mowing them down by rows, but still they hold on,” said the adjutant.

“They want more!...” said Napoleon in a hoarse voice.

“Sire?” asked the adjutant who had not heard the remark.

“They want more!” croaked Napoleon frowning. “Let them have it!”

Even before he gave that order the thing he did not desire, and for which he gave the order only because he thought it was expected of him, was being done. And he fell back into that artificial realm of imaginary greatness, and again — as a horse walking a treadmill thinks it is doing something for itself — he submissively fulfilled the cruel, sad, gloomy, and inhuman role predestined for him.

And not for that day and hour alone were the mind and conscience darkened of this man on whom the responsibility for what was happening lay more than on all the others who took part in it. Never to the end of his life could he understand goodness, beauty, or truth, or the significance of his actions which were too contrary to goodness and truth, too remote from everything human, for him ever to be able to grasp their meaning. He could not disavow his actions, belauded as they were by half the world, and so he had to repudiate truth, goodness, and all humanity.

Not only on that day, as he rode over the battlefield strewn with men killed and maimed (by his will as he believed), did he reckon as he looked at them how many Russians there were for each Frenchman and, deceiving himself, find reason for rejoicing in the calculation that there were five Russians for every Frenchman. Not on that day alone did he write in a letter to Paris that “the battle field was superb,” because fifty thousand corpses lay there, but even on the island of St. Helena in the peaceful solitude where he said he intended to devote his leisure to an account of the great deeds he had done, he wrote:

The Russian war should have been the most popular war of modern times: it was a war of good sense, for real interests, for the tranquillity and security of all; it was purely pacific and conservative.

It was a war for a great cause, the end of uncertainties and the beginning of security. A new horizon and new labors were opening out, full of well-being and prosperity for all. The European system was already founded; all that remained was to organize it.

Satisfied on these great points and with tranquility everywhere, I too should have had my Congress and my Holy Alliance. Those ideas were stolen from me. In that reunion of great sovereigns we should have discussed our interests like one family, and have rendered account to the peoples as clerk to master.

Europe would in this way soon have been, in fact, but one people, and anyone who traveled anywhere would have found himself always in the common fatherland. I should have demanded the freedom of all navigable rivers for everybody, that the seas should be common to all, and that the great standing armies should be reduced henceforth to mere guards for the sovereigns.

On returning to France, to the bosom of the great, strong, magnificent, peaceful, and glorious fatherland, I should have proclaimed her frontiers immutable; all future wars purely defensive, all aggrandizement antinational. I should have associated my son in the Empire; my dictatorship would have been finished, and his constitutional reign would have begun.

Paris would have been the capital of the world, and the French the envy of the nations!

My leisure then, and my old age, would have been devoted, in company with the Empress and during the royal apprenticeship of my son, to leisurely visiting, with our own horses and like a true country couple, every corner of the Empire, receiving complaints, redressing wrongs, and scattering public buildings and benefactions on all sides and everywhere.

Napoleon, predestined by Providence for the gloomy role of executioner of the peoples, assured himself that the aim of his actions had been the peoples’ welfare and that he could control the fate of millions and by the employment of power confer benefactions.

“Of four hundred thousand who crossed the Vistula,” he wrote further of the Russian war, “half were Austrians, Prussians, Saxons, Poles, Bavarians, Württembergers, Mecklenburgers, Spaniards, Italians, and Neapolitans. The Imperial army, strictly speaking, was one third composed of Dutch, Belgians, men from the borders of the Rhine, Piedmontese, Swiss, Genevese, Tuscans, Romans, inhabitants of the Thirty-second Military Division, of Bremen, of Hamburg, and so on: it included scarcely a hundred and forty thousand who spoke French. The Russian expedition actually cost France less than fifty thousand men; the Russian army in its retreat from Vílna to Moscow lost in the various battles four times more men than the French army; the burning of Moscow cost the lives of a hundred thousand Russians who died of cold and want in the woods; finally, in its march from Moscow to the Oder the Russian army also suffered from the severity of the season; so that by the time it reached Vílna it numbered only fifty thousand, and at Kálisch less than eighteen thousand.”

He imagined that the war with Russia came about by his will, and the horrors that occurred did not stagger his soul. He boldly took the whole responsibility for what happened, and his darkened mind found justification in the belief that among the hundreds of thousands who perished there were fewer Frenchmen than Hessians and Bavarians.

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Anyone looking at the disorganized rear of the Russian army would have said that, if only the French made one more slight effort, it would disappear; and anyone looking at the rear of the French army would have said that the Russians need only make one more slight effort and the French would be destroyed. But neither the French nor the Russians made that effort, and the flame of battle burned slowly out.

The Russians did not make that effort because they were not attacking the French. At the beginning of the battle they stood blocking the way to Moscow and they still did so at the end of the battle as at the beginning. But even had the aim of the Russians been to drive the French from their positions, they could not have made this last effort, for all the Russian troops had been broken up, there was no part of the Russian army that had not suffered in the battle, and though still holding their positions they had lost ONE HALF of their army.

The French, with the memory of all their former victories during fifteen years, with the assurance of Napoleon’s invincibility, with the consciousness that they had captured part of the battlefield and had lost only a quarter of their men and still had their Guards intact, twenty thousand strong, might easily have made that effort. The French who had attacked the Russian army in order to drive it from its position ought to have made that effort, for as long as the Russians continued to block the road to Moscow as before, the aim of the French had not been attained and all their efforts and losses were in vain. But the French did not make that effort. Some historians say that Napoleon need only have used his Old Guards, who were intact, and the battle would have been won. To speak of what would have happened had Napoleon sent his Guards is like talking of what would happen if autumn became spring. It could not be. Napoleon did not give his Guards, not because he did not want to, but because it could not be done. All the generals, officers, and soldiers of the French army knew it could not be done, because the flagging spirit of the troops would not permit it.

It was not Napoleon alone who had experienced that nightmare feeling of the mighty arm being stricken powerless, but all the generals and soldiers of his army whether they had taken part in the battle or not, after all their experience of previous battles — when after one tenth of such efforts the enemy had fled — experienced a similar feeling of terror before an enemy who, after losing HALF his men, stood as threateningly at the end as at the beginning of the battle. The moral force of the attacking French army was exhausted. Not that sort of victory which is defined by the capture of pieces of material fastened to sticks, called standards, and of the ground on which the troops had stood and were standing, but a moral victory that convinces the enemy of the moral superiority of his opponent and of his own impotence was gained by the Russians at Borodinó. The French invaders, like an infuriated animal that has in its onslaught received a mortal wound, felt that they were perishing, but could not stop, any more than the Russian army, weaker by one half, could help swerving. By impetus gained, the French army was still able to roll forward to Moscow, but there, without further effort on the part of the Russians, it had to perish, bleeding from the mortal wound it had received at Borodinó. The direct consequence of the battle of Borodinó was Napoleon’s senseless flight from Moscow, his retreat along the old Smolénsk road, the destruction of the invading army of five hundred thousand men, and the downfall of Napoleonic France, on which at Borodinó for the first time the hand of an opponent of stronger spirit had been laid.

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Absolute continuity of motion is not comprehensible to the human mind. Laws of motion of any kind become comprehensible to man only when he examines arbitrarily selected elements of that motion; but at the same time, a large proportion of human error comes from the arbitrary division of continuous motion into discontinuous elements. There is a well-known, so-called sophism of the ancients consisting in this, that Achilles could never catch up with a tortoise he was following, in spite of the fact that he traveled ten times as fast as the tortoise. By the time Achilles has covered the distance that separated him from the tortoise, the tortoise has covered one tenth of that distance ahead of him: when Achilles has covered that tenth, the tortoise has covered another one hundredth, and so on forever. This problem seemed to the ancients insoluble. The absurd answer (that Achilles could never overtake the tortoise) resulted from this: that motion was arbitrarily divided into discontinuous elements, whereas the motion both of Achilles and of the tortoise was continuous.

By adopting smaller and smaller elements of motion we only approach a solution of the problem, but never reach it. Only when we have admitted the conception of the infinitely small, and the resulting geometrical progression with a common ratio of one tenth, and have found the sum of this progression to infinity, do we reach a solution of the problem.

A modern branch of mathematics having achieved the art of dealing with the infinitely small can now yield solutions in other more complex problems of motion which used to appear insoluble.

This modern branch of mathematics, unknown to the ancients, when dealing with problems of motion admits the conception of the infinitely small, and so conforms to the chief condition of motion (absolute continuity) and thereby corrects the inevitable error which the human mind cannot avoid when it deals with separate elements of motion instead of examining continuous motion.

In seeking the laws of historical movement just the same thing happens. The movement of humanity, arising as it does from innumerable arbitrary human wills, is continuous.

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For people accustomed to think that plans of campaign and battles are made by generals — as anyone of us sitting over a map in his study may imagine how he would have arranged things in this or that battle — the questions present themselves: Why did Kutúzov during the retreat not do this or that? Why did he not take up a position before reaching Filí? Why did he not retire at once by the Kalúga road, abandoning Moscow? and so on. People accustomed to think in that way forget, or do not know, the inevitable conditions which always limit the activities of any commander in chief. The activity of a commander in chief does not at all resemble the activity we imagine to ourselves when we sit at ease in our studies examining some campaign on the map, with a certain number of troops on this and that side in a certain known locality, and begin our plans from some given moment. A commander in chief is never dealing with the beginning of any event — the position from which we always contemplate it. The commander in chief is always in the midst of a series of shifting events and so he never can at any moment consider the whole import of an event that is occurring. Moment by moment the event is imperceptibly shaping itself, and at every moment of this continuous, uninterrupted shaping of events the commander in chief is in the midst of a most complex play of intrigues, worries, contingencies, authorities, projects, counsels, threats, and deceptions and is continually obliged to reply to innumerable questions addressed to him, which constantly conflict with one another.

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At that very time, in circumstances even more important than retreating without a battle, namely the evacuation and burning of Moscow, Rostopchín, who is usually represented as being the instigator of that event, acted in an altogether different manner from Kutúzov.

After the battle of Borodinó the abandonment and burning of Moscow was as inevitable as the retreat of the army beyond Moscow without fighting.

Every Russian might have predicted it, not by reasoning but by the feeling implanted in each of us and in our fathers.

The same thing that took place in Moscow had happened in all the towns and villages on Russian soil beginning with Smolénsk, without the participation of Count Rostopchín and his broadsheets. The people awaited the enemy unconcernedly, did not riot or become excited or tear anyone to pieces, but faced its fate, feeling within it the strength to find what it should do at that most difficult moment. And as soon as the enemy drew near the wealthy classes went away abandoning their property, while the poorer remained and burned and destroyed what was left.

The consciousness that this would be so and would always be so was and is present in the heart of every Russian. And a consciousness of this, and a foreboding that Moscow would be taken, was present in Russian Moscow society in 1812. Those who had quitted Moscow already in July and at the beginning of August showed that they expected this. Those who went away, taking what they could and abandoning their houses and half their belongings, did so from the latent patriotism which expresses itself not by phrases or by giving one’s children to save the fatherland and similar unnatural exploits, but unobtrusively, simply, organically, and therefore in the way that always produces the most powerful results.

“It is disgraceful to run away from danger; only cowards are running away from Moscow,” they were told. In his broadsheets Rostopchín impressed on them that to leave Moscow was shameful. They were ashamed to be called cowards, ashamed to leave, but still they left, knowing it had to be done. Why did they go? It is impossible to suppose that Rostopchín had scared them by his accounts of horrors Napoleon had committed in conquered countries. The first people to go away were the rich educated people who knew quite well that Vienna and Berlin had remained intact and that during Napoleon’s occupation the inhabitants had spent their time pleasantly in the company of the charming Frenchmen whom the Russians, and especially the Russian ladies, then liked so much.

They went away because for Russians there could be no question as to whether things would go well or ill under French rule in Moscow. It was out of the question to be under French rule, it would be the worst thing that could happen. They went away even before the battle of Borodinó and still more rapidly after it, despite Rostopchín’s calls to defend Moscow or the announcement of his intention to take the wonder-working icon of the Iberian Mother of God and go to fight, or of the balloons that were to destroy the French, and despite all the nonsense Rostopchín wrote in his broadsheets. They knew that it was for the army to fight, and that if it could not succeed it would not do to take young ladies and house serfs to the Three Hills quarter of Moscow to fight Napoleon, and that they must go away, sorry as they were to abandon their property to destruction. They went away without thinking of the tremendous significance of that immense and wealthy city being given over to destruction, for a great city with wooden buildings was certain when abandoned by its inhabitants to be burned. They went away each on his own account, and yet it was only in consequence of their going away that the momentous event was accomplished that will always remain the greatest glory of the Russian people. The lady who, afraid of being stopped by Count Rostopchín’s orders, had already in June moved with her Negroes and her women jesters from Moscow to her Sarátov estate, with a vague consciousness that she was not Bonaparte’s servant, was really, simply, and truly carrying out the great work which saved Russia. But Count Rostopchín, who now taunted those who left Moscow and now had the government offices removed; now distributed quite useless weapons to the drunken rabble; now had processions displaying the icons, and now forbade Father Augustin to remove icons or the relics of saints; now seized all the private carts in Moscow and on one hundred and thirty-six of them removed the balloon that was being constructed by Leppich; now hinted that he would burn Moscow and related how he had set fire to his own house; now wrote a proclamation to the French solemnly upbraiding them for having destroyed his Orphanage; now claimed the glory of having hinted that he would burn Moscow and now repudiated the deed; now ordered the people to catch all spies and bring them to him, and now reproached them for doing so; now expelled all the French residents from Moscow, and now allowed Madame Aubert-Chalmé (the center of the whole French colony in Moscow) to remain, but ordered the venerable old postmaster Klyucharëv to be arrested and exiled for no particular offense; now assembled the people at the Three Hills to fight the French and now, to get rid of them, handed over to them a man to be killed and himself drove away by a back gate; now declared that he would not survive the fall of Moscow, and now wrote French verses in albums concerning his share in the affair — this man did not understand the meaning of what was happening but merely wanted to do something himself that would astonish people, to perform some patriotically heroic feat; and like a child he made sport of the momentous, and unavoidable event — the abandonment and burning of Moscow — and tried with his puny hand now to speed and now to stay the enormous, popular tide that bore him along with it.

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Though tattered, hungry, worn out, and reduced to a third of their original number, the French entered Moscow in good marching order. It was a weary and famished, but still a fighting and menacing army. But it remained an army only until its soldiers had dispersed into their different lodgings. As soon as the men of the various regiments began to disperse among the wealthy and deserted houses, the army was lost forever and there came into being something nondescript, neither citizens nor soldiers but what are known as marauders. When five weeks later these same men left Moscow, they no longer formed an army. They were a mob of marauders, each carrying a quantity of articles which seemed to him valuable or useful. The aim of each man when he left Moscow was no longer, as it had been, to conquer, but merely to keep what he had acquired. Like a monkey which puts its paw into the narrow neck of a jug, and having seized a handful of nuts will not open its fist for fear of losing what it holds, and therefore perishes, the French when they left Moscow had inevitably to perish because they carried their loot with them, yet to abandon what they had stolen was as impossible for them as it is for the monkey to open its paw and let go of its nuts. Ten minutes after each regiment had entered a Moscow district, not a soldier or officer was left. Men in military uniforms and Hessian boots could be seen through the windows, laughing and walking through the rooms. In cellars and storerooms similar men were busy among the provisions, and in the yards unlocking or breaking open coach house and stable doors, lighting fires in kitchens and kneading and baking bread with rolled-up sleeves, and cooking; or frightening, amusing, or caressing women and children. There were many such men both in the shops and houses — but there was no army.

Order after order was issued by the French commanders that day forbidding the men to disperse about the town, sternly forbidding any violence to the inhabitants or any looting, and announcing a roll call for that very evening. But despite all these measures the men, who had till then constituted an army, flowed all over the wealthy, deserted city with its comforts and plentiful supplies. As a hungry herd of cattle keeps well together when crossing a barren field, but gets out of hand and at once disperses uncontrollably as soon as it reaches rich pastures, so did the army disperse all over the wealthy city.

No residents were left in Moscow, and the soldiers — like water percolating through sand — spread irresistibly through the city in all directions from the Krémlin into which they had first marched. The cavalry, on entering a merchant’s house that had been abandoned and finding there stabling more than sufficient for their horses, went on, all the same, to the next house which seemed to them better. Many of them appropriated several houses, chalked their names on them, and quarreled and even fought with other companies for them. Before they had had time to secure quarters the soldiers ran out into the streets to see the city and, hearing that everything had been abandoned, rushed to places where valuables were to be had for the taking. The officers followed to check the soldiers and were involuntarily drawn into doing the same. In Carriage Row carriages had been left in the shops, and generals flocked there to select calèches and coaches for themselves. The few inhabitants who had remained invited commanding officers to their houses, hoping thereby to secure themselves from being plundered. There were masses of wealth and there seemed no end to it. All around the quarters occupied by the French were other regions still unexplored and unoccupied where, they thought, yet greater riches might be found. And Moscow engulfed the army ever deeper and deeper. When water is spilled on dry ground both the dry ground and the water disappear and mud results; and in the same way the entry of the famished army into the rich and deserted city resulted in fires and looting and the destruction of both the army and the wealthy city.

The French attributed the Fire of Moscow au patriotisme féroce de Rostopchíne, \* the Russians to the barbarity of the French. In reality, however, it was not, and could not be, possible to explain the burning of Moscow by making any individual, or any group of people, responsible for it. Moscow was burned because it found itself in a position in which any town built of wood was bound to burn, quite apart from whether it had, or had not, a hundred and thirty inferior fire engines. Deserted Moscow had to burn as inevitably as a heap of shavings has to burn on which sparks continually fall for several days. A town built of wood, where scarcely a day passes without conflagrations when the house owners are in residence and a police force is present, cannot help burning when its inhabitants have left it and it is occupied by soldiers who smoke pipes, make campfires of the Senate chairs in the Senate Square, and cook themselves meals twice a day. In peacetime it is only necessary to billet troops in the villages of any district and the number of fires in that district immediately increases. How much then must the probability of fire be increased in an abandoned, wooden town where foreign troops are quartered. “Le patriotisme féroce de Rostopchíne”, Rostopchín’s ferocious patriotism, and the barbarity of the French were not to blame in the matter. Moscow was set on fire by the soldiers’ pipes, kitchens, and campfires, and by the carelessness of enemy soldiers occupying houses they did not own. Even if there was any arson (which is very doubtful, for no one had any reason to burn the houses — in any case a troublesome and dangerous thing to do), arson cannot be regarded as the cause, for the same thing would have happened without any incendiarism.

However tempting it might be for the French to blame Rostopchín’s ferocity and for Russians to blame the scoundrel Bonaparte, or later on to place an heroic torch in the hands of their own people, it is impossible not to see that there could be no such direct cause of the fire, for Moscow had to burn as every village, factory, or house must burn which is left by its owners and in which strangers are allowed to live and cook their porridge. Moscow was burned by its inhabitants, it is true, but by those who had abandoned it and not by those who remained in it. Moscow when occupied by the enemy did not remain intact like Berlin, Vienna, and other towns, simply because its inhabitants abandoned it and did not welcome the French with bread and salt, nor bring them the keys of the city.

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And with a Frenchman’s easy and naïve frankness the captain told Pierre the story of his ancestors, his childhood, youth, and manhood, and all about his relations and his financial and family affairs, “ma pauvre mère” playing of course an important part in the story.

“But all that is only life’s setting, the real thing is love — love! Am I not right, Monsieur Pierre?” said he, growing animated. “Another glass?”

Pierre again emptied his glass and poured himself out a third.

“Oh, women, women!” and the captain, looking with glistening eyes at Pierre, began talking of love and of his love affairs.

There were very many of these, as one could easily believe, looking at the officer’s handsome, self-satisfied face, and noting the eager enthusiasm with which he spoke of women. Though all Ramballe’s love stories had the sensual character which Frenchmen regard as the special charm and poetry of love, yet he told his story with such sincere conviction that he alone had experienced and known all the charm of love and he described women so alluringly that Pierre listened to him with curiosity.

It was plain that l’amour which the Frenchman was so fond of was not that low and simple kind that Pierre had once felt for his wife, nor was it the romantic love stimulated by himself that he experienced for Natásha. (Ramballe despised both these kinds of love equally: the one he considered the “love of clodhoppers” and the other the “love of simpletons.”) L’amour which the Frenchman worshiped consisted principally in the unnaturalness of his relation to the woman and in a combination of incongruities giving the chief charm to the feeling.

Thus the captain touchingly recounted the story of his love for a fascinating marquise of thirty-five and at the same time for a charming, innocent child of seventeen, daughter of the bewitching marquise. The conflict of magnanimity between the mother and the daughter, ending in the mother’s sacrificing herself and offering her daughter in marriage to her lover, even now agitated the captain, though it was the memory of a distant past. Then he recounted an episode in which the husband played the part of the lover, and he — the lover — assumed the role of the husband, as well as several droll incidents from his recollections of Germany, where “shelter” is called Unterkunft and where the husbands eat sauerkraut and the young girls are “too blonde.”

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In the darkness of the night one of the servants noticed, above the high body of a coach standing before the porch, the small glow of another fire. One glow had long been visible and everybody knew that it was Little Mytíshchi burning — set on fire by Mamónov’s Cossacks.

“But look here, brothers, there’s another fire!” remarked an orderly.

All turned their attention to the glow.

“But they told us Little Mytíshchi had been set on fire by Mamónov’s Cossacks.”

“But that’s not Mytíshchi, it’s farther away.”

“Look, it must be in Moscow!”

Two of the gazers went round to the other side of the coach and sat down on its steps.

“It’s more to the left, why, Little Mytíshchi is over there, and this is right on the other side.”

Several men joined the first two.

“See how it’s flaring,” said one. “That’s a fire in Moscow: either in the Sushchévski or the Rogózhski quarter.”

No one replied to this remark and for some time they all gazed silently at the spreading flames of the second fire in the distance.

Old Daniel Teréntich, the count’s valet (as he was called), came up to the group and shouted at Míshka.

“What are you staring at, you good-for-nothing?... The count will be calling and there’s nobody there; go and gather the clothes together.”

“I only ran out to get some water,” said Míshka.

“But what do you think, Daniel Teréntich? Doesn’t it look as if that glow were in Moscow?” remarked one of the footmen.

Daniel Teréntich made no reply, and again for a long time they were all silent. The glow spread, rising and falling, farther and farther still.

“God have mercy.... It’s windy and dry...” said another voice.

“Just look! See what it’s doing now. O Lord! You can even see the crows flying. Lord have mercy on us sinners!”

“They’ll put it out, no fear!”

“Who’s to put it out?” Daniel Teréntich, who had hitherto been silent, was heard to say. His voice was calm and deliberate. “Moscow it is, brothers,” said he. “Mother Moscow, the white...” his voice faltered, and he gave way to an old man’s sob.

And it was as if they had all only waited for this to realize the significance for them of the glow they were watching. Sighs were heard, words of prayer, and the sobbing of the count’s old valet.

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He did not find the civil servant or his wife where he had left them. He walked among the crowd with rapid steps, scanning the various faces he met. Involuntarily he noticed a Georgian or Armenian family consisting of a very handsome old man of Oriental type, wearing a new, cloth-covered, sheepskin coat and new boots, an old woman of similar type, and a young woman. That very young woman seemed to Pierre the perfection of Oriental beauty, with her sharply outlined, arched, black eyebrows and the extraordinarily soft, bright color of her long, beautiful, expressionless face. Amid the scattered property and the crowd on the open space, she, in her rich satin cloak with a bright lilac shawl on her head, suggested a delicate exotic plant thrown out onto the snow. She was sitting on some bundles a little behind the old woman, and looked from under her long lashes with motionless, large, almond-shaped eyes at the ground before her. Evidently she was aware of her beauty and fearful because of it.

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When Rostóv entered the room, the princess dropped her eyes for an instant, as if to give the visitor time to greet her aunt, and then just as Nicholas turned to her she raised her head and met his look with shining eyes. With a movement full of dignity and grace she half rose with a smile of pleasure, held out her slender, delicate hand to him, and began to speak in a voice in which for the first time new deep womanly notes vibrated. Mademoiselle Bourienne, who was in the drawing room, looked at Princess Mary in bewildered surprise. Herself a consummate coquette, she could not have maneuvered better on meeting a man she wished to attract.

“Either black is particularly becoming to her or she really has greatly improved without my having noticed it. And above all, what tact and grace!” thought Mademoiselle Bourienne.

Had Princess Mary been capable of reflection at that moment, she would have been more surprised than Mademoiselle Bourienne at the change that had taken place in herself. From the moment she recognized that dear, loved face, a new life force took possession of her and compelled her to speak and act apart from her own will. From the time Rostóv entered, her face became suddenly transformed. It was as if a light had been kindled in a carved and painted lantern and the intricate, skillful, artistic work on its sides, that previously seemed dark, coarse, and meaningless, was suddenly shown up in unexpected and striking beauty. For the first time all that pure, spiritual, inward travail through which she had lived appeared on the surface. All her inward labor, her dissatisfaction with herself, her sufferings, her strivings after goodness, her meekness, love, and self-sacrifice — all this now shone in those radiant eyes, in her delicate smile, and in every trait of her gentle face.

Rostóv saw all this as clearly as if he had known her whole life. He felt that the being before him was quite different from, and better than, anyone he had met before, and above all better than himself.

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“How are you now?” said Princess Mary, herself surprised at what she was saying.

“That, my dear, you must ask the doctor,” he replied, and again making an evident effort to be affectionate, he said with his lips only (his words clearly did not correspond to his thoughts):

“Merci, chère amie, d’être venue.” “Thank you for coming, my dear.”

Princess Mary pressed his hand. The pressure made him wince just perceptibly. He was silent, and she did not know what to say. She now understood what had happened to him two days before. In his words, his tone, and especially in that calm, almost antagonistic look could be felt an estrangement from everything belonging to this world, terrible in one who is alive. Evidently only with an effort did he understand anything living; but it was obvious that he failed to understand, not because he lacked the power to do so but because he understood something else — something the living did not and could not understand — and which wholly occupied his mind.

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Napoleon enters Moscow after the brilliant victory de la Moskowa; there can be no doubt about the victory for the battlefield remains in the hands of the French. The Russians retreat and abandon their ancient capital. Moscow, abounding in provisions, arms, munitions, and incalculable wealth, is in Napoleon’s hands. The Russian army, only half the strength of the French, does not make a single attempt to attack for a whole month. Napoleon’s position is most brilliant. He can either fall on the Russian army with double its strength and destroy it; negotiate an advantageous peace, or in case of a refusal make a menacing move on Petersburg, or even, in the case of a reverse, return to Smolénsk or Vílna; or remain in Moscow; in short, no special genius would seem to be required to retain the brilliant position the French held at that time. For that, only very simple and easy steps were necessary: not to allow the troops to loot, to prepare winter clothing — of which there was sufficient in Moscow for the whole army — and methodically to collect the provisions, of which (according to the French historians) there were enough in Moscow to supply the whole army for six months. Yet Napoleon, that greatest of all geniuses, who the historians declare had control of the army, took none of these steps.

He not merely did nothing of the kind, but on the contrary he used his power to select the most foolish and ruinous of all the courses open to him. Of all that Napoleon might have done: wintering in Moscow, advancing on Petersburg or on Nízhni-Nóvgorod, or retiring by a more northerly or more southerly route (say by the road Kutúzov afterwards took), nothing more stupid or disastrous can be imagined than what he actually did. He remained in Moscow till October, letting the troops plunder the city; then, hesitating whether to leave a garrison behind him, he quitted Moscow, approached Kutúzov without joining battle, turned to the right and reached Málo-Yaroslávets, again without attempting to break through and take the road Kutúzov took, but retiring instead to Mozháysk along the devastated Smolénsk road. Nothing more stupid than that could have been devised, or more disastrous for the army, as the sequel showed. Had Napoleon’s aim been to destroy his army, the most skillful strategist could hardly have devised any series of actions that would so completely have accomplished that purpose, independently of anything the Russian army might do.

Napoleon, the man of genius, did this! But to say that he destroyed his army because he wished to, or because he was very stupid, would be as unjust as to say that he had brought his troops to Moscow because he wished to and because he was very clever and a genius.

In both cases his personal activity, having no more force than the personal activity of any soldier, merely coincided with the laws that guided the event.

The historians quite falsely represent Napoleon’s faculties as having weakened in Moscow, and do so only because the results did not justify his actions. He employed all his ability and strength to do the best he could for himself and his army, as he had done previously and as he did subsequently in 1813. His activity at that time was no less astounding than it was in Egypt, in Italy, in Austria, and in Prussia. We do not know for certain in how far his genius was genuine in Egypt — where forty centuries looked down upon his grandeur — for his great exploits there are all told us by Frenchmen. We cannot accurately estimate his genius in Austria or Prussia, for we have to draw our information from French or German sources, and the incomprehensible surrender of whole corps without fighting and of fortresses without a siege must incline Germans to recognize his genius as the only explanation of the war carried on in Germany. But we, thank God, have no need to recognize his genius in order to hide our shame. We have paid for the right to look at the matter plainly and simply, and we will not abandon that right.

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Dórokhov’s report about Broussier’s division, the guerrillas’ reports of distress in Napoleon’s army, rumors of preparations for leaving Moscow, all confirmed the supposition that the French army was beaten and preparing for flight. But these were only suppositions, which seemed important to the younger men but not to Kutúzov. With his sixty years’ experience he knew what value to attach to rumors, knew how apt people who desire anything are to group all news so that it appears to confirm what they desire, and he knew how readily in such cases they omit all that makes for the contrary. And the more he desired it the less he allowed himself to believe it.

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One of the most obvious and advantageous departures from the so-called laws of war is the action of scattered groups against men pressed together in a mass. Such action always occurs in wars that take on a national character. In such actions, instead of two crowds opposing each other, the men disperse, attack singly, run away when attacked by stronger forces, but again attack when opportunity offers. This was done by the guerrillas in Spain, by the mountain tribes in the Caucasus, and by the Russians in 1812.

People have called this kind of war “guerrilla warfare” and assume that by so calling it they have explained its meaning. But such a war does not fit in under any rule and is directly opposed to a well-known rule of tactics which is accepted as infallible. That rule says that an attacker should concentrate his forces in order to be stronger than his opponent at the moment of conflict.

Guerrilla war (always successful, as history shows) directly infringes that rule.

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In military affairs the strength of an army is the product of its mass and some unknown x.

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That unknown quantity is the spirit of the army, that is to say, the greater or lesser readiness to fight and face danger felt by all the men composing an army, quite independently of whether they are, or are not, fighting under the command of a genius, in two — or three-line formation, with cudgels or with rifles that repeat thirty times a minute. Men who want to fight will always put themselves in the most advantageous conditions for fighting.

The spirit of an army is the factor which multiplied by the mass gives the resulting force.

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This campaign consisted in a flight of the French during which they did all they could to destroy themselves. From the time they turned onto the Kalúga road to the day their leader fled from the army, none of the movements of the crowd had any sense. So one might have thought that regarding this period of the campaign the historians, who attributed the actions of the mass to the will of one man, would have found it impossible to make the story of the retreat fit their theory. But no! Mountains of books have been written by the historians about this campaign, and everywhere are described Napoleon’s arrangements, the maneuvers, and his profound plans which guided the army, as well as the military genius shown by his marshals.

The retreat from Málo-Yaroslávets when he had a free road into a well-supplied district and the parallel road was open to him along which Kutúzov afterwards pursued him — this unnecessary retreat along a devastated road — is explained to us as being due to profound considerations. Similarly profound considerations are given for his retreat from Smolénsk to Orshá. Then his heroism at Krásnoe is described, where he is reported to have been prepared to accept battle and take personal command, and to have walked about with a birch stick and said:

“J’ai assez fait l’empereur; il est temps de faire le général,” “I have acted the Emperor long enough; it is time to act the general”, but nevertheless immediately ran away again, abandoning to its fate the scattered fragments of the army he left behind.

Then we are told of the greatness of soul of the marshals, especially of Ney — a greatness of soul consisting in this: that he made his way by night around through the forest and across the Dnieper and escaped to Orshá, abandoning standards, artillery, and nine tenths of his men.

And lastly, the final departure of the great Emperor from his heroic army is presented to us by the historians as something great and characteristic of genius. Even that final running away, described in ordinary language as the lowest depth of baseness which every child is taught to be ashamed of — even that act finds justification in the historians’ language.

When it is impossible to stretch the very elastic threads of historical ratiocination any farther, when actions are clearly contrary to all that humanity calls right or even just, the historians produce a saving conception of “greatness.” “Greatness,” it seems, excludes the standards of right and wrong. For the “great” man nothing is wrong, there is no atrocity for which a “great” man can be blamed.

“C’est grand!” “It is great” say the historians, and there no longer exists either good or evil but only “grand” and “not grand.” Grand is good, not grand is bad. Grand is the characteristic, in their conception, of some special animals called “heroes.” And Napoleon, escaping home in a warm fur coat and leaving to perish those who were not merely his comrades but were (in his opinion) men he had brought there, feels que c’est grand, that it is great, and his soul is tranquil.

“Du sublime (he saw something sublime in himself) au ridicule il n’y a qu’un pas,” “From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step” said he. And the whole world for fifty years has been repeating: “Sublime! Grand! Napoléon le Grand!” Du sublime au ridicule il n’y a qu’un pas.

And it occurs to no one that to admit a greatness not commensurable with the standard of right and wrong is merely to admit one’s own nothingness and immeasurable meanness.

For us with the standard of good and evil given us by Christ, no human actions are incommensurable. And there is no greatness where simplicity, goodness, and truth are absent.

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After she felt herself deserted by Princes Mary and alone in her grief, Natásha spent most of the time in her room by herself, sitting huddled up feet and all in the corner of the sofa, tearing and twisting something with her slender nervous fingers and gazing intently and fixedly at whatever her eyes chanced to fall on. This solitude exhausted and tormented her but she was in absolute need of it. As soon as anyone entered she got up quickly, changed her position and expression, and picked up a book or some sewing, evidently waiting impatiently for the intruder to go.

She felt all the time as if she might at any moment penetrate that on which — with a terrible questioning too great for her strength — her spiritual gaze was fixed.

One day toward the end of December Natásha, pale and thin, dressed in a black woolen gown, her plaited hair negligently twisted into a knot, was crouched feet and all in the corner of her sofa, nervously crumpling and smoothing out the end of her sash while she looked at a corner of the door.

She was gazing in the direction in which he had gone — to the other side of life. And that other side of life, of which she had never before thought and which had formerly seemed to her so far away and improbable, was now nearer and more akin and more comprehensible than this side of life, where everything was either emptiness and desolation or suffering and indignity.

She was gazing where she knew him to be; but she could not imagine him otherwise than as he had been here. She now saw him again as he had been at Mytíshchi, at Tróitsa, and at Yaroslávl.

She saw his face, heard his voice, repeated his words and her own, and sometimes devised other words they might have spoken.

There he is lying back in an armchair in his velvet cloak, leaning his head on his thin pale hand. His chest is dreadfully hollow and his shoulders raised. His lips are firmly closed, his eyes glitter, and a wrinkle comes and goes on his pale forehead. One of his legs twitches just perceptibly, but rapidly. Natásha knows that he is struggling with terrible pain. “What is that pain like? Why does he have that pain? What does he feel? How does it hurt him?” thought Natásha. He noticed her watching him, raised his eyes, and began to speak seriously:

“One thing would be terrible,” said he: “to bind oneself forever to a suffering man. It would be continual torture.” And he looked searchingly at her. Natásha as usual answered before she had time to think what she would say. She said: “This can’t go on — it won’t. You will get well — quite well.”

She now saw him from the commencement of that scene and relived what she had then felt. She recalled his long sad and severe look at those words and understood the meaning of the rebuke and despair in that protracted gaze.

“I agreed,” Natásha now said to herself, “that it would be dreadful if he always continued to suffer. I said it then only because it would have been dreadful for him, but he understood it differently. He thought it would be dreadful for me. He then still wished to live and feared death. And I said it so awkwardly and stupidly! I did not say what I meant. I thought quite differently. Had I said what I thought, I should have said: even if he had to go on dying, to die continually before my eyes, I should have been happy compared with what I am now. Now there is nothing... nobody. Did he know that? No, he did not and never will know it. And now it will never, never be possible to put it right.” And now he again seemed to be saying the same words to her, only in her imagination Natásha this time gave him a different answer. She stopped him and said: “Terrible for you, but not for me! You know that for me there is nothing in life but you, and to suffer with you is the greatest happiness for me,” and he took her hand and pressed it as he had pressed it that terrible evening four days before his death. And in her imagination she said other tender and loving words which she might have said then but only spoke now: “I love thee!... thee! I love, love...” she said, convulsively pressing her hands and setting her teeth with a desperate effort....

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The mother’s wounded spirit could not heal. Pétya’s death had torn from her half her life. When the news of Pétya’s death had come she had been a fresh and vigorous woman of fifty, but a month later she left her room a listless old woman taking no interest in life. But the same blow that almost killed the countess, this second blow, restored Natásha to life.

A spiritual wound produced by a rending of the spiritual body is like a physical wound and, strange as it may seem, just as a deep wound may heal and its edges join, physical and spiritual wounds alike can yet heal completely only as the result of a vital force from within.

Natásha’s wound healed in that way. She thought her life was ended, but her love for her mother unexpectedly showed her that the essence of life — love — was still active within her. Love awoke and so did life.

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“Mary,” she said timidly, drawing Princess Mary’s hand to herself, “Mary, you mustn’t think me wicked. No? Mary darling, how I love you! Let us be quite, quite friends.”

And Natásha, embracing her, began kissing her face and hands, making Princess Mary feel shy but happy by this demonstration of her feelings.

From that day a tender and passionate friendship such as exists only between women was established between Princess Mary and Natásha. They were continually kissing and saying tender things to one another and spent most of their time together. When one went out the other became restless and hastened to rejoin her. Together they felt more in harmony with one another than either of them felt with herself when alone. A feeling stronger than friendship sprang up between them; an exclusive feeling of life being possible only in each other’s presence.

Sometimes they were silent for hours; sometimes after they were already in bed they would begin talking and go on till morning. They spoke most of what was long past. Princess Mary spoke of her childhood, of her mother, her father, and her daydreams; and Natásha, who with a passive lack of understanding had formerly turned away from that life of devotion, submission, and the poetry of Christian self-sacrifice, now feeling herself bound to Princess Mary by affection, learned to love her past too and to understand a side of life previously incomprehensible to her. She did not think of applying submission and self-abnegation to her own life, for she was accustomed to seek other joys, but she understood and loved in another those previously incomprehensible virtues. For Princess Mary, listening to Natásha’s tales of childhood and early youth, there also opened out a new and hitherto uncomprehended side of life: belief in life and its enjoyment.

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Natásha had grown thin and pale and physically so weak that they all talked about her health, and this pleased her. But sometimes she was suddenly overcome by fear not only of death but of sickness, weakness, and loss of good looks, and involuntarily she examined her bare arm carefully, surprised at its thinness, and in the morning noticed her drawn and, as it seemed to her, piteous face in her glass. It seemed to her that things must be so, and yet it was dreadfully sad.

One day she went quickly upstairs and found herself out of breath. Unconsciously she immediately invented a reason for going down, and then, testing her strength, ran upstairs again, observing the result.

Another time when she called Dunyásha her voice trembled, so she called again — though she could hear Dunyásha coming — called her in the deep chest tones in which she had been wont to sing, and listened attentively to herself.

She did not know and would not have believed it, but beneath the layer of slime that covered her soul and seemed to her impenetrable, delicate young shoots of grass were already sprouting, which taking root would so cover with their living verdure the grief that weighed her down that it would soon no longer be seen or noticed. The wound had begun to heal from within.

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It was only gradually during his convalescence that Pierre lost the impressions he had become accustomed to during the last few months and got used to the idea that no one would oblige him to go anywhere tomorrow, that no one would deprive him of his warm bed, and that he would be sure to get his dinner, tea, and supper. But for a long time in his dreams he still saw himself in the conditions of captivity. In the same way little by little he came to understand the news he had been told after his rescue, about the death of Prince Andrew, the death of his wife, and the destruction of the French.

A joyous feeling of freedom — that complete inalienable freedom natural to man which he had first experienced at the first halt outside Moscow — filled Pierre’s soul during his convalescence. He was surprised to find that this inner freedom, which was independent of external conditions, now had as it were an additional setting of external liberty. He was alone in a strange town, without acquaintances. No one demanded anything of him or sent him anywhere. He had all he wanted: the thought of his wife which had been a continual torment to him was no longer there, since she was no more.

“Oh, how good! How splendid!” said he to himself when a cleanly laid table was moved up to him with savory beef tea, or when he lay down for the night on a soft clean bed, or when he remembered that the French had gone and that his wife was no more. “Oh, how good, how splendid!”

And by old habit he asked himself the question: “Well, and what then? What am I going to do?” And he immediately gave himself the answer: “Well, I shall live. Ah, how splendid!”

The very question that had formerly tormented him, the thing he had continually sought to find — the aim of life — no longer existed for him now. That search for the aim of life had not merely disappeared temporarily — he felt that it no longer existed for him and could not present itself again. And this very absence of an aim gave him the complete, joyous sense of freedom which constituted his happiness at this time.

He could not see an aim, for he now had faith — not faith in any kind of rule, or words, or ideas, but faith in an ever-living, ever-manifest God. Formerly he had sought Him in aims he set himself. That search for an aim had been simply a search for God, and suddenly in his captivity he had learned not by words or reasoning but by direct feeling what his nurse had told him long ago: that God is here and everywhere. In his captivity he had learned that in Karatáev God was greater, more infinite and unfathomable than in the Architect of the Universe recognized by the Freemasons. He felt like a man who after straining his eyes to see into the far distance finds what he sought at his very feet. All his life he had looked over the heads of the men around him, when he should have merely looked in front of him without straining his eyes.

In the past he had never been able to find that great inscrutable infinite something. He had only felt that it must exist somewhere and had looked for it. In everything near and comprehensible he had seen only what was limited, petty, commonplace, and senseless. He had equipped himself with a mental telescope and looked into remote space, where petty worldliness hiding itself in misty distance had seemed to him great and infinite merely because it was not clearly seen. And such had European life, politics, Freemasonry, philosophy, and philanthropy seemed to him. But even then, at moments of weakness as he had accounted them, his mind had penetrated to those distances and he had there seen the same pettiness, worldliness, and senselessness. Now, however, he had learned to see the great, eternal, and infinite in everything, and therefore — to see it and enjoy its contemplation — he naturally threw away the telescope through which he had till now gazed over men’s heads, and gladly regarded the ever-changing, eternally great, unfathomable, and infinite life around him. And the closer he looked the more tranquil and happy he became. That dreadful question, “What for?” which had formerly destroyed all his mental edifices, no longer existed for him. To that question, “What for?” a simple answer was now always ready in his soul: “Because there is a God, that God without whose will not one hair falls from a man’s head.”

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In external ways Pierre had hardly changed at all. In appearance he was just what he used to be. As before he was absent-minded and seemed occupied not with what was before his eyes but with something special of his own. The difference between his former and present self was that formerly when he did not grasp what lay before him or was said to him, he had puckered his forehead painfully as if vainly seeking to distinguish something at a distance. At present he still forgot what was said to him and still did not see what was before his eyes, but he now looked with a scarcely perceptible and seemingly ironic smile at what was before him and listened to what was said, though evidently seeing and hearing something quite different. Formerly he had appeared to be a kindhearted but unhappy man, and so people had been inclined to avoid him. Now a smile at the joy of life always played round his lips, and sympathy for others shone in his eyes with a questioning look as to whether they were as contented as he was, and people felt pleased by his presence.

Previously he had talked a great deal, grew excited when he talked, and seldom listened; now he was seldom carried away in conversation and knew how to listen so that people readily told him their most intimate secrets.

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It would be difficult to explain why and whither ants whose heap has been destroyed are hurrying: some from the heap dragging bits of rubbish, larvae, and corpses, others back to the heap, or why they jostle, overtake one another, and fight, and it would be equally difficult to explain what caused the Russians after the departure of the French to throng to the place that had formerly been Moscow. But when we watch the ants round their ruined heap, the tenacity, energy, and immense number of the delving insects prove that despite the destruction of the heap, something indestructible, which though intangible is the real strength of the colony, still exists; and similarly, though in Moscow in the month of October there was no government and no churches, shrines, riches, or houses — it was still the Moscow it had been in August. All was destroyed, except something intangible yet powerful and indestructible.

The motives of those who thronged from all sides to Moscow after it had been cleared of the enemy were most diverse and personal, and at first for the most part savage and brutal. One motive only they all had in common: a desire to get to the place that had been called Moscow, to apply their activities there.

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Pierre spoke rapidly and with animation. He glanced once at the companion’s face, saw her attentive and kindly gaze fixed on him, and, as often happens when one is talking, felt somehow that this companion in the black dress was a good, kind, excellent creature who would not hinder his conversing freely with Princess Mary.

But when he mentioned the Rostóvs, Princess Mary’s face expressed still greater embarrassment. She again glanced rapidly from Pierre’s face to that of the lady in the black dress and said:

“Do you really not recognize her?”

Pierre looked again at the companion’s pale, delicate face with its black eyes and peculiar mouth, and something near to him, long forgotten and more than sweet, looked at him from those attentive eyes.

“But no, it can’t be!” he thought. “This stern, thin, pale face that looks so much older! It cannot be she. It merely reminds me of her.” But at that moment Princess Mary said, “Natásha!” And with difficulty, effort, and stress, like the opening of a door grown rusty on its hinges, a smile appeared on the face with the attentive eyes, and from that opening door came a breath of fragrance which suffused Pierre with a happiness he had long forgotten and of which he had not even been thinking — especially at that moment. It suffused him, seized him, and enveloped him completely. When she smiled doubt was no longer possible, it was Natásha and he loved her.

At that moment Pierre involuntarily betrayed to her, to Princess Mary, and above all to himself, a secret of which he himself had been unaware. He flushed joyfully yet with painful distress. He tried to hide his agitation. But the more he tried to hide it the more clearly — clearer than any words could have done — did he betray to himself, to her, and to Princess Mary that he loved her.

“No, it’s only the unexpectedness of it,” thought Pierre. But as soon as he tried to continue the conversation he had begun with Princess Mary he again glanced at Natásha, and a still-deeper flush suffused his face and a still-stronger agitation of mingled joy and fear seized his soul. He became confused in his speech and stopped in the middle of what he was saying.

Pierre had failed to notice Natásha because he did not at all expect to see her there, but he had failed to recognize her because the change in her since he last saw her was immense. She had grown thin and pale, but that was not what made her unrecognizable; she was unrecognizable at the moment he entered because on that face whose eyes had always shone with a suppressed smile of the joy of life, now when he first entered and glanced at her there was not the least shadow of a smile: only her eyes were kindly attentive and sadly interrogative.

Pierre’s confusion was not reflected by any confusion on Natásha’s part, but only by the pleasure that just perceptibly lit up her whole face.

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He told of his adventures as he had never yet recalled them. He now, as it were, saw a new meaning in all he had gone through. Now that he was telling it all to Natásha he experienced that pleasure which a man has when women listen to him — not clever women who when listening either try to remember what they hear to enrich their minds and when opportunity offers to retell it, or who wish to adopt it to some thought of their own and promptly contribute their own clever comments prepared in their little mental workshop — but the pleasure given by real women gifted with a capacity to select and absorb the very best a man shows of himself. Natásha without knowing it was all attention: she did not lose a word, no single quiver in Pierre’s voice, no look, no twitch of a muscle in his face, nor a single gesture. She caught the unfinished word in its flight and took it straight into her open heart, divining the secret meaning of all Pierre’s mental travail.

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“Do you know, Mary...” Natásha suddenly said with a mischievous smile such as Princess Mary had not seen on her face for a long time, “he has somehow grown so clean, smooth, and fresh — as if he had just come out of a Russian bath; do you understand? Out of a moral bath. Isn’t it true?”

“Yes,” replied Princess Mary. “He has greatly improved.”

“With a short coat and his hair cropped; just as if, well, just as if he had come straight from the bath... Papa used to...”

“I understand why he” (Prince Andrew) “liked no one so much as him,” said Princess Mary.

“Yes, and yet he is quite different. They say men are friends when they are quite different. That must be true. Really he is quite unlike him — in everything.”

“Yes, but he’s wonderful.”

“Well, good night,” said Natásha.

And the same mischievous smile lingered for a long time on her face as if it had been forgotten there.

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Pierre’s insanity consisted in not waiting, as he used to do, to discover personal attributes which he termed “good qualities” in people before loving them; his heart was now overflowing with love, and by loving people without cause he discovered indubitable causes for loving them.

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Seven years had passed. The storm-tossed sea of European history had subsided within its shores and seemed to have become calm. But the mysterious forces that move humanity (mysterious because the laws of their motion are unknown to us) continued to operate.

Though the surface of the sea of history seemed motionless, the movement of humanity went on as unceasingly as the flow of time. Various groups of people formed and dissolved, the coming formation and dissolution of kingdoms and displacement of peoples was in course of preparation.

The sea of history was not driven spasmodically from shore to shore as previously. It was seething in its depths. Historic figures were not borne by the waves from one shore to another as before. They now seemed to rotate on one spot. The historical figures at the head of armies, who formerly reflected the movement of the masses by ordering wars, campaigns, and battles, now reflected the restless movement by political and diplomatic combinations, laws, and treaties.

The historians call this activity of the historical figures “the reaction.”

In dealing with this period they sternly condemn the historical personages who, in their opinion, caused what they describe as the reaction. All the well-known people of that period, from Alexander and Napoleon to Madame de Staël, Photius, Schelling, Fichte, Chateaubriand, and the rest, pass before their stern judgment seat and are acquitted or condemned according to whether they conduced to progress or to reaction.

According to their accounts a reaction took place at that time in Russia also, and the chief culprit was Alexander I, the same man who according to them was the chief cause of the liberal movement at the commencement of his reign, being the savior of Russia.

There is no one in Russian literature now, from schoolboy essayist to learned historian, who does not throw his little stone at Alexander for things he did wrong at this period of his reign.

“He ought to have acted in this way and in that way. In this case he did well and in that case badly. He behaved admirably at the beginning of his reign and during 1812, but acted badly by giving a constitution to Poland, forming the Holy Alliance, entrusting power to Arakchéev, favoring Golítsyn and mysticism, and afterwards Shishkóv and Photius. He also acted badly by concerning himself with the active army and disbanding the Semënov regiment.”

It would take a dozen pages to enumerate all the reproaches the historians address to him, based on their knowledge of what is good for humanity.

What do these reproaches mean?

Do not the very actions for which the historians praise Alexander I (the liberal attempts at the beginning of his reign, his struggle with Napoleon, the firmness he displayed in 1812 and the campaign of 1813) flow from the same sources — the circumstances of his birth, education, and life — that made his personality what it was and from which the actions for which they blame him (the Holy Alliance, the restoration of Poland, and the reaction of 1820 and later) also flowed?

In what does the substance of those reproaches lie?

It lies in the fact that an historic character like Alexander I, standing on the highest possible pinnacle of human power with the blinding light of history focused upon him; a character exposed to those strongest of all influences: the intrigues, flattery, and self-deception inseparable from power; a character who at every moment of his life felt a responsibility for all that was happening in Europe; and not a fictitious but a live character who like every man had his personal habits, passions, and impulses toward goodness, beauty, and truth — that this character — though not lacking in virtue (the historians do not accuse him of that) — had not the same conception of the welfare of humanity fifty years ago as a present-day professor who from his youth upwards has been occupied with learning: that is, with books and lectures and with taking notes from them.

But even if we assume that fifty years ago Alexander I was mistaken in his view of what was good for the people, we must inevitably assume that the historian who judges Alexander will also after the lapse of some time turn out to be mistaken in his view of what is good for humanity. This assumption is all the more natural and inevitable because, watching the movement of history, we see that every year and with each new writer, opinion as to what is good for mankind changes; so that what once seemed good, ten years later seems bad, and vice versa. And what is more, we find at one and the same time quite contradictory views as to what is bad and what is good in history: some people regard giving a constitution to Poland and forming the Holy Alliance as praiseworthy in Alexander, while others regard it as blameworthy.

The activity of Alexander or of Napoleon cannot be called useful or harmful, for it is impossible to say for what it was useful or harmful. If that activity displeases somebody, this is only because it does not agree with his limited understanding of what is good. Whether the preservation of my father’s house in Moscow, or the glory of the Russian arms, or the prosperity of the Petersburg and other universities, or the freedom of Poland or the greatness of Russia, or the balance of power in Europe, or a certain kind of European culture called “progress” appear to me to be good or bad, I must admit that besides these things the action of every historic character has other more general purposes inaccessible to me.

But let us assume that what is called science can harmonize all contradictions and possesses an unchanging standard of good and bad by which to try historic characters and events; let us say that Alexander could have done everything differently; let us say that with guidance from those who blame him and who profess to know the ultimate aim of the movement of humanity, he might have arranged matters according to the program his present accusers would have given him — of nationality, freedom, equality, and progress (these, I think, cover the ground). Let us assume that this program was possible and had then been formulated, and that Alexander had acted on it. What would then have become of the activity of all those who opposed the tendency that then prevailed in the government — an activity that in the opinion of the historians was good and beneficent? Their activity would not have existed: there would have been no life, there would have been nothing.

If we admit that human life can be ruled by reason, the possibility of life is destroyed.

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If we assume as the historians do that great men lead humanity to the attainment of certain ends — the greatness of Russia or of France, the balance of power in Europe, the diffusion of the ideas of the Revolution, general progress, or anything else — then it is impossible to explain the facts of history without introducing the conceptions of chance and genius.

If the aim of the European wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century had been the aggrandizement of Russia, that aim might have been accomplished without all the preceding wars and without the invasion. If the aim was the aggrandizement of France, that might have been attained without the Revolution and without the Empire. If the aim was the dissemination of ideas, the printing press could have accomplished that much better than warfare. If the aim was the progress of civilization, it is easy to see that there are other ways of diffusing civilization more expedient than by the destruction of wealth and of human lives.

Why did it happen in this and not in some other way?

Because it happened so! “Chance created the situation; genius utilized it,” says history.

But what is chance? What is genius?

The words chance and genius do not denote any really existing thing and therefore cannot be defined. Those words only denote a certain stage of understanding of phenomena. I do not know why a certain event occurs; I think that I cannot know it; so I do not try to know it and I talk about chance. I see a force producing effects beyond the scope of ordinary human agencies; I do not understand why this occurs and I talk of genius.

To a herd of rams, the ram the herdsman drives each evening into a special enclosure to feed and that becomes twice as fat as the others must seem to be a genius. And it must appear an astonishing conjunction of genius with a whole series of extraordinary chances that this ram, who instead of getting into the general fold every evening goes into a special enclosure where there are oats — that this very ram, swelling with fat, is killed for meat.

But the rams need only cease to suppose that all that happens to them happens solely for the attainment of their sheepish aims; they need only admit that what happens to them may also have purposes beyond their ken, and they will at once perceive a unity and coherence in what happened to the ram that was fattened. Even if they do not know for what purpose they are fattened, they will at least know that all that happened to the ram did not happen accidentally, and will no longer need the conceptions of chance or genius.

Only by renouncing our claim to discern a purpose immediately intelligible to us, and admitting the ultimate purpose to be beyond our ken, may we discern the sequence of experiences in the lives of historic characters and perceive the cause of the effect they produce (incommensurable with ordinary human capabilities), and then the words chance and genius become superfluous.

We need only confess that we do not know the purpose of the European convulsions and that we know only the facts — that is, the murders, first in France, then in Italy, in Africa, in Prussia, in Austria, in Spain, and in Russia — and that the movements from the west to the east and from the east to the west form the essence and purpose of these events, and not only shall we have no need to see exceptional ability and genius in Napoleon and Alexander, but we shall be unable to consider them to be anything but like other men, and we shall not be obliged to have recourse to chance for an explanation of those small events which made these people what they were, but it will be clear that all those small events were inevitable.

By discarding a claim to knowledge of the ultimate purpose, we shall clearly perceive that just as one cannot imagine a blossom or seed for any single plant better suited to it than those it produces, so it is impossible to imagine any two people more completely adapted down to the smallest detail for the purpose they had to fulfill, than Napoleon and Alexander with all their antecedents.

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The fundamental and essential significance of the European events of the beginning of the nineteenth century lies in the movement of the mass of the European peoples from west to east and afterwards from east to west. The commencement of that movement was the movement from west to east. For the peoples of the west to be able to make their warlike movement to Moscow it was necessary: (1) that they should form themselves into a military group of a size able to endure a collision with the warlike military group of the east, (2) that they should abandon all established traditions and customs, and (3) that during their military movement they should have at their head a man who could justify to himself and to them the deceptions, robberies, and murders which would have to be committed during that movement.

And beginning with the French Revolution the old inadequately large group was destroyed, as well as the old habits and traditions, and step by step a group was formed of larger dimensions with new customs and traditions, and a man was produced who would stand at the head of the coming movement and bear the responsibility for all that had to be done.

A man without convictions, without habits, without traditions, without a name, and not even a Frenchman, emerges — by what seem the strangest chances — from among all the seething French parties, and without joining any one of them is borne forward to a prominent position.

The ignorance of his colleagues, the weakness and insignificance of his opponents, the frankness of his falsehoods, and the dazzling and self-confident limitations of this man raise him to the head of the army. The brilliant qualities of the soldiers of the army sent to Italy, his opponents’ reluctance to fight, and his own childish audacity and self-confidence secure him military fame. Innumerable so-called chances accompany him everywhere. The disfavor into which he falls with the rulers of France turns to his advantage. His attempts to avoid his predestined path are unsuccessful: he is not received into the Russian service, and the appointment he seeks in Turkey comes to nothing. During the war in Italy he is several times on the verge of destruction and each time is saved in an unexpected manner. Owing to various diplomatic considerations the Russian armies — just those which might have destroyed his prestige — do not appear upon the scene till he is no longer there.

On his return from Italy he finds the government in Paris in a process of dissolution in which all those who are in it are inevitably wiped out and destroyed. And by chance an escape from this dangerous position presents itself in the form of an aimless and senseless expedition to Africa. Again so-called chance accompanies him. Impregnable Malta surrenders without a shot; his most reckless schemes are crowned with success. The enemy’s fleet, which subsequently did not let a single boat pass, allows his entire army to elude it. In Africa a whole series of outrages are committed against the almost unarmed inhabitants. And the men who commit these crimes, especially their leader, assure themselves that this is admirable, this is glory — it resembles Caesar and Alexander the Great and is therefore good.

This ideal of glory and grandeur — which consists not merely in considering nothing wrong that one does but in priding oneself on every crime one commits, ascribing to it an incomprehensible supernatural significance — that ideal, destined to guide this man and his associates, had scope for its development in Africa. Whatever he does succeeds. The plague does not touch him. The cruelty of murdering prisoners is not imputed to him as a fault. His childishly rash, uncalled-for, and ignoble departure from Africa, leaving his comrades in distress, is set down to his credit, and again the enemy’s fleet twice lets him slip past. When, intoxicated by the crimes he has committed so successfully, he reaches Paris, the dissolution of the republican government, which a year earlier might have ruined him, has reached its extreme limit, and his presence there now as a newcomer free from party entanglements can only serve to exalt him — and though he himself has no plan, he is quite ready for his new rôle.

He had no plan, he was afraid of everything, but the parties snatched at him and demanded his participation.

He alone — with his ideal of glory and grandeur developed in Italy and Egypt, his insane self-adulation, his boldness in crime and frankness in lying — he alone could justify what had to be done.

He is needed for the place that awaits him, and so almost apart from his will and despite his indecision, his lack of a plan, and all his mistakes, he is drawn into a conspiracy that aims at seizing power and the conspiracy is crowned with success.

He is pushed into a meeting of the legislature. In alarm he wishes to flee, considering himself lost. He pretends to fall into a swoon and says senseless things that should have ruined him. But the once proud and shrewd rulers of France, feeling that their part is played out, are even more bewildered than he, and do not say the words they should have said to destroy him and retain their power.

Chance, millions of chances, give him power, and all men as if by agreement co-operate to confirm that power. Chance forms the characters of the rulers of France, who submit to him; chance forms the character of Paul I of Russia who recognizes his government; chance contrives a plot against him which not only fails to harm him but confirms his power. Chance puts the Duc d’Enghien in his hands and unexpectedly causes him to kill him — thereby convincing the mob more forcibly than in any other way that he had the right, since he had the might. Chance contrives that though he directs all his efforts to prepare an expedition against England (which would inevitably have ruined him) he never carries out that intention, but unexpectedly falls upon Mack and the Austrians, who surrender without a battle. Chance and genius give him the victory at Austerlitz; and by chance all men, not only the French but all Europe — except England which does not take part in the events about to happen — despite their former horror and detestation of his crimes, now recognize his authority, the title he has given himself, and his ideal of grandeur and glory, which seems excellent and reasonable to them all.

As if measuring themselves and preparing for the coming movement, the western forces push toward the east several times in 1805, 1806, 1807, and 1809, gaining strength and growing. In 1811 the group of people that had formed in France unites into one group with the peoples of Central Europe. The strength of the justification of the man who stands at the head of the movement grows with the increased size of the group. During the ten-year preparatory period this man had formed relations with all the crowned heads of Europe. The discredited rulers of the world can oppose no reasonable ideal to the insensate Napoleonic ideal of glory and grandeur. One after another they hasten to display their insignificance before him. The King of Prussia sends his wife to seek the great man’s mercy; the Emperor of Austria considers it a favor that this man receives a daughter of the Caesars into his bed; the Pope, the guardian of all that the nations hold sacred, utilizes religion for the aggrandizement of the great man. It is not Napoleon who prepares himself for the accomplishment of his role, so much as all those round him who prepare him to take on himself the whole responsibility for what is happening and has to happen. There is no step, no crime or petty fraud he commits, which in the mouths of those around him is not at once represented as a great deed. The most suitable fête the Germans can devise for him is a celebration of Jena and Auerstädt. Not only is he great, but so are his ancestors, his brothers, his stepsons, and his brothers-in-law. Everything is done to deprive him of the remains of his reason and to prepare him for his terrible part. And when he is ready so too are the forces.

The invasion pushes eastward and reaches its final goal — Moscow. That city is taken; the Russian army suffers heavier losses than the opposing armies had suffered in the former war from Austerlitz to Wagram. But suddenly instead of those chances and that genius which hitherto had so consistently led him by an uninterrupted series of successes to the predestined goal, an innumerable sequence of inverse chances occur — from the cold in his head at Borodinó to the sparks which set Moscow on fire, and the frosts — and instead of genius, stupidity and immeasurable baseness become evident.

The invaders flee, turn back, flee again, and all the chances are now not for Napoleon but always against him.

A countermovement is then accomplished from east to west with a remarkable resemblance to the preceding movement from west to east. Attempted drives from east to west — similar to the contrary movements of 1805, 1807, and 1809 — precede the great westward movement; there is the same coalescence into a group of enormous dimensions; the same adhesion of the people of Central Europe to the movement; the same hesitation midway, and the same increasing rapidity as the goal is approached.

Paris, the ultimate goal, is reached. The Napoleonic government and army are destroyed. Napoleon himself is no longer of any account; all his actions are evidently pitiful and mean, but again an inexplicable chance occurs. The allies detest Napoleon whom they regard as the cause of their sufferings. Deprived of power and authority, his crimes and his craft exposed, he should have appeared to them what he appeared ten years previously and one year later — an outlawed brigand. But by some strange chance no one perceives this. His part is not yet ended. The man who ten years before and a year later was considered an outlawed brigand is sent to an island two days’ sail from France, which for some reason is presented to him as his dominion, and guards are given to him and millions of money are paid him.

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The flood of nations begins to subside into its normal channels. The waves of the great movement abate, and on the calm surface eddies are formed in which float the diplomatists, who imagine that they have caused the floods to abate.

But the smooth sea again suddenly becomes disturbed. The diplomatists think that their disagreements are the cause of this fresh pressure of natural forces; they anticipate war between their sovereigns; the position seems to them insoluble. But the wave they feel to be rising does not come from the quarter they expect. It rises again from the same point as before — Paris. The last backwash of the movement from the west occurs: a backwash which serves to solve the apparently insuperable diplomatic difficulties and ends the military movement of that period of history.

The man who had devastated France returns to France alone, without any conspiracy and without soldiers. Any guard might arrest him, but by strange chance no one does so and all rapturously greet the man they cursed the day before and will curse again a month later.

This man is still needed to justify the final collective act.

That act is performed.

The last rôle is played. The actor is bidden to disrobe and wash off his powder and paint: he will not be wanted any more.

And some years pass during which he plays a pitiful comedy to himself in solitude on his island, justifying his actions by intrigues and lies when the justification is no longer needed, and displaying to the whole world what it was that people had mistaken for strength as long as an unseen hand directed his actions.

The manager having brought the drama to a close and stripped the actor shows him to us.

“See what you believed in! This is he! Do you now see that it was not he but I who moved you?”

But dazed by the force of the movement, it was long before people understood this.

Still greater coherence and inevitability is seen in the life of Alexander I, the man who stood at the head of the countermovement from east to west.

What was needed for him who, overshadowing others, stood at the head of that movement from east to west?

What was needed was a sense of justice and a sympathy with European affairs, but a remote sympathy not dulled by petty interests; a moral superiority over those sovereigns of the day who co-operated with him; a mild and attractive personality; and a personal grievance against Napoleon. And all this was found in Alexander I; all this had been prepared by innumerable so-called chances in his life: his education, his early liberalism, the advisers who surrounded him, and by Austerlitz, and Tilsit, and Erfurt.

During the national war he was inactive because he was not needed. But as soon as the necessity for a general European war presented itself he appeared in his place at the given moment and, uniting the nations of Europe, led them to the goal.

The goal is reached. After the final war of 1815 Alexander possesses all possible power. How does he use it?

Alexander I — the pacifier of Europe, the man who from his early years had striven only for his people’s welfare, the originator of the liberal innovations in his fatherland — now that he seemed to possess the utmost power and therefore to have the possibility of bringing about the welfare of his peoples — at the time when Napoleon in exile was drawing up childish and mendacious plans of how he would have made mankind happy had he retained power — Alexander I, having fulfilled his mission and feeling the hand of God upon him, suddenly recognizes the insignificance of that supposed power, turns away from it, and gives it into the hands of contemptible men whom he despises, saying only:

“Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name!... I too am a man like the rest of you. Let me live like a man and think of my soul and of God.”

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Natásha did not follow the golden rule advocated by clever folk, especially by the French, which says that a girl should not let herself go when she marries, should not neglect her accomplishments, should be even more careful of her appearance than when she was unmarried, and should fascinate her husband as much as she did before he became her husband. Natásha on the contrary had at once abandoned all her witchery, of which her singing had been an unusually powerful part. She gave it up just because it was so powerfully seductive. She took no pains with her manners or with delicacy of speech, or with her toilet, or to show herself to her husband in her most becoming attitudes, or to avoid inconveniencing him by being too exacting. She acted in contradiction to all those rules. She felt that the allurements instinct had formerly taught her to use would now be merely ridiculous in the eyes of her husband, to whom she had from the first moment given herself up entirely — that is, with her whole soul, leaving no corner of it hidden from him. She felt that her unity with her husband was not maintained by the poetic feelings that had attracted him to her, but by something else — indefinite but firm as the bond between her own body and soul.

To fluff out her curls, put on fashionable dresses, and sing romantic songs to fascinate her husband would have seemed as strange as to adorn herself to attract herself. To adorn herself for others might perhaps have been agreeable — she did not know — but she had no time at all for it. The chief reason for devoting no time either to singing, to dress, or to choosing her words was that she really had no time to spare for these things.

We know that man has the faculty of becoming completely absorbed in a subject however trivial it may be, and that there is no subject so trivial that it will not grow to infinite proportions if one’s entire attention is devoted to it.

The subject which wholly engrossed Natásha’s attention was her family: that is, her husband whom she had to keep so that he should belong entirely to her and to the home, and the children whom she had to bear, bring into the world, nurse, and bring up.

And the deeper she penetrated, not with her mind only but with her whole soul, her whole being, into the subject that absorbed her, the larger did that subject grow and the weaker and more inadequate did her powers appear, so that she concentrated them wholly on that one thing and yet was unable to accomplish all that she considered necessary.

There were then as now conversations and discussions about women’s rights, the relations of husband and wife and their freedom and rights, though these themes were not yet termed questions as they are now; but these topics were not merely uninteresting to Natásha, she positively did not understand them.

These questions, then as now, existed only for those who see nothing in marriage but the pleasure married people get from one another, that is, only the beginnings of marriage and not its whole significance, which lies in the family.

Discussions and questions of that kind, which are like the question of how to get the greatest gratification from one’s dinner, did not then and do not now exist for those for whom the purpose of a dinner is the nourishment it affords; and the purpose of marriage is the family.

If the purpose of dinner is to nourish the body, a man who eats two dinners at once may perhaps get more enjoyment but will not attain his purpose, for his stomach will not digest the two dinners.

If the purpose of marriage is the family, the person who wishes to have many wives or husbands may perhaps obtain much pleasure, but in that case will not have a family.

If the purpose of food is nourishment and the purpose of marriage is the family, the whole question resolves itself into not eating more than one can digest, and not having more wives or husbands than are needed for the family — that is, one wife or one husband. Natásha needed a husband. A husband was given her and he gave her a family. And she not only saw no need of any other or better husband, but as all the powers of her soul were intent on serving that husband and family, she could not imagine and saw no interest in imagining how it would be if things were different.

Natásha did not care for society in general, but prized the more the society of her relatives — Countess Mary, and her brother, her mother, and Sónya. She valued the company of those to whom she could come striding disheveled from the nursery in her dressing gown, and with joyful face show a yellow instead of a green stain on baby’s napkin, and from whom she could hear reassuring words to the effect that baby was much better.

To such an extent had Natásha let herself go that the way she dressed and did her hair, her ill-chosen words, and her jealousy — she was jealous of Sónya, of the governess, and of every woman, pretty or plain — were habitual subjects of jest to those about her. The general opinion was that Pierre was under his wife’s thumb, which was really true. From the very first days of their married life Natásha had announced her demands. Pierre was greatly surprised by his wife’s view, to him a perfectly novel one, that every moment of his life belonged to her and to the family. His wife’s demands astonished him, but they also flattered him, and he submitted to them.

Pierre’s subjection consisted in the fact that he not only dared not flirt with, but dared not even speak smilingly to, any other woman; did not dare dine at the Club as a pastime, did not dare spend money on a whim, and did not dare absent himself for any length of time, except on business — in which his wife included his intellectual pursuits, which she did not in the least understand but to which she attributed great importance. To make up for this, at home Pierre had the right to regulate his life and that of the whole family exactly as he chose. At home Natásha placed herself in the position of a slave to her husband, and the whole household went on tiptoe when he was occupied — that is, was reading or writing in his study. Pierre had but to show a partiality for anything to get just what he liked done always. He had only to express a wish and Natásha would jump up and run to fulfill it.

The entire household was governed according to Pierre’s supposed orders, that is, by his wishes which Natásha tried to guess. Their way of life and place of residence, their acquaintances and ties, Natásha’s occupations, the children’s upbringing, were all selected not merely with regard to Pierre’s expressed wishes, but to what Natásha from the thoughts he expressed in conversation supposed his wishes to be. And she deduced the essentials of his wishes quite correctly, and having once arrived at them clung to them tenaciously. When Pierre himself wanted to change his mind she would fight him with his own weapons.

Thus in a time of trouble ever memorable to him after the birth of their first child who was delicate, when they had to change the wet nurse three times and Natásha fell ill from despair, Pierre one day told her of Rousseau’s view, with which he quite agreed, that to have a wet nurse is unnatural and harmful. When her next baby was born, despite the opposition of her mother, the doctors, and even of her husband himself — who were all vigorously opposed to her nursing her baby herself, a thing then unheard of and considered injurious — she insisted on having her own way, and after that nursed all her babies herself.

It very often happened that in a moment of irritation husband and wife would have a dispute, but long afterwards Pierre to his surprise and delight would find in his wife’s ideas and actions the very thought against which she had argued, but divested of everything superfluous that in the excitement of the dispute he had added when expressing his opinion.

After seven years of marriage Pierre had the joyous and firm consciousness that he was not a bad man, and he felt this because he saw himself reflected in his wife. He felt the good and bad within himself inextricably mingled and overlapping. But only what was really good in him was reflected in his wife, all that was not quite good was rejected. And this was not the result of logical reasoning but was a direct and mysterious reflection.

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At that moment Nicholas and Countess Mary came in. Pierre with the baby on his hand stooped, kissed them, and replied to their inquiries. But in spite of much that was interesting and had to be discussed, the baby with the little cap on its unsteady head evidently absorbed all his attention.

“How sweet!” said Countess Mary, looking at and playing with the baby. “Now, Nicholas,” she added, turning to her husband, “I can’t understand how it is you don’t see the charm of these delicious marvels.”

“I don’t and can’t,” replied Nicholas, looking coldly at the baby. “A lump of flesh. Come along, Pierre!”

“And yet he’s such an affectionate father,” said Countess Mary, vindicating her husband, “but only after they are a year old or so...”

“Now, Pierre nurses them splendidly,” said Natásha. “He says his hand is just made for a baby’s seat. Just look!”

“Only not for this...” Pierre suddenly exclaimed with a laugh, and shifting the baby he gave him to the nurse.

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The countess was sitting with her companion Belóva, playing grand-patience as usual, when Pierre and Natásha came into the drawing room with parcels under their arms.

The countess was now over sixty, was quite gray, and wore a cap with a frill that surrounded her face. Her face had shriveled, her upper lip had sunk in, and her eyes were dim.

After the deaths of her son and husband in such rapid succession, she felt herself a being accidentally forgotten in this world and left without aim or object for her existence. She ate, drank, slept, or kept awake, but did not live. Life gave her no new impressions. She wanted nothing from life but tranquillity, and that tranquillity only death could give her. But until death came she had to go on living, that is, to use her vital forces. A peculiarity one sees in very young children and very old people was particularly evident in her. Her life had no external aims — only a need to exercise her various functions and inclinations was apparent. She had to eat, sleep, think, speak, weep, work, give vent to her anger, and so on, merely because she had a stomach, a brain, muscles, nerves, and a liver. She did these things not under any external impulse as people in the full vigor of life do, when behind the purpose for which they strive that of exercising their functions remains unnoticed. She talked only because she physically needed to exercise her tongue and lungs. She cried as a child does, because her nose had to be cleared, and so on. What for people in their full vigor is an aim was for her evidently merely a pretext.

Thus in the morning — especially if she had eaten anything rich the day before — she felt a need of being angry and would choose as the handiest pretext Belóva’s deafness.

She would begin to say something to her in a low tone from the other end of the room.

“It seems a little warmer today, my dear,” she would murmur.

And when Belóva replied: “Oh yes, they’ve come,” she would mutter angrily: “O Lord! How stupid and deaf she is!”

Another pretext would be her snuff, which would seem too dry or too damp or not rubbed fine enough. After these fits of irritability her face would grow yellow, and her maids knew by infallible symptoms when Belóva would again be deaf, the snuff damp, and the countess’ face yellow. Just as she needed to work off her spleen so she had sometimes to exercise her still-existing faculty of thinking — and the pretext for that was a game of patience. When she needed to cry, the deceased count would be the pretext. When she wanted to be agitated, Nicholas and his health would be the pretext, and when she felt a need to speak spitefully, the pretext would be Countess Mary. When her vocal organs needed exercise, which was usually toward seven o’clock when she had had an after-dinner rest in a darkened room, the pretext would be the retelling of the same stories over and over again to the same audience.

The old lady’s condition was understood by the whole household though no one ever spoke of it, and they all made every possible effort to satisfy her needs. Only by a rare glance exchanged with a sad smile between Nicholas, Pierre, Natásha, and Countess Mary was the common understanding of her condition expressed.

But those glances expressed something more: they said that she had played her part in life, that what they now saw was not her whole self, that we must all become like her, and that they were glad to yield to her, to restrain themselves for this once precious being formerly as full of life as themselves, but now so much to be pitied. “Memento mori,” said these glances.

Only the really heartless, the stupid ones of that household, and the little children failed to understand this and avoided her.

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Nicholas put down the book and looked at his wife. The radiant eyes gazed at him questioningly: would he approve or disapprove of her diary? There could be no doubt not only of his approval but also of his admiration for his wife.

Perhaps it need not be done so pedantically, thought Nicholas, or even done at all, but this untiring, continual spiritual effort of which the sole aim was the children’s moral welfare delighted him. Had Nicholas been able to analyze his feelings he would have found that his steady, tender, and proud love of his wife rested on his feeling of wonder at her spirituality and at the lofty moral world, almost beyond his reach, in which she had her being.

He was proud of her intelligence and goodness, recognized his own insignificance beside her in the spiritual world, and rejoiced all the more that she with such a soul not only belonged to him but was part of himself.

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Natásha and Pierre, left alone, also began to talk as only a husband and wife can talk, that is, with extraordinary clearness and rapidity, understanding and expressing each other’s thoughts in ways contrary to all rules of logic, without premises, deductions, or conclusions, and in a quite peculiar way. Natásha was so used to this kind of talk with her husband that for her it was the surest sign of something being wrong between them if Pierre followed a line of logical reasoning. When he began proving anything, or talking argumentatively and calmly and she, led on by his example, began to do the same, she knew that they were on the verge of a quarrel.

From the moment they were alone and Natásha came up to him with wide-open happy eyes, and quickly seizing his head pressed it to her bosom, saying: “Now you are all mine, mine! You won’t escape!” — from that moment this conversation began, contrary to all the laws of logic and contrary to them because quite different subjects were talked about at one and the same time. This simultaneous discussion of many topics did not prevent a clear understanding but on the contrary was the surest sign that they fully understood one another.

Just as in a dream when all is uncertain, unreasoning, and contradictory, except the feeling that guides the dream, so in this intercourse contrary to all laws of reason, the words themselves were not consecutive and clear but only the feeling that prompted them.

Natásha spoke to Pierre about her brother’s life and doings, of how she had suffered and lacked life during his own absence, and of how she was fonder than ever of Mary, and how Mary was in every way better than herself. In saying this Natásha was sincere in acknowledging Mary’s superiority, but at the same time by saying it she made a demand on Pierre that he should, all the same, prefer her to Mary and to all other women, and that now, especially after having seen many women in Petersburg, he should tell her so afresh.

Pierre, answering Natásha’s words, told her how intolerable it had been for him to meet ladies at dinners and balls in Petersburg.

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Instead of men endowed with divine authority and directly guided by the will of God, modern history has given us either heroes endowed with extraordinary, superhuman capacities, or simply men of very various kinds, from monarchs to journalists, who lead the masses. Instead of the former divinely appointed aims of the Jewish, Greek, or Roman nations, which ancient historians regarded as representing the progress of humanity, modern history has postulated its own aims — the welfare of the French, German, or English people, or, in its highest abstraction, the welfare and civilization of humanity in general, by which is usually meant that of the peoples occupying a small northwesterly portion of a large continent.

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In 1789 a ferment arises in Paris; it grows, spreads, and is expressed by a movement of peoples from west to east. Several times it moves eastward and collides with a countermovement from the east westward. In 1812 it reaches its extreme limit, Moscow, and then, with remarkable symmetry, a countermovement occurs from east to west, attracting to it, as the first movement had done, the nations of middle Europe. The counter movement reaches the starting point of the first movement in the west — Paris — and subsides.

During that twenty-year period an immense number of fields were left untilled, houses were burned, trade changed its direction, millions of men migrated, were impoverished, or were enriched, and millions of Christian men professing the law of love of their fellows slew one another.

What does all this mean? Why did it happen? What made those people burn houses and slay their fellow men? What were the causes of these events? What force made men act so? These are the instinctive, plain, and most legitimate questions humanity asks itself when it encounters the monuments and tradition of that period.

For a reply to these questions the common sense of mankind turns to the science of history, whose aim is to enable nations and humanity to know themselves.

If history had retained the conception of the ancients it would have said that God, to reward or punish his people, gave Napoleon power and directed his will to the fulfillment of the divine ends, and that reply would have been clear and complete. One might believe or disbelieve in the divine significance of Napoleon, but for anyone believing in it there would have been nothing unintelligible in the history of that period, nor would there have been any contradictions.

But modern history cannot give that reply. Science does not admit the conception of the ancients as to the direct participation of the Deity in human affairs, and therefore history ought to give other answers.

Modern history replying to these questions says: you want to know what this movement means, what caused it, and what force produced these events? Then listen:

“Louis XIV was a very proud and self-confident man; he had such and such mistresses and such and such ministers and he ruled France badly. His descendants were weak men and they too ruled France badly. And they had such and such favorites and such and such mistresses. Moreover, certain men wrote some books at that time. At the end of the eighteenth century there were a couple of dozen men in Paris who began to talk about all men being free and equal. This caused people all over France to begin to slash at and drown one another. They killed the king and many other people. At that time there was in France a man of genius — Napoleon. He conquered everybody everywhere — that is, he killed many people because he was a great genius. And for some reason he went to kill Africans, and killed them so well and was so cunning and wise that when he returned to France he ordered everybody to obey him, and they all obeyed him. Having become an Emperor he again went out to kill people in Italy, Austria, and Prussia. And there too he killed a great many. In Russia there was an Emperor, Alexander, who decided to restore order in Europe and therefore fought against Napoleon. In 1807 he suddenly made friends with him, but in 1811 they again quarreled and again began killing many people. Napoleon led six hundred thousand men into Russia and captured Moscow; then he suddenly ran away from Moscow, and the Emperor Alexander, helped by the advice of Stein and others, united Europe to arm against the disturber of its peace. All Napoleon’s allies suddenly became his enemies and their forces advanced against the fresh forces he raised. The Allies defeated Napoleon, entered Paris, forced Napoleon to abdicate, and sent him to the island of Elba, not depriving him of the title of Emperor and showing him every respect, though five years before and one year later they all regarded him as an outlaw and a brigand. Then Louis XVIII, who till then had been the laughingstock both of the French and the Allies, began to reign. And Napoleon, shedding tears before his Old Guards, renounced the throne and went into exile. Then the skillful statesmen and diplomatists (especially Talleyrand, who managed to sit down in a particular chair before anyone else and thereby extended the frontiers of France) talked in Vienna and by these conversations made the nations happy or unhappy. Suddenly the diplomatists and monarchs nearly quarreled and were on the point of again ordering their armies to kill one another, but just then Napoleon arrived in France with a battalion, and the French, who had been hating him, immediately all submitted to him. But the Allied monarchs were angry at this and went to fight the French once more. And they defeated the genius Napoleon and, suddenly recognizing him as a brigand, sent him to the island of St. Helena. And the exile, separated from the beloved France so dear to his heart, died a lingering death on that rock and bequeathed his great deeds to posterity. But in Europe a reaction occurred and the sovereigns once again all began to oppress their subjects.”

It would be a mistake to think that this is ironic — a caricature of the historical accounts. On the contrary it is a very mild expression of the contradictory replies, not meeting the questions, which all the historians give, from the compilers of memoirs and the histories of separate states to the writers of general histories and the new histories of the culture of that period.

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When a man works alone he always has a certain set of reflections which as it seems to him directed his past activity, justify his present activity, and guide him in planning his future actions. Just the same is done by a concourse of people, allowing those who do not take a direct part in the activity to devise considerations, justifications, and surmises concerning their collective activity.

For reasons known or unknown to us the French began to drown and kill one another. And corresponding to the event its justification appears in people’s belief that this was necessary for the welfare of France, for liberty, and for equality. People ceased to kill one another, and this event was accompanied by its justification in the necessity for a centralization of power, resistance to Europe, and so on. Men went from the west to the east killing their fellow men, and the event was accompanied by phrases about the glory of France, the baseness of England, and so on. History shows us that these justifications of the events have no common sense and are all contradictory, as in the case of killing a man as the result of recognizing his rights, and the killing of millions in Russia for the humiliation of England. But these justifications have a very necessary significance in their own day.

These justifications release those who produce the events from moral responsibility. These temporary aims are like the broom fixed in front of a locomotive to clear the snow from the rails in front: they clear men’s moral responsibilities from their path.

Without such justification there would be no reply to the simplest question that presents itself when examining each historical event. How is it that millions of men commit collective crimes — make war, commit murder, and so on?

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Our conception of the degree of freedom often varies according to differences in the point of view from which we regard the event, but every human action appears to us as a certain combination of freedom and inevitability. In every action we examine we see a certain measure of freedom and a certain measure of inevitability. And always the more freedom we see in any action the less inevitability do we perceive, and the more inevitability the less freedom.

The proportion of freedom to inevitability decreases and increases according to the point of view from which the action is regarded, but their relation is always one of inverse proportion.

A sinking man who clutches at another and drowns him; or a hungry mother exhausted by feeding her baby, who steals some food; or a man trained to discipline who on duty at the word of command kills a defenseless man — seem less guilty, that is, less free and more subject to the law of necessity, to one who knows the circumstances in which these people were placed, and more free to one who does not know that the man was himself drowning, that the mother was hungry, that the soldier was in the ranks, and so on. Similarly a man who committed a murder twenty years ago and has since lived peaceably and harmlessly in society seems less guilty and his action more due to the law of inevitability, to someone who considers his action after twenty years have elapsed than to one who examined it the day after it was committed. And in the same way every action of an insane, intoxicated, or highly excited man appears less free and more inevitable to one who knows the mental condition of him who committed the action, and seems more free and less inevitable to one who does not know it.

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All cases without exception in which our conception of freedom and necessity is increased and diminished depend on three considerations:

(1) The relation to the external world of the man who commits the deeds.

(2) His relation to time.

(3) His relation to the causes leading to the action.

The first consideration is the clearness of our perception of the man’s relation to the external world and the greater or lesser clearness of our understanding of the definite position occupied by the man in relation to everything coexisting with him. This is what makes it evident that a drowning man is less free and more subject to necessity than one standing on dry ground, and that makes the actions of a man closely connected with others in a thickly populated district, or of one bound by family, official, or business duties, seem certainly less free and more subject to necessity than those of a man living in solitude and seclusion.

If we consider a man alone, apart from his relation to everything around him, each action of his seems to us free. But if we see his relation to anything around him, if we see his connection with anything whatever — with a man who speaks to him, a book he reads, the work on which he is engaged, even with the air he breathes or the light that falls on the things about him — we see that each of these circumstances has an influence on him and controls at least some side of his activity. And the more we perceive of these influences the more our conception of his freedom diminishes and the more our conception of the necessity that weighs on him increases.

The second consideration is the more or less evident time relation of the man to the world and the clearness of our perception of the place the man’s action occupies in time. That is the ground which makes the fall of the first man, resulting in the production of the human race, appear evidently less free than a man’s entry into marriage today. It is the reason why the life and activity of people who lived centuries ago and are connected with me in time cannot seem to me as free as the life of a contemporary, the consequences of which are still unknown to me.

The degree of our conception of freedom or inevitability depends in this respect on the greater or lesser lapse of time between the performance of the action and our judgment of it.

If I examine an act I performed a moment ago in approximately the same circumstances as those I am in now, my action appears to me undoubtedly free. But if I examine an act performed a month ago, then being in different circumstances, I cannot help recognizing that if that act had not been committed much that resulted from it — good, agreeable, and even essential — would not have taken place. If I reflect on an action still more remote, ten years ago or more, then the consequences of my action are still plainer to me and I find it hard to imagine what would have happened had that action not been performed. The farther I go back in memory, or what is the same thing the farther I go forward in my judgment, the more doubtful becomes my belief in the freedom of my action.

In history we find a very similar progress of conviction concerning the part played by free will in the general affairs of humanity. A contemporary event seems to us to be indubitably the doing of all the known participants, but with a more remote event we already see its inevitable results which prevent our considering anything else possible. And the farther we go back in examining events the less arbitrary do they appear.

The Austro-Prussian war appears to us undoubtedly the result of the crafty conduct of Bismarck, and so on. The Napoleonic wars still seem to us, though already questionably, to be the outcome of their heroes’ will. But in the Crusades we already see an event occupying its definite place in history and without which we cannot imagine the modern history of Europe, though to the chroniclers of the Crusades that event appeared as merely due to the will of certain people. In regard to the migration of the peoples it does not enter anyone’s head today to suppose that the renovation of the European world depended on Attila’s caprice. The farther back in history the object of our observation lies, the more doubtful does the free will of those concerned in the event become and the more manifest the law of inevitability.

The third consideration is the degree to which we apprehend that endless chain of causation inevitably demanded by reason, in which each phenomenon comprehended, and therefore man’s every action, must have its definite place as a result of what has gone before and as a cause of what will follow.

The better we are acquainted with the physiological, psychological, and historical laws deduced by observation and by which man is controlled, and the more correctly we perceive the physiological, psychological, and historical causes of the action, and the simpler the action we are observing and the less complex the character and mind of the man in question, the more subject to inevitability and the less free do our actions and those of others appear.

When we do not at all understand the cause of an action, whether a crime, a good action, or even one that is simply nonmoral, we ascribe a greater amount of freedom to it. In the case of a crime we most urgently demand the punishment for such an act; in the case of a virtuous act we rate its merit most highly. In an indifferent case we recognize in it more individuality, originality, and independence. But if even one of the innumerable causes of the act is known to us we recognize a certain element of necessity and are less insistent on punishment for the crime, or the acknowledgment of the merit of the virtuous act, or the freedom of the apparently original action. That a criminal was reared among malefactors mitigates his fault in our eyes. The self-sacrifice of a father or mother, or self-sacrifice with the possibility of a reward, is more comprehensible than gratuitous self-sacrifice, and therefore seems less deserving of sympathy and less the result of free will. The founder of a sect or party, or an inventor, impresses us less when we know how or by what the way was prepared for his activity. If we have a large range of examples, if our observation is constantly directed to seeking the correlation of cause and effect in people’s actions, their actions appear to us more under compulsion and less free the more correctly we connect the effects with the causes. If we examined simple actions and had a vast number of such actions under observation, our conception of their inevitability would be still greater. The dishonest conduct of the son of a dishonest father, the misconduct of a woman who had fallen into bad company, a drunkard’s relapse into drunkenness, and so on are actions that seem to us less free the better we understand their cause. If the man whose actions we are considering is on a very low stage of mental development, like a child, a madman, or a simpleton — then, knowing the causes of the act and the simplicity of the character and intelligence in question, we see so large an element of necessity and so little free will that as soon as we know the cause prompting the action we can foretell the result.

On these three considerations alone is based the conception of irresponsibility for crimes and the extenuating circumstances admitted by all legislative codes. The responsibility appears greater or less according to our greater or lesser knowledge of the circumstances in which the man was placed whose action is being judged, and according to the greater or lesser interval of time between the commission of the action and its investigation, and according to the greater or lesser understanding of the causes that led to the action.

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From the time the law of Copernicus was discovered and proved, the mere recognition of the fact that it was not the sun but the earth that moves sufficed to destroy the whole cosmography of the ancients. By disproving that law it might have been possible to retain the old conception of the movements of the bodies, but without disproving it, it would seem impossible to continue studying the Ptolemaic worlds. But even after the discovery of the law of Copernicus the Ptolemaic worlds were still studied for a long time.

From the time the first person said and proved that the number of births or of crimes is subject to mathematical laws, and that this or that mode of government is determined by certain geographical and economic conditions, and that certain relations of population to soil produce migrations of peoples, the foundations on which history had been built were destroyed in their essence.

By refuting these new laws the former view of history might have been retained; but without refuting them it would seem impossible to continue studying historic events as the results of man’s free will. For if a certain mode of government was established or certain migrations of peoples took place in consequence of such and such geographic, ethnographic, or economic conditions, then the free will of those individuals who appear to us to have established that mode of government or occasioned the migrations can no longer be regarded as the cause.

And yet the former history continues to be studied side by side with the laws of statistics, geography, political economy, comparative philology, and geology, which directly contradict its assumptions.

The struggle between the old views and the new was long and stubbornly fought out in physical philosophy. Theology stood on guard for the old views and accused the new of violating revelation. But when truth conquered, theology established itself just as firmly on the new foundation.

Just as prolonged and stubborn is the struggle now proceeding between the old and the new conception of history, and theology in the same way stands on guard for the old view, and accuses the new view of subverting revelation.

In the one case as in the other, on both sides the struggle provokes passion and stifles truth. On the one hand there is fear and regret for the loss of the whole edifice constructed through the ages, on the other is the passion for destruction.

To the men who fought against the rising truths of physical philosophy, it seemed that if they admitted that truth it would destroy faith in God, in the creation of the firmament, and in the miracle of Joshua the son of Nun. To the defenders of the laws of Copernicus and Newton, to Voltaire for example, it seemed that the laws of astronomy destroyed religion, and he utilized the law of gravitation as a weapon against religion.

Just so it now seems as if we have only to admit the law of inevitability, to destroy the conception of the soul, of good and evil, and all the institutions of state and church that have been built up on those conceptions.

So too, like Voltaire in his time, uninvited defenders of the law of inevitability today use that law as a weapon against religion, though the law of inevitability in history, like the law of Copernicus in astronomy, far from destroying, even strengthens the foundation on which the institutions of state and church are erected.

As in the question of astronomy then, so in the question of history now, the whole difference of opinion is based on the recognition or nonrecognition of something absolute, serving as the measure of visible phenomena. In astronomy it was the immovability of the earth, in history it is the independence of personality — free will.

As with astronomy the difficulty of recognizing the motion of the earth lay in abandoning the immediate sensation of the earth’s fixity and of the motion of the planets, so in history the difficulty of recognizing the subjection of personality to the laws of space, time, and cause lies in renouncing the direct feeling of the independence of one’s own personality. But as in astronomy the new view said: “It is true that we do not feel the movement of the earth, but by admitting its immobility we arrive at absurdity, while by admitting its motion (which we do not feel) we arrive at laws,” so also in history the new view says: “It is true that we are not conscious of our dependence, but by admitting our free will we arrive at absurdity, while by admitting our dependence on the external world, on time, and on cause, we arrive at laws.”

In the first case it was necessary to renounce the consciousness of an unreal immobility in space and to recognize a motion we did not feel; in the present case it is similarly necessary to renounce a freedom that does not exist, and to recognize a dependence of which we are not conscious.

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[Note: the above final section is how Tolstoy ended his book.]