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Аннотация

The whole memorable battle, shown through the eyes of four fellow soldiers, four sergeant major, grenadiers. Those three days of incredible battles that covered the glory of the Russian army

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Sergey Solovyov

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FOREWORD

This battle, which took place in 1812, was one of the landmark events in the history of Russia. What forever changed the fate of our country, the attitude towards what was happening in those years among all strata of society, especially the privileged. Since the time of Peter the Great, everyone has become accustomed to the fact that the wars waged by the Russian army are somewhere far away, and what happened will not affect the life and property of ordinary people. But, this has changed at once. Again, as in the era of Ivan the Terrible, cities burned, property was destroyed to dust, both rich and aristocrats, and ordinary citizens, artisans and serfs. Smolensk was simply wiped off the face of the earth, this richest city, with warehouses and estates of merchants, with dozens and dozens of houses of residents. Moscow — almost half of the city burned down in fires, Russian citizens lost their fortunes, many were absolutely ruined. This tragedy was described by Leo Tolstoy in his famous novel War and Peace. And yes, a considerable part of the aristocrats voluntarily joined the ranks of the militia, such famous and famous people as F.I. Glinka and subsequently the great poet of Russia, educator of the Tsarevich, V.A. Zhukovsky. Both left memories of those difficult and decisive times. And, this war, or rather, attitudes towards its victims, the suffering of people, forever changed the perception of the state, power, part

of the officers and aristocrats.

The provinces of Russia, where the war took place, were ruined, ordinary people were in dire need, but the emperor did not provide the unfortunate with any help and support. And people shaved, suffered, were deprived of the most necessary. The most incredible thing happened nearby. Inhuman greed and callousness, and the same incredible altruism. Field Marshal Kutuzov threw twenty thousand wounded in Moscow, and Count Vorontsov was able to take out, sacrificing his property, three hundred surviving soldiers of his division and sixty officers, took them to his estate, and treated them at his own expense.

And Emperor Alexander showed terrible cynicism to what was happening — this ruler gave the ruined residents of Waterloo in 1815 two and a half million rubles, not giving the unfortunate inhabitants of Smolensk, Borodino and Moscow, dozens of other affected settlements in Russia a penny! Alexander Pavlovich's sister, Ekaterina Pavlovna, who was in Kazan at that time, writes that the nobility is very dissatisfied with the sovereign.

Yes, in fact, this largely explained the movement of the Decembrists that arose in the last years of this emperor. You can recall Leskov's famous story «Lefty» about the unfortunate master Lefty, which clearly describes how contemptuously Emperor Alexander treated his country and adored everything foreign. Well, and remember the words of Pushkin, from «Eugene Onegin»:

The ruler is weak and evil,

Bald cheek, enemy of labor,
Inadvertently warmed by fame
Then he ruled over us…

After the war, in devastated Russia, in 1817, peasant unrest began. Gzhatsky province, Smolensk. General Paskevich had to understand the reasons for these riots. It turned out that the embezzlers plundered the funds allocated for the restoration of the burned villages, and they continued to charge land from the population. So only the intervention of General Paskevich made it possible to eliminate injustices. But, only during the reign of Nikolai Pavlovich, the provinces affected by the war were exempted from extortion for ten years.

That's actually the contradictory era in which Russia existed, at the difficult time when this battle happened.

***

Almost two hundred and twelve years later, it is important to show the full scope of that battle, called the Battle of Borodino in Russian sources, and on the Moscow River in French. What can I say here? In this area at the beginning of the 19th century. four villages, fifteen villages and four villages were located. The village of Borodino was 124 kilometers from Moscow. The length of the battlefield was about three and a half miles, from the village of Gorki to Utitsa. Shevardino defended from Semenovsky at a distance of two miles. Is it a lot or a little in that era? Well, you need to understand that there were no cars for movement and drones for reconnaissance, and the range of a

cannon shot was no more than two kilometers, and a gun shot was only three hundred meters, and the range of effective, aimed fire was much lower. The maneuvering speed was low — for infantry no more than five kilometers per hour, and cavalry ten per hour by trot, and by gallop, and only for couriers — no more than twenty. That is, the commander could receive a report no earlier than half an hour after an important incident. This is due to the fact that the commander with the headquarters advanced close to the troops, taking great risks, but wanting not to lose control of the battle. The next thing that made the battles incomprehensible to today's readers was the peculiar speed of maneuvering troops and the throughput of the road network of a state. Any army on the march stretched for many miles, walked along the roads, leaving relatively hard surfaces for artillery. The highways were not wide, with a maximum of accommodating two horse-drawn trucks for parallel traffic. Well, what was the artillery installation of that time? A gun weighing about one and a half tons (this is light), with six horses, and a charging box with four horses. How much did this take up? Simple mathematics — one and a half meters per horse, a gun another two meters. Charging box — two meters. In total, the gun occupied ten meters on the road. The highway was also two guns wide. That is, a hundred guns is a thousand meters, at least. Five hundred guns, this is a column almost five kilometers long. It is also necessary to count the parks of heavy trucks for stocks of gunpowder. All this was a difficult concern for the army quartermasters in order

to manage it all effectively. And the most dangerous situation was to miss the enemy attack on the march. In general, it often turned into a disaster. In the era of Tsar Peter, Count Sheremetev was the master of such blows. Next. Readers should know that a horse, like dryness, is alive, subject to fatigue, capricious, and its endurance is much lower than that of a person. The maximum march for a horse is no more than twenty miles per day if it has to march the next day again. The battle, with continuous maneuvers, attacks, rebuilding for horses, is difficult. Withstand a high pace of movement for no more than four hours. Further, they move only in increments. The next day they are completely incapable. This, excuse me, is not cars or tanks, where you only need to refuel the equipment, and the mileage before repair is thousands of kilometers.

Therefore, say, Napoleon's army, following three columns, entered the Borodino field for almost three days, from August 22 to 25, being stationed according to the plan of the French commander. And, the army rested long after the grueling march.

So, the Russian army took a position on the right bank of the Kolochi River, with its front to the Kolochsky Monastery, with its right wing leaning on the bank of Moscow — the river. Here the river meanders whimsically at Borodino heights and hills. The Kolocha River, serving as an obstacle for the enemy, flowed into Moscow, at an acute angle. The Voyna River, the streams Stonets, Ognik, Semenovsky and many others flow into Koloch. The names themselves, which were not alone a hundred years

before that battle, as if warned of an impending bloody battle. Or, this area has been chosen for hot battles and fights before.

In general, this whole place in those days was extremely rugged, uneven, rich in ravines, depressions and hills, thanks to these water obstacles. During the battle, these irregularities served as shelter from the murderous artillery fire, both for the defenders and attackers. Forests hid the edges of this huge position, and two roads, Staraya Smolenskaya on the left flank, and Novaya Moskovskaya on the right flank, seemed to limit it. In addition, the right and left flank were protected by natural heights, on which fortified batteries were erected. True, due to lack of time, lunettes were created, and not full-fledged redoubts protected from all sides. Lunette is a position for artillery, opening from the rear. Redoubt is a pentagon protected on all sides by a moat and a rampart.

In Gorki, on the right flank of the position, the ancient mound was turned into a powerful battery, surrounding it with a bulk shaft. From this place, the whole position was perfectly visible, according to the memoirs of contemporaries.

In front of the mound, about four hundred meters from the Kolochi River, there was another battery, opposite the village of Borodino. In the forest, sappers also built flushes that defended the right flank of the Russian army. In addition, nearby, in the village of Tatarinovo, the headquarters of the commander-in-chief Kutuzov was located. Flushes with artillery batteries were erected near the village of Maslovo. Here stood the corps of

General Baggovut.

Further, in the center of the position, from Gorki, to the village of Semenovskaya, Lunet was built on a natural hill, sometimes, however incorrectly, it was called a redoubt, and then, recognizing the merits of General Raevsky to protect this position, and the battery of Raevsky or Kurgan.» She was also called, by the name of the commander of the Shulman artillery battery, the «Shulman battery.» The lunette stood from the redoubt at Gorki, at a distance of about eight hundred meters. The description of this fortification has been preserved, nineteen guns of 26 and 12 battery artillery companies were delivered. The length of the arc on which the guns stood was 60 fathoms or about 128 meters. The width of the moat in front of the lunette was 7.5 meters, a depth of about 3 meters. The flanks of the fortification were 26.7 meters each. Covered the lunette of the division of the Raevsky corps, numbering 10,800 people, behind stood the fourth cavalry corps.

A height was discovered near the village of Semenovskaya by quartermasters, and Semenovsky flushes, three positions open from the rear, were erected from the houses of the settlement, completely destroyed. The fortifications were one kilometer away from Raevsky's battery. That is, they could cover each other with fire. Each of the flushes could have a 12-gun battery, but there were only 24 guns from 2 and 32 battery artillery companies. The position was defended by the combined grenadier division of Count Vorontsov of 2,100 people and the

27th division of Neverovsky, numbering 4,000 people after the Shevardinsky battle, in reserve near the village of Semenovskaya there was a second grenalier division of 6,000 soldiers.

In reserve was the guards corps of General Lavrov and two cuirassier divisions under the general command of General Prince Golitsyn.

A kilometer from the Semenov flushes, on the Utitsky Kurgan, a giant battery of 60 guns was built. The 1,2,5,6 light artillery companies and the 1st battery artillery company got angry. The battery covered the Old Smolensk road. Behind it stood the Tuchkov corps and part of the Moscow militia.

On the right flank of the position, brought forward along the New Moscow Road, the Shevardinsky redoubt was also created, judging by the descriptions, it also lunges. He was defended by a detachment of General Gorchakov, with 27 divisions. It was here that the multi-day battle of Borodino began, on August 24, according to the old style, about the fourteenth hour. It continued on August 26th.

The right flank of the Russian army was commanded by General Miloradovich. The height near the village of Gorki, and the position to the Kurgan battery was under the general command of General Dokhturov, the left flank, including the position on the Kurgan battery and Semenov flushes, was commanded by Lieutenant General Gorchakov.

The French army also lined this field. For two days, sappers erected artillery positions. These were fortifications for the

Foucher and Sorbier batteries, located east of the Shevardinsky redoubt. Field fortifications were also built on the left flank, for the troops of Eugene Bogarne, near the village of Borodino. The main forces, under the command of Davout, the divisions of Kompan, Frian and Desse, were assigned to attack the Semenov flushes. The Ney and Junot corps were assigned to act against the Kurgan battery, the Beauharnais corps was deployed on the left flank, then it was supposed to join the attack on the center of the Russian position. He had the divisions of Moran, Gerard, Delzon and Bruzier.

Murat's reserve horse corps were built behind the infantry corps of the French army. Nansouty's first corps was behind the right flank, Davout's corps divisions, Kompana, Friana and Desse. The second corps of Montbren behind the divisions of the center, the corps of Ney and Junot The third corps of Pear on the left flank, covering the divisions of Moran, Gerard, Bruzier. The fourth, the cuirassier corps of Latur- Mobur stood in reserve. General Ornano with several regiments of light cavalry watched the tip of the left flank of the French army. The imperial guard, consisting of three infantry divisions, Curial, Rogue and Clapared, was in reserve.

PROLOGUE

Rearguard of General Konovnitsyn. Several days of fighting from August 19 to 24, 1812.

Many exploits of Russian soldiers marked the retreat from the western borders to Borodino. Everyone remembers the unprecedented battle of General Neverovsky's division near Smolensk with Murat's cavalry. But the continuous battles of General Konovnitsyn's detachment from Tsarev-Zaimishche to Borodino are undeservedly forgotten, covered by the glory of the Borodino battle

***

Russian infantrymen of Konovnitsyn's division hurriedly ran across a wooden bridge across the river. Tsarevo-Zaimishche, a rich village, was burning. In the copse, he shook the Russian rangers fired at the French, letting them retreat to the other side. It was August 19, 1812.

The horse huntsmen tried to drive closer, but having lost a few shot down with well-aimed shots, they drove back. The Russians, numbering about a company, fled across the bridge, and occupied the oorona by the trees. But, the bridge remained intact.

General Konovnitsyn blared after his detachment, breaking away from the pursuit, and sighed with satisfaction. But, suddenly

looked closely again, and irritably turned to the commander of the rangers.

— What, your devils, did not light the bridge?

«Nothing, Your Excellency!

— The commander of the pioneers to me!

Then a very young lieutenant appeared, and famously trumped the general: Everything was in favor of the officer. Both straightening and appearance. Eagle, in a word.

~ Lieutenant Carl Jung!

— Lieutenant, we must destroy the bridge.

«We will surely do it!

***

«I need three hunters! This is a dangerous business, brothers, but, I can promise, you will immediately go to unters! Lieutenant Jung told his pioneers, bypassing the formation of his subordinates.

He had brave and experienced soldiers, skilled at all sorts of things that were shown near Smolensk. Three came forward: Nikifor Ponosov, Onufry Timoshenko and Nikita Yakovlev.

«This is the case, burn the bridges, stop the enemy,» the lieutenant explained.

— So the matter is simple. Resins and gunpowder are needed. Wicks.

— Take everything. Only fast.

The pioneers took what they needed, ran to this place, where huntsmen sat along the bushes, at the bridge, exchanging fire with

the French.

«Who are you?» the soldiers did not understand.

Indeed, the people who stood peped with them, read in one from scratch, barefoot, but really, without beards. Anyone would not understand.

«We are the pioneers. We must burn the bridge, order!

— Come on

— You, brothers, shoot more often! Ponosov asked.

«Let's do it,» promised the eldest of the rangers, a gray-haired non-commissioned officer.

Russian arrows began to fire thickets from guns, pioneers were able to climb the bridge. In karachki, no matter what hit them, the aisles to the middle of the bridge, dumped resin from shoulder bags, added gunpowder with a couple of pounds. The French noticed everything, ran closer, their bullets hit the logs of the bridge very close. But, Yakovlev fired gunpowder from a smoldering wick, and the whole trio of pioneers poured into the water, fleeing the shots.

But it was not done yet. Pioneers in the manner of beavers climbed onto the dam, and broke the flaps, so that water poured out of the dam. And the French grumbled completely, dragged the cannon, and blurted out buckshot on them. The pioneers only managed to dive into the wave.

And there, in ten fathoms, they got to the Russian coast in a safe place. Yakovlev turned and looked. And then, the bridge burned well, they could not walk along it, that's for sure.

And Tymoshenko looked around, but looked around, as if he had lost something.

— What are you, Onufry? Nikita laughed.

— Yes, soromno somehow, — the pioneer answered a little blushing, — and our uniforms with boots are far away. Read, you have to get naked.

The answer was only the laughter of his comrades.

***

The next day, it didn't get any easier. Konovnitsyn's detachment was pursued by the French. And the Russian rearguard was retreating. General Konovnitsyn seemed to be playing chess, moving pieces, covering his infantrymen with artillery fire. Not allowing Murat to bypass or surround himself. On August 20, Russian troops approached Gzhatsk, waging almost continuous battles for three hours.

The general studied the map, and with a lead pencil he drove everything across the bridge over the Gzhat River. And he especially noticed all these narrowness, and the forest too.

— Golubchik, — he turned to the orderly, — call me the lieutenant of the pioneer company…

So Konovnitsyn received this officer on a folding chair at the folding table.

«So sorry, Karl Friedrichovich, that I'm not in my house,» the general grinned.

And those who did not know from the army that Konovnitsyn was still tsarist relatives, the Konovnitsyns were close in blood to

the Romanov boyars, and the general would always be listened to in the Winter Palace.

— Well, but our house near Narva is small, in my father's estate, — the lieutenant Jung joked.

— Reported about the exploits of your soldiers, lieutenant. Again, it is necessary to burn the bridge over Gzhat.

«It's harder to build. We must, and we will set fire.

***

Now four pioneers have begun to fulfill. Non-commissioned officer Gavriil Ivanov, privates Yogan Willem, Gavriil Kondratyev, Naum Martynov moved to the outskirts of the city. There was a marina nearby, no one. Kondratyev noticed the watchman at the barn.

— Great grandfather! 'he said.

— Hello and you, servant! Again, leave?

«That's the strategy. The retreat is called.

«So of course it is. You know, angry. And why are you not fighting, afraid, or what?

«So no. Now, and we will accept the fight. Only we need resin. Do you have it?

«It is. Only this is the good of the merchant Krivorukov.

All non-commissioned officer Ivanov listened to this, and stepped forward. And the grandfather seems to be impressed.

— Requisitioning, — uttered the clever word non-commissioned, — For army needs. Open the barn.

Grandfather was directly stunned by all this, and dissolved the

barn doors itself. The soldiers quickly rolled out a barrel of tar to the bridge. Here I had to hurry. While Ivanov lit the bridge, the rest of their carbines fired back from the French horse rangers. But it seems that everything worked out.

***

The detachment passed all the ambushes, and the rearguard itself defeated two regiments of French cavalry in the Gzhat forests. And then, on August 23, tired soldiers approached the Gridnevo post station.

Konovnitsyn placed his regiments, behind the moat and ravine, preventing the French cavalry from maneuvering. It was cool, and the general went around the regiments, throwing an overcoat over his shoulders. And, on many days, his head ached unbearably, so that under his hat, decorated with feathers, you could see the usual nightcap. The soldiers greeted their general with joy, and his face, calm and cold, was calm.

Moreover, on the other side of the ravine, the restless handsome man and the brave man of the Great Army, Marshal Murat himself, flanked with his retinue. He greeted the Russian general, shouted something, but was not heard.

Soon a fight ensued, the French horse rangers tried to bypass Konovnitsyn's position on the right, but were met by the Izyum hussars, who threw them back to the road. The cannon fire continued until the evening, and then the Russian rearguard moved to the Kolochsky monastery.

But, the next day, August 24, the case continued. The battle

went on until the evening, the Jus huntsmen, seeding along the banks of the Kolochi, did not allow the French to breathe. And the glorious Izyum regiment chopped up the division of French horse rangers. And on the night, the Russian rearguard seemed to dissolve, disappeared into the forests, and took its place in the line of the Russian army prepared for the battle of Borodinskrm.

CHAPTER 1 Gray-haired old man on the Borodino field

Simbirtsy, standing at their bivouacs, suddenly jumped up from their seats. Soldiers standing on guard, pulled out on the rack «at attention.» The regimental commander quickly drove up to this horseman, who was accompanied by only four Don Cossacks. And then, a small bay and a very obedient horse, a klepper, proudly carried this seemingly invisible rider. The cavalier guard hat, flattened and all sitting on the crown of the head, covered his gray hair, knocked out from under the headdress. The general's scarf was hung in an old way, over his shoulder, on a non-combat uniform frock coat. Of the orders, as the most expensive and beloved, only St. George shone around his neck. Apparently, the general did not like to drag himself into a combat outfit.

This was a man of medium height, stocky, albeit overweight, a little loose. He did not talk to the colonel for long, he let him go with a wave of his hand. Well, one of the Donets put a bench on a hillock, and this general sat down on it, and took out a

spyglass, surveying the surroundings. True, the right eye of an elderly general saw badly, and he looked into the pipe only with his left. But, as you can see, I saw more than others with one eye, with both eyes. And more importantly, he comprehended and understood everything with his vast mind. He was silent for a long time, and so, as others cannot, trying to cover up the absence of his own mind with idle words.

The general looked for a long time, and only then, this man surprised many… He sat down, leaned his left ear to the ground, and seemed to be listening to something. The soldiers looked, and as if they froze without interfering. As if he could find out what all the soldiers of the Russian Army were so eager to understand.

Soon, three generals arrived, with rich epaulettes and a retinue of brilliant officers, and the gray-haired general in a simple frock coat, slowly gathered, and left.

The soldiers, lined up in rows, shouted together:" Hurray!» They saw off the greetings of their beloved commander. Then, they began slowly, with regret diverges to their fires and tents.

— What was he doing? the young soldier whispered, making round eyes.

— So listened to what the Cheese Earth itself says. Who should win, who should surpass the enemy in battle. This, not everyone knows how to hear, here, because a special skill is needed!

— And who is it, Panteleimon Ilyich? asked, judging by the

gray uniform, the recent recruit of his sergeant major.

— So this, Semyon, is, our commander, General-Marshal Mikhail Illarionovich Kutuzov. He fought with Generalissimo Suvorov himself, took the Ishmael fortress. He was wounded in the head, so survived, you see, the Lord helped him. And they say, they say, in the Turetchina, many sorcerers taught him various spells, and now no one can surpass him in battle by cunning.

— So, now we will definitely not retreat? Won't we move further?

— Since God willing, yes the commander will order, — the sergeant major himself sighed heavily, and smoothed out a thick mustache.

— And then, for sure, it will be…

— The army stood up, the reserves came up. They say the artillery folder has arrived. New commander in the army…

— And the soldier's rumor says:" Kutuzov has come, beat the French!»

«That's for sure, Semyon. So, the tenants said that help from Moscow came, as many as twelve thousand troops, with General Markov at the head. All the earth has risen, all of Russia. Now, for sure, Napoleon cannot cope with the Orthodox army, and it is no longer possible for us, Russian soldiers, to retreat!

CHAPTER 2 The evening before the battle.

It was already evening, and here, too, finally became quiet.

The departed soldiers in arrows and secrets, see, tired of shooting at the French, and just sat in the bushes, served and gnawed crackers. Well, here, by the fire, it was even better. There was a bivouac of the Simbirsk Infantry Regiment, the twenty-seventh division. And every person could understand this, even purely in a particular dress. On the shoulder straps of the soldiers flaunted the number «27.» However, among the soldiers, in uniforms of dark green cloth, almost half were in dark gray they say: still recruiting. And then, the division suffered heavy losses, and by order of the commander-in-chief Kutuzov, as many as four thousand recruits were included in the lists. But, and transferred to the regiments of experienced soldiers who became sergeant major in companies.

Both Unter and Sergeant Major cool and skillfully taught young soldiers to the royal service. To indiscriminately and loyally pull a heavy soldier's strap. They did not murmur, did not quarrel, but honestly followed orders. But, now the case was bowing in the evening, and the soldiers sat and rested by the fire.

Yakov, an artel cashevar, stirred the brew with a wooden spoon.

— And, Panteleimon Ilyich, the noble after all kulesh will come out. Senka is great, he ran to the huntsmen in time, got hold of horse meat.

— Yes, there was a mistake between our hussars and Lancers, — the sergeant major spoke decorously, — Well done, guy, showed ingenuity. And a soldier cannot do without it. The main

thing is to straighten, but to keep the system, especially when HE shoots at you. The main thing is not to be timid, but hold on to your own. And, of course, so that the uniform is always in order, for a soldier, the main thing is straightening.

— And you, here, Panteleimon Ilyich, to us in a regiment, too recently transferred. Say, from the Moscow Grenadier? How come? From the grenadiers and to us, to the infantry?

— It's not our business, Timka, to decide. And the officer. Translated, so it is necessary, but — with an increase. And so, I also deserved a cross for Smolensk, but they still won't give it in any way, right, the scribes hurt where, — the sergeant major was saddened again.

— Yes, you look into battle soon. And there are no corned beef. Only now, horse meat with buckwheat, — the soldier in a gray uniform recalled, — Semyon just rescued the artel. Everything is bad with us. Food is not good at all.

— Exactly, otherwise the meat would have disappeared in vain. And so, at least we will eat willingly. You, after the recruitment depot, will not be fed. No matter how much you eat, Semyon, but all one, skin and bones. Won, shako, barely wider than your shoulders will be.

The soldiers around the fire laughed together. Everyone looked at an experienced warrior with booty and adoration, and then you won't disappear with that. They looked at the tula, behind the forest, where the lights of the French bivouacs shone. And there are many lights, if only to cope tomorrow, with the

Frenchman…

— So I eat, Panteleimon Ilyich, I eat. And even then, I am in our company, but the shooter is the first! Warriors remarked.

— Well, how is Yakov, isn't it ready? — asked the sergeant major, — and then certainly… And some kind of sensible smell! As if I looked into the Smolensk tavern!

— So I also got weed and a ray, everything went too far, — the kashevar boasted.

— Yes, it seems to have sung… said the sergeant major, looking at Jacob with approval. — Well, that's it, sit down at the cauldron, and sip. And then we'll eat the meat…

Panteleimon Ilyiich got up here, removed the shako hidden by the cover from the cut head, and began to read the prayer. His voice was good, loud, like a clerk in a large temple. And the osanist himself is a servant, decorated with lush and well-groomed mustaches that have already begun to gray. And judging by the stripes on the sleeve, ten years, no less, served the king: father. The service men sat down, took out wooden spoons, and began to lower them into the brew in turn. Everything is as it should be…

They ate with pleasure, and then, at home, in their village, they did not feed like that every day. Panteleimon Ilyich himself ate leisurely, trying not to stain his mustache, his great pride. But now, it came to the meat, which was quickly eaten by the soldiers who were not spoiled. Yakov took the boiler and went to the stream, and the sergeant major slowly began to stuff the

old pipe with good tobacco taken from the French. He lit a little coal, and let out a cloud of smoke. I myself thought that a good day was today, very good.

Then there was a roar of hooves, screams were heard:

«Attention!»

Here, a couple of riders drove up to their bivouac. Feldwebel jumped up, removed the phone, put on a shako, and dashing, springy step approached the officers.

— Your high-breasted, entrusted to me the first company rests after eating. Twenty soldiers in guard and secrets…

— Oh and well done, sergeant major Pustovalov! Here, it's good that you were transferred to my recruits. Right, Mr. Quartermaster? General Neverovsky addressed him.

— That's right,. And for the Simbirsk regiment you can be calm. Nevertheless, the first, famous company…

— Do you understand, sergeant major? And now, take it, friend, otherwise your award is late! Wear it with honor! — and the general handed over the St. George Cross to Pustovalov, — that's it, to us further. Hold on boldly, soldiers!

And the general and the major drove on, and the sergeant major carefully pinned the award to his uniform, where two medals were already hanging. The delighted Pustovalov was distracted, he preened everything, but looked back at his awards.

— Panteleimon! he heard a scream, and at once turned around.

Here he himself went to meet these unexpected guests. In

front of him stood three honored warriors, also marked with feldwebel barbs. One, in the grenadier uniform, with the sign of the 2nd grenadier division on uniform, the other in the uniform of the Pavlovsky grenadier regiment, and the third, in the beautiful Life Guards, with galloons, judging by the uniform, of the Lithuanian regiment. His soldiers jumped up when they saw this.

— Hello, dear friends! — Pustovalov greeted, — glad, aam, and very much!

— When we still meet, Panteleimon, — said the non-commissioned officer in the uniform of the Pavlovsky regiment, — it's good that they were allowed. They volunteered to escort a truck with gunpowder for your regiment.

— I see, Cyril. Or how are you now, Kirill Borisovich?

«Like you, Panteleimon Ilyich?» — he grinned, — here, scattered us from our, Moscow grenadier regiment… As they produced them from unerrs in sergeant major, they divorced them. I, you see, in the Pavlovsky regiment now.

— Well, now there are a lot of recruits in the regiments, — reasoned the sergeant major in the uniform of the second grenadier division, — the losses are much more than considerable, we are retreating with battles.

— Well, now you, Evgraf Fomich, at the prince of Mecklenburg, in the Moscow regiment. And then, honorable!

— Well, Peter Zakharovich jumped all of us. And then, higher growth. Even you, Panteleimon, and then outgrew!

— Well, we have such a service… — Peter said, — And even

then, our regiment, Lithuanian, new, the sovereign recently gave the banner. And not everything is simple. Konstantin Pavlovich, Tsarevich sovereign, Strogonek. In Moscow, everything was better. Where, consider, Evgraf remained.

Young sollats looked with delight at these already gray-haired warriors. Everyone, after all, given to recruits, thought and wondered if they would have to return home? Or, will you disappear in someone else's side without going missing, or even without a grave? And these, now, everyone has served more than ten years!

«What are you sad about?» Put your noses down! Panteleimon Ilyich said sternly, «you are now in the royal service, you should be proud!» Soldiers, not men's inexperienced! Check the locks of the guns in the goats! Quick! Perform!

And privates ran in, fussed, dismantling weapons. We started the usual business — to check the spring, flint. Is everything all right?

«You understand them,» praised Evgraf Panteleimon.

— And then! As my old sergeant major used to say, a soldier must perform a service, be in business. And any thought for a soldier is a real harm, from this only a headache is connected! Pustovalov replied, smoothing his mustache again.

All four servicemen laughed, and old acquaintances left the bivouac of the Simbirsk regiment. Well, Panteleimon began to take off his uniform, and took out the saved clean linen from the satchel.

— You can't go to death in a dirty underworld. This is a sin, «he whispered, quickly changing his clothes.

And it was much more pleasant to smell clean on the body. It became easier for myself. I checked the buttons on the cuffs, everything was in place. And then the voice of the quarterman rang out:

— Vodka brought! Go to the charka! Who wishes, guys!

The soldiers decorously, without crowding, received a wine portion and went aside. Panteleimon stood a little with a tin charka, then, without grimacing, drank. Vodka was caustic, but he knew that from stomach diseases, the first thing. Well, or water with vinegar. But now, in the camp, the signal of the bugler «To the end!» and who wanted, except for the guards, went to bed. Pustovalov also sighed, and went to the tent. Where he took off his boots, but lay down on spruce branches, covered with an overcoat — it's simple, after all, and a soldier's bed. He tried to fall asleep, giving an example to his subordinates.

CHAPTER 3 Shevardinsky fight

From his sleep he was pulled out by the sound of a bugle, which was unlike anything else. The layman cannot explain what this signal is for a military man! I heard, immediately run to your banner, get in line, and expect an order! And Pustovalov cheerfully got up himself, and began to push the soldiers to quickly take on a military appearance. He himself looked with a vigilant eye, so as not to forget something from the ammunition. Non-combatants also came up, collect property, and load trucks, take to the designated place. It was immediately possible to distinguish them — without knapsacks, in fodder hats instead of shakos.

— Disassemble the weapon from the goats! — the sergeant major usually commanded.

And nearby stood two unters, senior and junior, strong warriors with heroic, pood fists, Legkov and Birkin. And the names, although funny, but you look at both, it immediately becomes no laughing matter.

The company was built quickly, so the ensigns, Khrustalev and Ionin, and Mr. Lieutenant Fedorov himself, Ivan Kuzmich, the company commander, approached. Pustovalov approached him and reported as it should:

— Ninety-five men in the ranks, three in the infirmary. There are no stragglers!

— Well done, Panteleimon Ilyich! And the fact is that you were assigned to my company! And the reward found you, buddy! Drummer! To the march!

Then the standard-bearer with two assistants approached, and the first company advanced from the camp, followed by the second, third companies of their battalion. Drummers famously beat off the rhythm of movement Pustovalov walked from the side of the formation, watching his soldiers with a tenacious and corrosive look. Their nobles rode on horseback, along with all the officers of the regiment. The column-guides jumped up, and Panteleimon sighed, he realized that now the matter is certainly ahead. True, they were overtaken by company columns of rangers, who went further, to the road, forests and shrubs. And behind them, trucks were gathering dust with supplies, water, breadcrumbs and rifle charges for the infantrymen. And the sergeant major noticed the artillery park, he stood on a heavy battery half a verst. Barrels of gunpowder, baskets with cores and bombs, everything was ready, already immersed in spare charging boxes. The non-combatants were loaded, did not give up, did not sit idle.

«Stop! — the command rang out, — sit down!

Slightly tired soldiers sat on the ground. There was an anxious wait on my faces. And then, hard all this business, wait, and catch up, as Pustovalov thought. But he could not sit out, walked through the rows, checked all the soldiers. Fedka Petrov, helped remove the cover from the shako. Sighed, but said nothing. What

do you take from yesterday's recruits? But he himself did not see it in the morning.

The standard-bearer, the dozen Rodion Petrovich Varlamov, himself in Unter ranks, only grinned, but smoothed his mustache. He stood at the banner, how can you sit down? And then Pustovalov was glad, three-pound guns began to be placed between the columns of the battalions.

— Great well done! — shouted to them Fairverker, decorated with thick whiskers, — will you help, if that?

— And how! screamed in the column, — only you bring HIM with buckshot! Spare neither cast iron nor gunpowder!

— nothing! Forty shots is enough! — the artilleryman convinced them.

Pustovalov was silent. Are there a lot of these forty charges? Here, the French are firing like this, straight powder is not a pity. They always have guns ahead of the infantry. And then, the buckshot hits six hundred steps, and the gun is barely three hundred. So then under Austerlitz they were killed, under such fire they did not give a sigh. But their new commander of the detachment, General Gorchakov, he is great, praised him to himself Pustovalov's boss, with such a difficult light will be. After all, he does everything according to his mind, with a sense and arrangement.

Well, in front of them stood a hill, with heavy, twelve-pound guns covered with baskets of earth. They stood there with a dozen guns, that is, one heavy battery. But, the sappers did not

go too far, and the moat around the fortification beat liquid, and the shaft was not impressive. Weak shelter turned out. The Earth, however, did not disappoint. It's bad for strengthening, but standing on it is dry, sandy. From such a land, the core or buckshot will not ricochet, but it will hurt, fewer soldiers' heads will disappear here, as the sergeant major decided.

The regiment commander himself, Lieutenant Colonel Ryndin Philadelphus Kirillovich, drove up to the right flank of their company. He dismounted, handed over the reins of his horse to the batman, and talked about something with the commander of the first battalion of their regiment.

The sergeant major looked around, and noticed that in the distance, in the copse, cuirassiers also took refuge, there were two regiments. I considered the color of the instrument cloth, and judging by it, both from the second division, the Glukhovsky regiment and Little Russian, and there were others, but Panteleimon did not consider them. Somehow it immediately felt better, since such help came to them.

— What is it, Panteleimon Ilyich? 'asked the restless Yashka.

«We are not alone. There will be a big battle. And the cavalry is given to help us. Nothing, hold on…

***

From behind the forest, a shootout became audible. The gun fire was almost continuous, so that white dense smoke hung over the trees. Then their heavy battery spoke. Panteleimon gladly heard these deafening shots of twelve pounds, as they flew with

a heavy whistle of the core towards the French.

— Ehma, Panteleimon Ilyich! — said Yakov quietly, — what a passion!

— Eh you… Fly well… The more the gunners break up, the less they will fly to us in return.

— And what, and will get to us?

— War brother, this is the case. And you stand where ordered! said the sergeant major sternly.

And then, rounding the infantry on the right, four squadrons of dragoons went to the road with a large trot. Pustovalov noticed that it was the Kyiv Dragoon Regiment that moved forward. Panteleimon only corrected his mustache, but sighed… The battle began quickly, and serious.

And exactly, to their formation, running, the huntsmen began to return, in their dark green uniforms. Behind them, on stretched overcoats, they brought two wounded officers. One, very young, tried to jump up everything, but only choked on a cough. They were carried to the wagons of the detachment.

The senior ranger officer, waving a sword, called the soldiers to him, together with the unter quickly built a column. A messenger drove up to them, handed over the order, and the huntsmen with a controversial step passed by the battalion columns of the Simbirsk regiment, and scattered in the copse, behind their formation. The wounded began to leave the road. The soldiers relied on guns, tried to reach their own. Yakov and Fedka da Semyon wanted to rush to help, but Pustovalov

managed to stop the soldier. And it's good that gentlemen the officers did not see such a disorder, otherwise they would not have avoided yesterday's recruits of ramrods for leaving the system. But he knew their company service, and the soldier loved. He vividly sent his messenger for non-combatants, and they, taking a two-wheeler, were able to pick up a dozen suffering.

— Next time, I will definitely not spare! — the sergeant major pronounced strictly and evil to inexperienced soldiers, — you want something invented! Build to leave! Yes, for that, well, if only they throw it out! And then you will meet with the regimental executioner!

— And if you, Panteleimon Ilyich? Is that so? And you will lie on the ground? And no one will help?

— nothing. Throw me too, — and Pustovalov crossed himself, — March, where the company commander will order you. Now, if an officer, then the matter is different. For this they will praise. And don't you dare quit! But no, I'm behind, so follow the regimental banner!

«I see…» Yakov whispered.

Then the company commander stood to the side of the formation, raised his hand, and the unters handed over to the commander:

— Load the guns!

And the soldiers began to quickly and deftly bite the cartridge, send gunpowder into the barrel of the gun, easily killing its

ramrod. Then the bullet, and the cartridge wrapper, which served as a wad. A little powder pulp on the bolt shelf, and the guns were ready to fire.

«To the leg!

So it is safer that the soldiers did not shoot each other in a hustle and bustle. And then, they will kill themselves, and who will fight the enemy?

The gunners also equipped their cannon, and rolled it out in front of the formation. The dragoons returned to their banner, listening to the horn signal. Again, as if by magic, the riders stood in even ranks, only the horses shook their heads, as if listening to the commands. Then, the regiment went beyond the hillock.

And the heavy battery again fired. And it was clear where. On the way, from the north-east, there was such a distant ribbon of people in blue uniforms. And so, they, as in a parade, were built in columns, on the eyes of Russian soldiers. And there, at a distant copse, on a hill, French artillerymen began to spread. We stopped at the position cheerfully and sporingly, as in a parade. They installed guns, led away a team of horses, prepared shells and charges.. And everything is also in perfect order, as if to music. It seems that they did not pay attention to the fire of Russian guns, but the cores fell very close, and the bombs burst not far from the French artillery park. And, it seems, they blundered, began to act.

And the French infantry stood under fire. But, a mile or more, the nuclei gave flight, then it was not far off, occasionally

falling into the ranks of the salt in blue uniforms.. Mr. Lieutenant Fedorov, with a sword in his hand, walked around the first line of the company.

— Stand still, guys! Cores do not bow! Shoot, only on command! he repeated loudly.

No, of course, they had a brave lieutenant, as Pustovalov believed. Sensible such a boss. And the voice is even, does not sit down… But here, this one over their heads, already from the side of the forest, from the north-fuse, the French cores whistled. One hit the shaft of the redoubt, bounced off, went into the sky with a black ball, and falling to the ground, cracked the tree at the edge with a bang.

Artillerymen on the mound began to deploy guns. But, the French managed to fire another volley, and shot down two charge carriers with a core. There was not the slightest hitch, the dead were dragged aside, no matter what prevented them from firing.

The artillery duel continued, and now, the core landed on the left flank of their company, breaking out four soldiers. Two died immediately, and the less lucky, shouted terribly, with their legs torn off. Pustovalov personally dragged both into the bushes, dying calmly. Dal and flask with vodka for two. I could not come up with anything else, and so his recruits stood with whitened faces.

— Stand! Panteleimon shouted, «remember the oath!» — and he strictly looked around the formation — such is our soldier's business, to stand and die!

Then, in their row, the head of one soldier was torn off by a core, and the fire of the French guns died down. But, there was a drum fight from the enemy. And twelve battalion columns of the French slowly crawled towards them. In between, they rolled guns, while they lowered down, as if out of shame, their shiny trunks, ready to spew flames and disastrous cast iron. Ahead were arrows, in a thick chain.

And they started shooting from a hundred fathoms. The air filled with this indescribable nasty whistle. In front of the Russian columns, the lead of their guns began to knock out the ground, rushing up with a spray of downed grass.

Russian gunners also rolled out their guns, and eight regurgitated buckshot. The distance was long, but the commander of the battery took risks, trying to confuse the ranks of the French, and especially the gunners and shooters. Pustovalov noticed that the buckshot was not sighted. Enemy arrows swept away, and began to hastily retreat, straying to the right.

Here on the left, bypassing the Odessa regiment, two squadrons of the Glukhovsky regiment broke out on the field, and hit immediately on the extreme column of the French. They tried to curl up in a square, like a hedgehog hides, protects himself with needles, and the French tried to defend themselves with their bayonets. But, it didn't work out so well, they didn't have time. And, the fusiliers began to run away, throwing their guns. And then the cuirassiers of the Little Russian Regiment

flew in, helping their own.

The sound of pipes rang out in the rows of Russian columns, drums rumbled, and two regiments went forward with a measured, but fast step. Neverovsky decided to take the opportunity and throw the enemy away. Commands rang out:

«Gun on hand!» and «Forward!.»

Pustovalov noticed that the soldiers are not afraid, they willingly go into battle. And then, it's more fun than just standing under the cores and bullets. Lieutenant Fedorov went with his soldiers like ensigns Khrustalyuv and Ionov. The drum thundered loudly, and now, the distance was shrinking, and shrinking. The shakos of the French were already visible, decorated with copper diamonds with eagles, but the numbers of the regiments were not yet visible. Their line was painted with white smoke, they fired a volley, from a hundred fathoms. Panteleimon saw non-commissioned officer Birkin fall to the ground, and nearby soldiers Nikolai Ivanov and Fedor Samkin. Konstantin, Petrov grabbed his hand, the blood flowed, but did not throw the system. The lieutenant only looked around his formation, and shouted:

— Add step!

Their formation went quickly and menacingly, Panteleimon heard the French banging loudly with ramrods, reloading guns.

«Stop! — shouted the lieutenant, — The first two rows on the knee, The third fell!

And their company fired the first salvo. The ranks were shrouded in smoke. Then, the second row also blurted out.

— Forward! — Fedorov gave the command.

Pustovalov noticed that they also hit someone. Here the French hastily fired a volley, and already eight Russian soldiers were on the ground, and ensign Ionin was killed.

«Stop! — commanded Fedorov, — Front line, volley!

They all shot, and Pustovalov, aiming at the French sergeant, also pulled the trigger. The usual ular in the shoulder from the shot, a cloud of gunpowder smoke… And, new command:

— Bayonets, attack!

And their column rushed forward without interfering with the system. The gun belt was lowered to the limit, and all this became familiar to the sergeant major. Immediately, right-handed for the butt, left far threw a gun with a bayonet into the stomach of the French fusilier. He did not have time to recapture, and the experienced sergeant major, not paying attention to the wild cry, had already pulled the bayonet out of the wound. Then the second and third… And there, time was lost, retreated, like the French column. But then, the sound of a trumpet cut through his ears:

— Retreat!

The soldiers quickly closed ranks, healthy supported the wounded, and the first battalion, with their company, began to retreat. The lieutenant looked around his thinned foot soldiers, and ordered:

— Ten in the arrow, cover the column!

«So I'll go senior,» Pustovalov himself volunteered.

The lieutenant thought a little, but nodded his head. Ivan

Kuzmich was also wounded, the tip of a French bayonet hit the left forearm. The sleeve of the uniform was torn, and a piece of gray canvas was wound on top.

— Okay. Just go too far and you will not disappear, Panteleimon. There is still a lot of time until the evening. We must hold out.

— Let's do it, your nobility, — and the sergeant major smoothed his mustache.

And a number of cuirassiers drove past them, and captured French guns rolled between them, cleverly tied to cavalry saddles.

— Hello, brothers! 'the cuirassier wahmister shouted to the infantrymen.

— Yes, — Jacob sighed, — here, they have pantaloons on buttons, dark gray, and you can't see the dirt. And here? — and he lowered his eyes to his pantaloons smeared with blood and mud.

«That's right, Yakov. When the battle ends, you will fight your ports. And I'll check.

«That's right! — answered the suddenly talked soldier, — I will certainly perform!

«And I'll check! — the sergeant major said with all severity, — well, what? Quickly to me! Break into threes! One shoots, others charge. Roots, you shoot, and you, Semyon! Semyon, you are on the left foang, Roots in the center, I am on the right! That's it, get started!

The soldiers fled, sat down, and began to charge. To the left and right of them in the line were other arrows, from all regiments of their 27 divisions, retreating behind the battery.

They were pursued by French riflemen, marching in threes. Again, the field was painted with white powder smoke, but much rarer. These clouds appeared here, as if this place was a blue sky. But no, not the sky, but guns sent this smoke to the sky, and then, heavy lead bullets became like lightning strikes. Fortunately, this fire has not yet taken away either one or the other. Although the bullets buzzed like disturbed bumblebees.

Pustovalov sighed again, and put the butt of a loaded gun to his shoulder. Slowly pulled the trigger, then sighed, and handed the weapon to Jacob.

— You said there that the shooter is the first. Come on, you shoot, we will charge.

«You will not lose with me, Pateleimon Ilyich,» the young soldier beamed.

He quickly got up, took aim at a group of Frenchmen. The shot rumbled, and one of the enemies fell to the ground.

— Let's run away a little… — commanded the sergeant major.

French bullets sang over their heads. Yakov received another loaded gun, fired, and then fired from another, not allowing the opponents to come to their senses. Pustovalov noticed how one of the surviving Frenchmen quickly ran to his own. Meanwhile, Panteleimon loaded the gun with an arrow, in return receiving

an empty one.

— Oh, and well done you Yashka, — Semyon praised him, — so they will transfer you to the life-jaeger, with such and such a skill.

— Okay, stop chatting, we leave a little, — ordered the sergeant major.

We walked another hundred steps, and again ran into the French, a shootout began. Yakov again shot well like that, hit six. But, the sergeant major noticed that they, lagging behind, were trying to capture them.

«You're here, Yakov. I will fight them on the side, — Panteleimon ordered or explained.

He quickly ran, ducked in the tall grass, walked around the bushes, and without a shot, rushed to six. So far, yes, four were lying dead from the blows of his bayonet, one escaped, and the last, requested pardon, raising his hands up.

— Running! Shnell! Panteleimon shouted to the foreigner.

And both, so got to their own. It was not far from the native banner of the regiment and their company. However, it was much worse here. The French shot themselves, and the cores often fell into the battalion column, pulling out one soldier, or even two.

— Well done, Panteleimon Ilyich! You act like an officer! — and the company commander slyly looked at the sergeant major, — and fought well!

— I didn't shoot, but Private Yakov Voinov, and I ask you to mark him. And I captured private 61 regiment.

— Well, otherwise you say, not me, but not me, — Fedorov grinned, — so ensign Ionin died.

«What about that?

— The core killed. So I remained an officer alone on the company…

Then the trumpet began to play again. And Pustovalov noticed that the battery was removed from the redoubt, and now it stood in a hundred fathoms, on a good hillock.

It was already evening, twilight seemed to creep out of the nearest forest, crept with dark lumps on the road, and with them the French infantrymen went right, into the last desperate attack. Despite the hot fire of light batteries, a battalion of enemies climbed onto the redoubt, and rifle shots rang out from there.

Neverovsky himself traveled around the formation of his thinned battalions, and the division, slightly turned the front to the right. Pustovalov at first did not understand what was the matter until he heard the thunder of the drums.

— Sikurs is coming, — Ivan Kuzmich said happily, — now, let's bring the enemy down from the field!

And from the left flank, they swept past them into the squadron colonnades of the cuirassier regiment, the Glukhovsky regiment and Little Russia, with the blue collars of the columns. They immediately shot down the columns of the French, and drove them in front of them. And in front of the redoubt, the second grenadier division of Prince Mecklenburg unfolded, and without a single shot hit the bayonets, overturning the enemy.

Tall and skillful soldiers quickly drove the enemy away, and one of the grenadier battalions burst into the fortification captured by the enemy. On this hill, among the destroyed shafts of the Shevardinsky redoubt, screams were heard for a long time. But now, everything has subsided. Here, past them, on a hot horse, ahead of his retinue, Bagration himself swept.

Evening twilight was announced by screams:

— Yay!

The soldiers enthusiastically greeted the beloved leader. Pioneers have already entered the redoubt, with trench tools, and started work.

— Well, what? We stand angry again, Pustovalov. They will not change us, this is our commander, Lieutenant Colonel Ryndin Philadelphus Kirillovich firmly said.

— There were ninety soldiers in the company, sixty left. We do not have more unters, both died.

— Which of the best soldiers choose, produce two, at your discretion, Pustovalov. Okay, even though the tents are in place, only here, there is no provision, — said the lieutenant, — and everyone shot the cartridges.

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