

if about to speak, but thought better of it and went on.

"I must keep you here for the present," he said at last, "till inquisition is made into the matter."

"You will let me see to Palma and the others?"

"They will be seen to. The man you saw with me arrived last night. He is the new doctor appointed by headquarters."

"Ah, then I would be glad to have him strap up my shoulder."

"You are wounded? Yes, I remember, Madame mentioned it."

"A bullet went through it in the *mêlée*, but I don't think any great damage is done. It was a narrow defile——"

"Don't tell me anything about it," Sokolof held up his hand. "Tschak and the rest will no doubt have quite enough to say about it. A good deal will depend on what they say. I will send Irbatsky in to look at your shoulder. And, remember, the less said the better."

"Will you as a favour allow me to nurse Palma to the end? It cannot be far off. You can understand—I feel as if I had used him ill, though God knows, I never intended to do so."

"I will see what Irbatsky says. I am a bit