

RAINA (seeing him). Oh! (She points.)

CATHERINE (scandalized). Well! (She strides to the left side of the bed, Raina following and standing opposite her on the right.) He's fast asleep. The brute!

RAINA (anxiously). Sh!

CATHERINE (shaking him). Sir! (Shaking him again, harder.) Sir!! (Vehemently shaking very bard.) Sir!!!

RAINA (catching her arm). Don't, mamma: the poor dear is worn out. Let him sleep.

CATHERINE (letting him go and turning amazed to Raina). The poor dear! Raina!!! (She looks sternly at her daughter. The man sleeps profoundly.)

ACT II

The sixth of March, 1886. In the garden of major Petkoff's house. It is a fine spring morning; and the garden looks fresh and pretty. Beyond the paling the tops of a couple of minarets can be seen, shewing that there is a valley there, with the little town in it. A few miles further the Balkan mountains rise and shut in the view. Within the garden the side of the house is seen on the right, with a garden door reached by a little flight of steps. On the left the stable yard, with its gateway, encroaches on the garden. There are fruit bushes along the paling and house, covered with washing hung out to dry. A path runs by the house, and rises by two steps at the corner where it turns out of the right along the front. In the middle a small table, with two bent wood chairs at it, is laid for breakfast with Turkish coffee pot, cups, rolls, etc.; but the cups have been used and the bread broken. There is a wooden garden seat against the wall on the left.

Louka, smoking a cigaret, is standing between the table and the house, turning her back with angry disdain on a man-servant who is lecturing her. He is a middle-aged man of cool temperament and low but clear and keen intelligence, with the complacency of the servant who values himself on his rank in servility, and the imperturbability of the accurate calculator who has no illusions. He wears a white Bulgarian costume jacket with decorated harder, sash, wide knickerbockers, and decorated gaiters. His head is shaved up to the crown, giving him a high Japanese forehead. His name is Nicola.

NICOLA. Be warned in time, Louka: mend your manners. I know the mistress. She is so grand that she never dreams that any servant could dare to be disrespectful to her; but if she once suspects that you are defying her, out you go.

LOUKA. I do defy her. I will defy her. What do I care for her?

NICOLA. If you quarrel with the family, I never can marry you. It's the same as if you quarrelled with me!

LOUKA. You take her part against me, do you?

NICOLA (sedately). I shall always be dependent on the good will of the family. When I leave their service and start a shop in Sofea, their custom will be half my capital: their bad word would ruin me.

LOUKA. You have no spirit. I should like to see them dare say a word against me!

NICOLA (pityingly). I should have expected more sense from you, Louka. But you're young, you're young!

LOUKA. Yes; and you like me the better for it, don't you? But I know some family secrets they wouldn't care to have told, young as I am. Let them quarrel with me if they dare!

NICOLA (with compassionate superiority). Do you know what they would do if they heard you talk like that?

LOUKA. What could they do?

NICOLA. Discharge you for untruthfulness. Who would believe any stories you told after that? Who would give you another situation? Who in this house would dare be seen speaking to you ever again? How long would your father be left on his little farm? (She impatiently throws away the end of her cigaret, and stamps on it.) Child, you don't know the power such high people have over the like of you and me when we try to rise out of our poverty against them. (He goes close to her and lowers his voice.) Look at me, ten years in their service. Do you think I know no secrets? I know things about the mistress that she wouldn't have the master know for a thousand levas. I know things about him that she wouldn't let him hear the last of for six months if I blabbed them to her. I know things about Raina that would break off her match with Sergius if--

LOUKA (turning on him quickly). How do you know? I never told you!

NICOLA (opening his eyes cunningly). So that's your little secret, is it? I thought it might be something like that. Well, you take my advice, and be respectful; and make the mistress feel that no matter what you know or don't know, they can depend on you to hold your tongue and serve the family faithfully. That's what they like; and that's how you'll make most out of them.

LOUKA (with searching scorn). You have the soul of a servant, Nicola.

NICOLA (complacently). Yes: that's the secret of success in service.

(A loud knocking with a whip handle on a wooden door, outside on the left, is heard.)

MALE VOICE OUTSIDE. Hollo! Hollo there! Nicola!

LOUKA. Master! back from the war!

NICOLA (quickly). My word for it, Louka, the war's over. Off with you and get some fresh coffee. (He runs out into the stable yard.)

LOUKA (as she puts the coffee pot and the cups upon the tray, and carries it into the house). You'll never put the soul of a servant into me.

(Major Petkoff comes from the stable yard, followed by Nicola. He is a cheerful, excitable, insignificant, unpolished man of about 50, naturally unambitious except as to his income and his importance in local society, but just now greatly pleased with the military rank which the war has thrust on him as a man of consequence in his town. The fever of plucky patriotism which the Servian attack roused in all the Bulgarians has pulled him through the war; but he is obviously glad to be home again.)

PETKOFF (pointing to the table with his whip). Breakfast out here, eh?

NICOLA. Yes, sir. The mistress and Miss Raina have just gone in.

PETKOFF (fitting down and taking a roll). Go in and say I've come; and get me some fresh coffee.

NICOLA. It's coming, sir. (He goes to the house door. Louka, with fresh coffee, a clean cup, and a brandy bottle on her tray meets him.) Have you told the mistress?

LOUKA. Yes: she's coming.

(Nicola goes into the house. Louka brings the coffee to the table.)

PETKOFF. Well, the Servians haven't run away with you, have they?

LOUKA. No, sir.

PETKOFF. That's right. Have you brought me some cognac?

LOUKA (putting the bottle on the table). Here, sir.

PETKOFF. That's right. (He pours some into his coffee.)

(Catherine who has at this early hour made only a very perfunctory toilet, and wears a Bulgarian apron over a once brilliant, but now half worn out red dressing gown, and a colored handkerchief tied over her thick black hair, with Turkish slippers on her bare feet, comes from the house, looking astonishingly handsome and stately under all the circumstances. Louka goes into the house.)

CATHERINE. My dear Paul, what a surprise for us. (She stoops over the back of his chair to kiss him.) Have they brought you fresh coffee?

PETKOFF. Yes, Louka's been looking after me. The war's over. The treaty was signed three days ago at Bucharest; and the decree for our army to demobilize was issued yesterday.

CATHERINE (springing erect, with flashing eyes). The war over! Paul: have you let the Austrians force you to make peace?

PETKOFF (submissively). My dear: they didn't consult me. What could *I* do? (She sits down and turns away from him.) But of course we saw to it that the treaty was an honorable one. It declares peace--

CATHERINE (outraged). Peace!

PETKOFF (appeasing her).--but not friendly relations: remember that. They wanted to put that in; but I insisted on its being struck out. What more could I do?

CATHERINE. You could have annexed Servia and made Prince Alexander Emperor of the Balkans. That's what I would have done.

PETKOFF. I don't doubt it in the least, my dear. But I should have had to subdue the whole Austrian Empire first; and that would have kept me too long away from you. I missed you greatly.

CATHERINE (relenting). Ah! (Stretches her hand affectionately across the table to squeeze his.)

PETKOFF. And how have you been, my dear?

CATHERINE. Oh, my usual sore throats, that's all.

PETKOFF (with conviction). That comes from washing your neck every day. I've often told you so.

CATHERINE. Nonsense, Paul!

PETKOFF (over his coffee and cigaret). I don't believe in going too far with these modern customs. All this washing can't be good for the health: it's not natural. There was an Englishman at Phillipopolis who used to

wet himself all over with cold water every morning when he got up. Disgusting! It all comes from the English: their climate makes them so dirty that they have to be perpetually washing themselves. Look at my father: he never had a bath in his life; and he lived to be ninety-eight, the healthiest man in Bulgaria. I don't mind a good wash once a week to keep up my position; but once a day is carrying the thing to a ridiculous extreme.

CATHERINE. You are a barbarian at heart still, Paul. I hope you behaved yourself before all those Russian officers.

PETKOFF. I did my best. I took care to let them know that we had a library.

CATHERINE. Ah; but you didn't tell them that we have an electric bell in it? I have had one put up.

PETKOFF. What's an electric bell?

CATHERINE. You touch a button; something tinkles in the kitchen; and then Nicola comes up.

PETKOFF. Why not shout for him?

CATHERINE. Civilized people never shout for their servants. I've learnt that while you were away.

PETKOFF. Well, I'll tell you something I've learnt, too. Civilized people don't hang out their washing to dry where visitors can see it; so you'd better have all that (indicating the clothes on the bushes) put somewhere else.

CATHERINE. Oh, that's absurd, Paul: I don't believe really refined people notice such things.

(Someone is heard knocking at the stable gates.)

PETKOFF. There's Sergius. (Shouting.) Hollo, Nicola!

CATHERINE. Oh, don't shout, Paul: it really isn't nice.

PETKOFF. Bosh! (He shouts louder than before.) Nicola!

NICOLA (appearing at the house door). Yes, sir.

PETKOFF. If that is Major Saranoff, bring him round this way. (He pronounces the name with the stress on the second syllable--Sarah-noff.)

NICOLA. Yes, sir. (He goes into the stable yard.)

PETKOFF. You must talk to him, my dear, until Raina takes him off our hands. He bores my life out about our not promoting him--over my head, mind you.

CATHERINE. He certainly ought to be promoted when he marries Raina. Besides, the country should insist on having at least one native general.

PETKOFF. Yes, so that he could throw away whole brigades instead of regiments. It's no use, my dear: he has not the slightest chance of promotion until we are quite sure that the peace will be a lasting one.

NICOLA (at the gate, announcing). Major Sergius Saranoff! (He goes into the house and returns presently

with a third chair, which he places at the table. He then withdraws.)

(Major Sergius Saranoff, the original of the portrait in Raina's room, is a tall, romantically handsome man, with the physical hardihood, the high spirit, and the susceptible imagination of an untamed mountaineer chieftain. But his remarkable personal distinction is of a characteristically civilized type. The ridges of his eyebrows, curving with a ram's-horn twist round the marked projections at the outer corners, his jealously observant eye, his nose, thin, keen, and apprehensive in spite of the pugnacious high bridge and large nostril, his assertive chin, would not be out of place in a Paris salon. In short, the clever, imaginative barbarian has an acute critical faculty which has been thrown into intense activity by the arrival of western civilization in the Balkans; and the result is precisely what the advent of nineteenth-century thought first produced in England: to-wit, Byronism. By his brooding on the perpetual failure, not only of others, but of himself, to live up to his imaginative ideals, his consequent cynical scorn for humanity, the jejune credulity as to the absolute validity of his ideals and the unworthiness of the world in disregarding them, his wincings and mockeries under the sting of the petty disillusionments which every hour spent among men brings to his infallibly quick observation, he has acquired the half tragic, half ironic air, the mysterious moodiness, the suggestion of a strange and terrible history that has left him nothing but undying remorse, by which Childe Harold fascinated the grandmothers of his English contemporaries. Altogether it is clear that here or nowhere is Raina's ideal hero. Catherine is hardly less enthusiastic, and much less reserved in shewing her enthusiasm. As he enters from the stable gate, she rises effusively to greet him. Petkoff is distinctly less disposed to make a fuss about him.)

PETKOFF. Here already, Sergius. Glad to see you!

CATHERINE. My dear Sergius!(She holds out both her hands.)

SERGIUS (kissing them with scrupulous gallantry). My dear mother, if I may call you so.

PETKOFF (drily). Mother-in-law, Sergius; mother-in-law! Sit down, and have some coffee.

SERGIUS. Thank you, none for me. (He gets away from the table with a certain distaste for Petkoff's enjoyment of it, and posts himself with conscious grace against the rail of the steps leading to the house.)

CATHERINE. You look superb--splendid. The campaign has improved you. Everybody here is mad about you. We were all wild with enthusiasm about that magnificent cavalry charge.

SERGIUS (with grave irony). Madam: it was the cradle and the grave of my military reputation.

CATHERINE. How so?

SERGIUS. I won the battle the wrong way when our worthy Russian generals were losing it the right way. That upset their plans, and wounded their self-esteem. Two of their colonels got their regiments driven back on the correct principles of scientific warfare. Two major-generals got killed strictly according to military etiquette. Those two colonels are now major-generals; and I am still a simple major.

CATHERINE. You shall not remain so, Sergius. The women are on your side; and they will see that justice is done you.

SERGIUS. It is too late. I have only waited for the peace to send in my resignation.

PETKOFF (dropping his cup in his amazement). Your resignation!

CATHERINE. Oh, you must withdraw it!

SERGIUS (with resolute, measured emphasis, folding his arms). I never withdraw!

PETKOFF (vexed). Now who could have supposed you were going to do such a thing?

SERGIUS (with fire). Everyone that knew me. But enough of myself and my affairs. How is Raina; and where is Raina?

RAINA (suddenly coming round the corner of the house and standing at the top of the steps in the path). Raina is here. (She makes a charming picture as they all turn to look at her. She wears an underdress of pale green silk, draped with an overdress of thin ecru canvas embroidered with gold. On her head she wears a pretty Phrygian cap of gold tinsel. Sergius, with an exclamation of pleasure, goes impulsively to meet her. She stretches out her hand: he drops chivalrously on one knee and kisses it.)

PETKOFF (aside to Catherine, beaming with parental pride). Pretty, isn't it? She always appears at the right moment.

CATHERINE (impatiently). Yes: she listens for it. It is an abominable habit.

(Sergius leads Raina forward with splendid gallantry, as if she were a queen. When they come to the table, she turns to him with a bend of the head; he bows; and thus they separate, he coming to his place, and she going behind her father's chair.)

RAINA (stooping and kissing her father). Dear father! Welcome home!

PETKOFF (patting her cheek). My little pet girl. (He kisses her; she goes to the chair left by Nicola for Sergius, and sits down.)

CATHERINE. And so you're no longer a soldier, Sergius.

SERGIUS. I am no longer a soldier. Soldiering, my dear madam, is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak. That is the whole secret of successful fighting. Get your enemy at a disadvantage; and never, on any account, fight him on equal terms. Eh, Major!

PETKOFF. They wouldn't let us make a fair stand-up fight of it. However, I suppose soldiering has to be a trade like any other trade.

SERGIUS. Precisely. But I have no ambition to succeed as a tradesman; so I have taken the advice of that bagman of a captain that settled the exchange of prisoners with us at Peerot, and given it up.

PETKOFF. What, that Swiss fellow? Sergius: I've often thought of that exchange since. He over-reached us about those horses.

SERGIUS. Of course he over-reached us. His father was a hotel and livery stable keeper; and he owed his first step to his knowledge of horse-dealing. (With mock enthusiasm.) Ah, he was a soldier--every inch a soldier! If only I had bought the horses for my regiment instead of foolishly leading it into danger, I should have been a field-marshal now!

CATHERINE. A Swiss? What was he doing in the Servian army?

PETKOFF. A volunteer of course--keen on picking up his profession. (Chuckling.) We shouldn't have been able to begin fighting if these foreigners hadn't shewn us how to do it: we knew nothing about it; and neither

did the Servians. Egad, there'd have been no war without them.

RAINA. Are there many Swiss officers in the Servian Army?

PETKOFF. No--all Austrians, just as our officers were all Russians. This was the only Swiss I came across. I'll never trust a Swiss again. He cheated us--humbled us into giving him fifty able bodied men for two hundred confounded worn out chargers. They weren't even eatable!

SERGIUS. We were two children in the hands of that consummate soldier, Major: simply two innocent little children.

RAINA. What was he like?

CATHERINE. Oh, Raina, what a silly question!

SERGIUS. He was like a commercial traveller in uniform. Bourgeois to his boots.

PETKOFF (grinning). Sergius: tell Catherine that queer story his friend told us about him--how he escaped after Slivnitza. You remember?--about his being hid by two women.

SERGIUS (with bitter irony). Oh, yes, quite a romance. He was serving in the very battery I so unprofessionally charged. Being a thorough soldier, he ran away like the rest of them, with our cavalry at his heels. To escape their attentions, he had the good taste to take refuge in the chamber of some patriotic young Bulgarian lady. The young lady was enchanted by his persuasive commercial traveller's manners. She very modestly entertained him for an hour or so and then called in her mother lest her conduct should appear unmaidenly. The old lady was equally fascinated; and the fugitive was sent on his way in the morning, disguised in an old coat belonging to the master of the house, who was away at the war.

RAINA (rising with marked stateliness). Your life in the camp has made you coarse, Sergius. I did not think you would have repeated such a story before me. (She turns away coldly.)

CATHERINE (also rising). She is right, Sergius. If such women exist, we should be spared the knowledge of them.

PETKOFF. Pooh! nonsense! what does it matter?

SERGIUS (ashamed). No, Petkoff: I was wrong. (To Raina, with earnest humility.) I beg your pardon. I have behaved abominably. Forgive me, Raina. (She bows reservedly.) And you, too, madam. (Catherine bows graciously and sits down. He proceeds solemnly, again addressing Raina.) The glimpses I have had of the seamy side of life during the last few months have made me cynical; but I should not have brought my cynicism here--least of all into your presence, Raina. I--(Here, turning to the others, he is evidently about to begin a long speech when the Major interrupts him.)

PETKOFF. Stuff and nonsense, Sergius. That's quite enough fuss about nothing: a soldier's daughter should be able to stand up without flinching to a little strong conversation. (He rises.) Come: it's time for us to get to business. We have to make up our minds how those three regiments are to get back to Phillipopolis:--there's no forage for them on the Sophia route. (He goes towards the house.) Come along. (Sergius is about to follow him when Catherine rises and intervenes.)

CATHERINE. Oh, Paul, can't you spare Sergius for a few moments? Raina has hardly seen him yet. Perhaps I can help you to settle about the regiments.

SERGIUS (protesting). My dear madam, impossible: you--

CATHERINE (stopping him playfully). You stay here, my dear Sergius: there's no hurry. I have a word or two to say to Paul. (Sergius instantly bows and steps back.) Now, dear (taking Petkoff's arm), come and see the electric bell.

PETKOFF. Oh, very well, very well. (They go into the house together affectionately. Sergius, left alone with Raina, looks anxiously at her, fearing that she may be still offended. She smiles, and stretches out her arms to him.)

(Exit R. into house, followed by Catherine.)

SERGIUS (hastening to her, but refraining from touching her without express permission). Am I forgiven?

RAINA (placing her hands on his shoulder as she looks up at him with admiration and worship). My hero! My king.

SERGIUS. My queen! (He kisses her on the forehead with holy awe.)

RAINA. How I have envied you, Sergius! You have been out in the world, on the field of battle, able to prove yourself there worthy of any woman in the world; whilst I have had to sit at home inactive,--dreaming--useless--doing nothing that could give me the right to call myself worthy of any man.

SERGIUS. Dearest, all my deeds have been yours. You inspired me. I have gone through the war like a knight in a tournament with his lady looking on at him!

RAINA. And you have never been absent from my thoughts for a moment. (Very solemnly.) Sergius: I think we two have found the higher love. When I think of you, I feel that I could never do a base deed, or think an ignoble thought.

SERGIUS. My lady, and my saint! (Clasping her reverently.)

RAINA (returning his embrace). My lord and my g--

SERGIUS. Sh--sh! Let me be the worshipper, dear. You little know how unworthy even the best man is of a girl's pure passion!

RAINA. I trust you. I love you. You will never disappoint me, Sergius. (Louka is heard singing within the house. They quickly release each other.) Hush! I can't pretend to talk indifferently before her: my heart is too full. (Louka comes from the house with her tray. She goes to the table, and begins to clear it, with her back turned to them.) I will go and get my hat; and then we can go out until lunch time. Wouldn't you like that?

SERGIUS. Be quick. If you are away five minutes, it will seem five hours. (Raina runs to the top of the steps and turns there to exchange a look with him and wave him a kiss with both hands. He looks after her with emotion for a moment, then turns slowly away, his face radiant with the exultation of the scene which has just passed. The movement shifts his field of vision, into the corner of which there now comes the tail of Louka's double apron. His eye gleams at once. He takes a stealthy look at her, and begins to twirl his moustache nervously, with his left hand akimbo on his hip. Finally, striking the ground with his heels in something of a cavalry swagger, he strolls over to the left of the table, opposite her, and says) Louka: do you know what the higher love is?

LOUKA (astonished). No, sir.

SERGIUS. Very fatiguing thing to keep up for any length of time, Louka. One feels the need of some relief after it.

LOUKA (innocently). Perhaps you would like some coffee, sir? (She stretches her hand across the table for the coffee pot.)

SERGIUS (taking her hand). Thank you, Louka.

LOUKA (pretending to pull). Oh, sir, you know I didn't mean that. I'm surprised at you!

SERGIUS (coming clear of the table and drawing her with him). I am surprised at myself, Louka. What would Sergius, the hero of Slivnitza, say if he saw me now? What would Sergius, the apostle of the higher love, say if he saw me now? What would the half dozen Sergiuses who keep popping in and out of this handsome figure of mine say if they caught us here? (Letting go her hand and slipping his arm dexterously round her waist.) Do you consider my figure handsome, Louka?

LOUKA. Let me go, sir. I shall be disgraced. (She struggles: he holds her inexorably.) Oh, will you let go?

SERGIUS (looking straight into her eyes). No.

LOUKA. Then stand back where we can't be seen. Have you no common sense?

SERGIUS. Ah, that's reasonable. (He takes her into the stableyard gateway, where they are hidden from the house.)

LOUKA (complaining). I may have been seen from the windows: Miss Raina is sure to be spying about after you.

SERGIUS (stung--letting her go). Take care, Louka. I may be worthless enough to betray the higher love; but do not you insult it.

LOUKA (demurely). Not for the world, sir, I'm sure. May I go on with my work please, now?

SERGIUS (again putting his arm round her). You are a provoking little witch, Louka. If you were in love with me, would you spy out of windows on me?

LOUKA. Well, you see, sir, since you say you are half a dozen different gentlemen all at once, I should have a great deal to look after.

SERGIUS (charmed). Witty as well as pretty. (He tries to kiss her.)

LOUKA (avoiding him). No, I don't want your kisses. Gentlefolk are all alike--you making love to me behind Miss Raina's back, and she doing the same behind yours.

SERGIUS (recoiling a step). Louka!

LOUKA. It shews how little you really care!

SERGIUS (dropping his familiarity and speaking with freezing politeness). If our conversation is to continue, Louka, you will please remember that a gentleman does not discuss the conduct of the lady he is engaged to with her maid.

LOUKA. It's so hard to know what a gentleman considers right. I thought from your trying to kiss me that you had given up being so particular.

SERGIUS (turning from her and striking his forehead as he comes back into the garden from the gateway). Devil! devil!

LOUKA. Ha! ha! I expect one of the six of you is very like me, sir, though I am only Miss Raina's maid. (She goes back to her work at the table, taking no further notice of him.)

SERGIUS (speaking to himself). Which of the six is the real man?--that's the question that torments me. One of them is a hero, another a buffoon, another a humbug, another perhaps a bit of a blackguard. (He pauses and looks furtively at Louka, as he adds with deep bitterness) And one, at least, is a coward--jealous, like all cowards. (He goes to the table.) Louka.

LOUKA. Yes?

SERGIUS. Who is my rival?

LOUKA. You shall never get that out of me, for love or money.

SERGIUS. Why?

LOUKA. Never mind why. Besides, you would tell that I told you; and I should lose my place.

SERGIUS (holding out his right hand in affirmation). No; on the honor of a--(He checks himself, and his hand drops nerveless as he concludes, sardonically)--of a man capable of behaving as I have been behaving for the last five minutes. Who is he?

LOUKA. I don't know. I never saw him. I only heard his voice through the door of her room.

SERGIUS. Damnation! How dare you?

LOUKA (retreating). Oh, I mean no harm: you've no right to take up my words like that. The mistress knows all about it. And I tell you that if that gentleman ever comes here again, Miss Raina will marry him, whether he likes it or not. I know the difference between the sort of manner you and she put on before one another and the real manner. (Sergius shivers as if she had stabbed him. Then, setting his face like iron, he strides grimly to her, and grips her above the elbows with both bands.)

SERGIUS. Now listen you to me!

LOUKA (wincing). Not so tight: you're hurting me!

SERGIUS. That doesn't matter. You have stained my honor by making me a party to your eavesdropping. And you have betrayed your mistress--

LOUKA (writhing). Please--

SERGIUS. That shews that you are an abominable little clod of common clay, with the soul of a servant. (He lets her go as if she were an unclean thing, and turns away, dusting his hands of her, to the bench by the wall, where he sits down with averted head, meditating gloomily.)

LOUKA (whimpering angrily with her hands up her sleeves, feeling her bruised arms). You know how to hurt

with your tongue as well as with your hands. But I don't care, now I've found out that whatever clay I'm made of, you're made of the same. As for her, she's a liar; and her fine airs are a cheat; and I'm worth six of her. (She shakes the pain off hardily; tosses her head; and sets to work to put the things on the tray. He looks doubtfully at her once or twice. She finishes packing the tray, and laps the cloth over the edges, so as to carry all out together. As she stoops to lift it, he rises.)

SERGIUS. Louka! (She stops and looks defiantly at him with the tray in her hands.) A gentleman has no right to hurt a woman under any circumstances. (With profound humility, uncovering his head.) I beg your pardon.

LOUKA. That sort of apology may satisfy a lady. Of what use is it to a servant?

SERGIUS (thus rudely crossed in his chivalry, throws it off with a bitter laugh and says slightly). Oh, you wish to be paid for the hurt? (He puts on his shako, and takes some money from his pocket.)

LOUKA (her eyes filling with tears in spite of herself). No, I want my hurt made well.

SERGIUS (sobered by her tone). How?

(She rolls up her left sleeve; clasps her arm with the thumb and fingers of her right hand; and looks down at the bruise. Then she raises her head and looks straight at him. Finally, with a superb gesture she presents her arm to be kissed. Amazed, he looks at her; at the arm; at her again; hesitates; and then, with shuddering intensity, exclaims)

SERGIUS. Never! (and gets away as far as possible from her.)

(Her arm drops. Without a word, and with unaffected dignity, she takes her tray, and is approaching the house when Raina returns wearing a hat and jacket in the height of the Vienna fashion of the previous year, 1885. Louka makes way proudly for her, and then goes into the house.)

RAINA. I'm ready! What's the matter? (Gaily.) Have you been flirting with Louka?

SERGIUS (hastily). No, no. How can you think such a thing?

RAINA (ashamed of herself). Forgive me, dear: it was only a jest. I am so happy to-day.

(He goes quickly to her, and kisses her hand remorsefully. Catherine comes out and calls to them from the top of the steps.)

CATHERINE (coming down to them). I am sorry to disturb you, children; but Paul is distracted over those three regiments. He does not know how to get them to Phillipopolis; and he objects to every suggestion of mine. You must go and help him, Sergius. He is in the library.

RAINA (disappointed). But we are just going out for a walk.

SERGIUS. I shall not be long. Wait for me just five minutes. (He runs up the steps to the door.)

RAINA (following him to the foot of the steps and looking up at him with timid coquetry). I shall go round and wait in full view of the library windows. Be sure you draw father's attention to me. If you are a moment longer than five minutes, I shall go in and fetch you, regiments or no regiments.

SERGIUS (laughing). Very well. (He goes in. Raina watches him until he is out of her sight. Then, with a perceptible relaxation of manner, she begins to pace up and down about the garden in a brown study.)

CATHERINE. Imagine their meeting that Swiss and hearing the whole story! The very first thing your father asked for was the old coat we sent him off in. A nice mess you have got us into!

RAINA (gazing thoughtfully at the gravel as she walks). The little beast!

CATHERINE. Little beast! What little beast?

RAINA. To go and tell! Oh, if I had him here, I'd stuff him with chocolate creams till he couldn't ever speak again!

CATHERINE. Don't talk nonsense. Tell me the truth, Raina. How long was he in your room before you came to me?

RAINA (whisking round and recommencing her march in the opposite direction). Oh, I forget.

CATHERINE. You cannot forget! Did he really climb up after the soldiers were gone, or was he there when that officer searched the room?

RAINA. No. Yes, I think he must have been there then.

CATHERINE. You think! Oh, Raina, Raina! Will anything ever make you straightforward? If Sergius finds out, it is all over between you.

RAINA (with cool impertinence). Oh, I know Sergius is your pet. I sometimes wish you could marry him instead of me. You would just suit him. You would pet him, and spoil him, and mother him to perfection.

CATHERINE (opening her eyes very widely indeed). Well, upon my word!

RAINA (capriciously--half to herself). I always feel a longing to do or say something dreadful to him--to shock his propriety--to scandalize the five senses out of him! (To Catherine perversely.) I don't care whether he finds out about the chocolate cream soldier or not. I half hope he may. (She again turns flippantly away and strolls up the path to the corner of the house.)

CATHERINE. And what should I be able to say to your father, pray?

RAINA (over her shoulder, from the top of the two steps). Oh, poor father! As if he could help himself! (She turns the corner and passes out of sight.)

CATHERINE (looking after her, her fingers itching). Oh, if you were only ten years younger! (Louka comes from the house with a salver, which she carries hanging down by her side.) Well?

LOUKA. There's a gentleman just called, madam--a Servian officer--

CATHERINE (flaming). A Servian! How dare he--(Checking herself bitterly.) Oh, I forgot. We are at peace now. I suppose we shall have them calling every day to pay their compliments. Well, if he is an officer why don't you tell your master? He is in the library with Major Saranoff. Why do you come to me?

LOUKA. But he asks for you, madam. And I don't think he knows who you are: he said the lady of the house. He gave me this little ticket for you. (She takes a card out of her bosom; puts it on the salver and offers it to Catherine.)

CATHERINE (reading). "Captain Bluntschli!" That's a German name.

LOUKA. Swiss, madam, I think.

CATHERINE (with a bound that makes Louka jump back). Swiss! What is he like?

LOUKA (timidly). He has a big carpet bag, madam.

CATHERINE. Oh, Heavens, he's come to return the coat! Send him away--say we're not at home--ask him to leave his address and I'll write to him--Oh, stop: that will never do. Wait! (She throws herself into a chair to think it out. Louka waits.) The master and Major Saranoff are busy in the library, aren't they?

LOUKA. Yes, madam.

CATHERINE (decisively). Bring the gentleman out here at once. (Imperatively.) And be very polite to him. Don't delay. Here (impatiently snatching the salver from her): leave that here; and go straight back to him.

LOUKA. Yes, madam. (Going.)

CATHERINE. Louka!

LOUKA (stopping). Yes, madam.

CATHERINE. Is the library door shut?

LOUKA. I think so, madam.

CATHERINE. If not, shut it as you pass through.

LOUKA. Yes, madam. (Going.)

CATHERINE. Stop! (Louka stops.) He will have to go out that way (indicating the gate of the stable yard). Tell Nicola to bring his bag here after him. Don't forget.

LOUKA (surprised). His bag?

CATHERINE. Yes, here, as soon as possible. (Vehemently.) Be quick! (Louka runs into the house. Catherine snatches her apron off and throws it behind a bush. She then takes up the salver and uses it as a mirror, with the result that the handkerchief tied round her head follows the apron. A touch to her hair and a shake to her dressing gown makes her presentable.) Oh, how--how--how can a man be such a fool! Such a moment to select! (Louka appears at the door of the house, announcing "Captain Bluntschli;" and standing aside at the top of the steps to let him pass before she goes in again. He is the man of the adventure in Raina's room. He is now clean, well brushed, smartly uniformed, and out of trouble, but still unmistakably the same man. The moment Louka's back is turned, Catherine swoops on him with hurried, urgent, coaxing appeal.) Captain Bluntschli, I am very glad to see you; but you must leave this house at once. (He raises his eyebrows.) My husband has just returned, with my future son-in-law; and they know nothing. If they did, the consequences would be terrible. You are a foreigner: you do not feel our national animosities as we do. We still hate the Servians: the only effect of the peace on my husband is to make him feel like a lion balked of his prey. If he discovered our secret, he would never forgive me; and my daughter's life would hardly be safe. Will you, like the chivalrous gentleman and soldier you are, leave at once before he finds you here?

BLUNTSCHLI (disappointed, but philosophical). At once, gracious lady. I only came to thank you and return the coat you lent me. If you will allow me to take it out of my bag and leave it with your servant as I pass out, I need detain you no further. (He turns to go into the house.)

CATHERINE (catching him by the sleeve). Oh, you must not think of going back that way. (Coaxing him across to the stable gates.) This is the shortest way out. Many thanks. So glad to have been of service to you. Good-bye.

BLUNTSCHLI. But my bag?

CATHERINE. It will be sent on. You will leave me your address.

BLUNTSCHLI. True. Allow me. (He takes out his card-case, and stops to write his address, keeping Catherine in an agony of impatience. As he hands her the card, Petkoff, hatless, rushes from the house in a fluster of hospitality, followed by Sergius.)

PETKOFF (as he hurries down the steps). My dear Captain Bluntschli--

CATHERINE. Oh Heavens! (She sinks on the seat against the wall.)

PETKOFF (too preoccupied to notice her as he shakes Bluntschli's hand heartily). Those stupid people of mine thought I was out here, instead of in the--haw!--library. (He cannot mention the library without betraying how proud he is of it.) I saw you through the window. I was wondering why you didn't come in. Saranoff is with me: you remember him, don't you?

SERGIUS (saluting humorously, and then offering his hand with great charm of manner). Welcome, our friend the enemy!

PETKOFF. No longer the enemy, happily. (Rather anxiously.) I hope you've come as a friend, and not on business.

CATHERINE. Oh, quite as a friend, Paul. I was just asking Captain Bluntschli to stay to lunch; but he declares he must go at once.

SERGIUS (sardonically). Impossible, Bluntschli. We want you here badly. We have to send on three cavalry regiments to Phillipopolis; and we don't in the least know how to do it.

BLUNTSCHLI (suddenly attentive and business-like). Phillipopolis! The forage is the trouble, eh?

PETKOFF (eagerly). Yes, that's it. (To Sergius.) He sees the whole thing at once.

BLUNTSCHLI. I think I can shew you how to manage that.

SERGIUS. Invaluable man! Come along! (Towering over Bluntschli, he puts his hand on his shoulder and takes him to the steps, Petkoff following. As Bluntschli puts his foot on the first step, Raina comes out of the house.)

RAINA (completely losing her presence of mind). Oh, the chocolate cream soldier!

(Bluntschli stands rigid. Sergius, amazed, looks at Raina, then at Petkoff, who looks back at him and then at his wife.)

CATHERINE (with commanding presence of mind). My dear Raina, don't you see that we have a guest here--Captain Bluntschli, one of our new Servian friends?

(Raina bows; Bluntschli bows.)

RAINA. How silly of me! (She comes down into the centre of the group, between Bluntschli and Petkoff) I made a beautiful ornament this morning for the ice pudding; and that stupid Nicola has just put down a pile of plates on it and spoiled it. (To Bluntschli, winningly.) I hope you didn't think that you were the chocolate cream soldier, Captain Bluntschli.

BLUNTSCHLI (laughing). I assure you I did. (Stealing a whimsical glance at her.) Your explanation was a relief.

PETKOFF (suspiciously, to Raina). And since when, pray, have you taken to cooking?

CATHERINE. Oh, whilst you were away. It is her latest fancy.

PETKOFF (testily). And has Nicola taken to drinking? He used to be careful enough. First he shews Captain Bluntschli out here when he knew quite well I was in the--hum!--library; and then he goes downstairs and breaks Raina's chocolate soldier. He must--(At this moment Nicola appears at the top of the steps R., with a carpet bag. He descends; places it respectfully before Bluntschli; and waits for further orders. General amazement. Nicola, unconscious of the effect he is producing, looks perfectly satisfied with himself. When Petkoff recovers his power of speech, he breaks out at him with) Are you mad, Nicola?

NICOLA (taken aback). Sir?

PETKOFF. What have you brought that for?

NICOLA. My lady's orders, sir. Louka told me that--

CATHERINE (interrupting him). My orders! Why should I order you to bring Captain Bluntschli's luggage out here? What are you thinking of, Nicola?

NICOLA (after a moment's bewilderment, picking up the bag as he addresses Bluntschli with the very perfection of servile discretion). I beg your pardon, sir, I am sure. (To Catherine.) My fault, madam! I hope you'll overlook it! (He bows, and is going to the steps with the bag, when Petkoff addresses him angrily.)

PETKOFF. You'd better go and slam that bag, too, down on Miss Raina's ice pudding! (This is too much for Nicola. The bag drops from his hands on Petkoff's corns, eliciting a roar of anguish from him.) Begone, you butter-fingered donkey.

NICOLA (snatching up the bag, and escaping into the house). Yes, sir.

CATHERINE. Oh, never mind, Paul, don't be angry!

PETKOFF (muttering). Scoundrel. He's got out of hand while I was away. I'll teach him. (Recollecting his guest.) Oh, well, never mind. Come, Bluntschli, let's have no more nonsense about you having to go away. You know very well you're not going back to Switzerland yet. Until you do go back you'll stay with us.

RAINA. Oh, do, Captain Bluntschli.

PETKOFF (to Catherine). Now, Catherine, it's of you that he's afraid. Press him and he'll stay.

CATHERINE. Of course I shall be only too delighted if (appealingly) Captain Bluntschli really wishes to stay. He knows my wishes.

BLUNTSCHLI (in his driest military manner). I am at madame's orders.

SERGIUS (cordially). That settles it!

PETKOFF (heartily). Of course!

RAINA. You see, you must stay!

BLUNTSCHLI (smiling). Well, If I must, I must! (Gesture of despair from Catherine.)

ACT III

In the library after lunch. It is not much of a library, its literary equipment consisting of a single fixed shelf stocked with old paper-covered novels, broken backed, coffee stained, torn and thumbed, and a couple of little hanging shelves with a few gift books on them, the rest of the wall space being occupied by trophies of war and the chase. But it is a most comfortable sitting-room. A row of three large windows in the front of the house shew a mountain panorama, which is just now seen in one of its softest aspects in the mellowing afternoon light. In the left hand corner, a square earthenware stove, a perfect tower of colored pottery, rises nearly to the ceiling and guarantees plenty of warmth. The ottoman in the middle is a circular bank of decorated cushions, and the window seats are well upholstered divans. Little Turkish tables, one of them with an elaborate hookah on it, and a screen to match them, complete the handsome effect of the furnishing. There is one object, however, which is hopelessly out of keeping with its surroundings. This is a small kitchen table, much the worse for wear, fitted as a writing table with an old canister full of pens, an eggcup filled with ink, and a deplorable scrap of severely used pink blotting paper.

At the side of this table, which stands on the right, Bluntschli is hard at work, with a couple of maps before him, writing orders. At the head of it sits Sergius, who is also supposed to be at work, but who is actually gnawing the feather of a pen, and contemplating Bluntschli's quick, sure, businesslike progress with a mixture of envious irritation at his own incapacity, and awestruck wonder at an ability which seems to him almost miraculous, though its prosaic character forbids him to esteem it. The major is comfortably established on the ottoman, with a newspaper in his hand and the tube of the hookah within his reach. Catherine sits at the stove, with her back to them, embroidering. Raina, reclining on the divan under the left hand window, is gazing in a daydream out at the Balkan landscape, with a neglected novel in her lap.

The door is on the left. The button of the electric bell is between the door and the fireplace.

PETKOFF (looking up from his paper to watch how they are getting on at the table). Are you sure I can't help you in any way, Bluntschli?

BLUNTSCHLI (without interrupting his writing or looking up). Quite sure, thank you. Saranoff and I will manage it.

SERGIUS (grimly). Yes: we'll manage it. He finds out what to do; draws up the orders; and I sign 'em. Division of labour, Major. (Bluntschli passes him a paper.) Another one? Thank you. (He plants the papers squarely before him; sets his chair carefully parallel to them; and signs with the air of a man resolutely performing a difficult and dangerous feat.) This hand is more accustomed to the sword than to the pen.

PETKOFF. It's very good of you, Bluntschli, it is indeed, to let yourself be put upon in this way. Now are you quite sure I can do nothing?

CATHERINE (in a low, warning tone). You can stop interrupting, Paul.

PETKOFF (starting and looking round at her). Eh? Oh! Quite right, my love, quite right. (He takes his newspaper up, but lets it drop again.) Ah, you haven't been campaigning, Catherine: you don't know how