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Arms and the Man

A Play in Three Acts

by George Bernard Shaw

As Directed by Anita Grannis
At Robroy Farquhar's Flat Rock Playhouse,
Flat Rock, N.C.

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

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ARMS AND THE MAN

STORY OF THE PLAY

This is a new acting edition of one of Shaw's most distinguished plays. Ever since its first performance in 1894, and the controversy it aroused, it has had a prominent place in the repertory of the English-speaking stage. In this play Shaw wrote a satire on war and the professional fighting man; the typical Shavian touches throughout are very good fun; but of course there are serious points to be made too, and Shaw makes them in his inimitably brilliant manner.

"SPECIAL NOTE ON PLAYS BY BERNARD SHAW.

All of Shaw's early plays through *Man and Superman* are in public domain in their original form, and may be performed without fee *provided the text used is that of original publication*. For his Collected Works, 1930-32, Shaw revised the texts of all of his early plays. These revisions, still under copyright protection, are incorporated in all authorized editions of the plays published since 1930, including the Samuel French acting editions and the Penguin editions. Those groups wishing to perform the *revised, definitive* texts of the following plays may do so at a special Royalty Rate of \$20 for the first performance and \$15 for each subsequent performance.

ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE
ARMS AND THE MAN
CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA
CANDIDA
CAPTAIN BRASSBOUND'S CONVERSION
DEVIL'S DISCIPLE
DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

DON JUAN IN HELL
MAN AND SUPERMAN
MAN OF DESTINY
MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION
PHILANDERER
WIDOWER'S HOUSES
YOU NEVER CAN TELL

ARMS AND THE MAN

CHARACTERS

(5 men; 3 women)

RAINA
CATHERINE PETKOFF
LOUKA
CAPTAIN BLUNTSCHLI
RUSSIAN OFFICER
NICOLA
MAJOR PAUL PETKOFF
MAJOR SERGIUS SARANOFF

SCENES

The action takes place at Major Petkoff's house somewhere in Bulgaria, about 1885.

ACT ONE: *Raina's bedchamber.*

ACT TWO: *The garden.*

ACT THREE: *The library.*

Arms and the Man

ACT I

Night. A lady's bedchamber in Bulgaria, in a small town near the Dragoman Pass, late in November in the year 1885. Through an open window with a little balcony a peak of the Balkans, wonderfully white and beautiful in the starlit snow seems quite close at hand, though it is really miles away. The interior of the room is not like anything to be seen in the west of Europe. It is half rich Bulgarian, half cheap Viennese. Above the head of the bed, which stands against a little wall cutting off the left hand corner of the room, is a painted wooden shrine, blue and gold, with an ivory image of Christ, and a light hanging before it in a pierced metal ball suspended by three chains. The principal seat, placed towards the other side of the room and apposite the window, is a Turkish ottoman. The counterpane and hangings of the bed, the window curtains, the little carpet, and all the ornamental textile fabrics in the room are oriental and gorgeous: the paper on the walls is occidental and paltry. The washstand, against the wall on the side nearest the ottoman and window, consists of an enamelled iron basin with a pail beneath it in a painted metal frame, and a single towel on the rail at the side. The dressing table, between the bed and the window, is a common pine table, covered with a cloth of many colors, with an expensive toilet mirror on it. The door is on the side nearest the bed; and there is a chest of drawers between. This chest of drawers is also covered by a variegated native cloth;

and on it there is a pile of paper backed novels, a box of chocolate creams, and a miniature easel with a large photograph of an extremely handsome officer, whose lofty bearing and magnetic glance can be felt even from the portrait. The room is lighted by a candle on the chest of drawers, and another on the dressing table with a box of matches beside it.

The window is hinged doorwise and stands wide open. Outside, a pair of wooden shutters, opening outwards, also stand open. On the balcony a YOUNG LADY, intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of the night, and of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it, is gazing at the snowy Balkans. She is in her nightgown, well covered by a long mantle of furs, worth, on a moderate estimate, about three times the furniture of her room.

Her reverie is interrupted by her mother, CATHERINE PETKOFF, a woman over forty, imperiously energetic, with magnificent black hair and eyes, who might be a very splendid specimen of the wife of a mountain farmer, but is determined to be a Viennese lady, and to that end wears a fashionable tea gown on all occasions.

CATHERINE. (*Entering hastily, full of good news*) Raina! (*She pronounces it Rah-eena, with the stress on the ee.*) Raina! (*She goes to the bed, expecting to find Raina there.*) Why, where—? (*RAINA looks into the room.*) Heavens, child! are you out in the night air instead of in your bed? You'll catch your death. Louka told me you were asleep.

RAINA. (*Dreamily*) I sent her away. I wanted to be alone. The stars are so beautiful! What is the matter?

CATHERINE. Such news! There has been a battle.

RAINA. (*Her eyes dilating*) Ah! (*She comes eagerly to Catherine.*)

CATHERINE. A great battle at Slivnitsa! A victory! And it was won by Sergius.

RAINA. (*With a cry of delight*) Ah! (*They embrace*

rapturously.) Oh, mother! (*Then, with sudden anxiety*) Is Father safe?

CATHERINE. Of course: he sends me the news. Sergius is the hero of the hour, the idol of the regiment.

RAINA. (*Up Center.*) Tell me, tell me. How was it? (*Ecstatically*) Oh, Mother! Mother! Mother! (*She pulls her MOTHER down on the ottoman; and they kiss one another frantically.*)

CATHERINE. (*With surging enthusiasm*) You can't guess how splendid it is. A cavalry charge! think of that! He defied our Russian commanders—acted without orders—led a charge on his own responsibility—headed it himself—was the first man to sweep through their guns. Can't you see it, Raina: our gallant splendid Bulgarians with their swords and eyes flashing thundering down like an avalanche and scattering the wretched Serbs and their dandified Austrian officers like chaff. And you! (*Slaps her playfully on hand.*) you kept Sergius waiting a year before you would be betrothed to him. Oh, if you have a drop of Bulgarian blood in your veins, you will worship him when he comes back.

RAINA. What will he care for my poor little worship after the acclamations of a whole army of heroes? But no matter: I am so happy! so proud! (*She rises and walks about excitedly.*) It proves that all our ideas were real after all.

CATHERINE. (*Indignantly*) Our ideas real! What do you mean?

RAINA. Our ideas of what Sergius would do. Our patriotism. Our heroic ideals. I sometimes used to doubt whether they were anything but dreams. Oh, what faithless little creatures girls are! When I buckled on Sergius's sword he looked so noble: it was treason to think of disillusion or humiliation or failure. And yet—and yet—(*She sits down again suddenly.*) Promise me you'll never tell him.

CATHERINE. Don't ask me for promises until I know what I'm promising.

RAINA. Well, it came into my head just as he was hold-

ing me in his arms and looking into my eyes, that perhaps we only had our heroic ideas because we are so fond of reading Byron and Pushkin, and because we were so delighted with the opera that season at Bucharest. Real life is so seldom like that! indeed never, as far as I knew it then. (*Remorsefully*) Only think, Mother: I doubted him: I wondered whether all his heroic qualities and his soldiership might not prove mere imagination when he went into a real battle. I had an uneasy fear that he might cut a poor figure there beside all those clever officers from the Tsar's court.

CATHERINE. A poor figure! Shame on you! The Serbs have Austrian officers who are just as clever as the Russians; but we have beaten them in every battle for all that.

RAINA. (*Laughing and snuggling against her MOTHER*) Yes: I was only a prosaic little coward. Oh, to think that it was all true! that Sergius is just as splendid and noble as he looks! that the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance! What happiness! what unspeakable fulfillment!

(They are interrupted by the entry of LOUKA, a handsome, proud girl in a pretty Bulgarian peasant's dress with double apron, so defiant that her servility to Raina is almost insolent. She is afraid of Catherine, but even with her goes as far as she dares.)

LOUKA. If you please, madam, all the windows are to be closed and the shutters made fast. They say there may be shooting in the streets. (*RAINA and CATHERINE rise together, alarmed.*) The Serbs are being chased right back through the pass; and they say they may run into the town. Our cavalry will be after them; and our people will be ready for them, you may be sure, now they're running away. (*She goes out on the balcony, and pulls the outside shutters to; then steps back into the room.*)

CATHERINE. (*Businesslike, her housekeeping instincts*

aroused) I must see that everything is made safe downstairs.

RAINA. I wish our people were not so cruel. What glory is there in killing wretched fugitives?

CATHERINE. Cruel! Do you suppose they would hesitate to kill you—or worse?

RAINA. (*To LOUKA*) Leave the shutters so that I can just close them if I hear any noise.

CATHERINE. (*Authoritatively, turning on her way to the door*) Oh no, dear: you must keep them fastened. You would be sure to drop off to sleep and leave them open. Make them fast, Louka.

LOUKA. Yes, madam. (*She fastens them.*)

RAINA. Don't be anxious about me. The moment I hear a shot, I shall blow out the candles and roll myself up in bed with my ears well covered.

CATHERINE. Quite the wisest thing you can do, my love. Goodnight.

RAINA. Goodnight. (*Her emotion comes back for a moment.*) Wish me joy. (*They kiss.*) This is the happiest night of my life—if only there are no fugitives.

CATHERINE. Go to bed, dear; and don't think of them. (*She goes out.*)

LOUKA. (*Secretly, to RAINA*) If you would like the shutters open, just give them a push like this. (*She pushes them: they open: she pulls them to again.*) One of them ought to be bolted at the bottom; but the bolt's gone.

RAINA. (*With dignity, reproving her*) Thanks, Louka; but we must do what we are told. (*LOUKA makes a grimace.*) Goodnight.

LOUKA. (*Carelessly*) Goodnight. (*She goes out, swaggering.*)

RAINA. (*Left alone, takes off her fur cloak and throws it on the ottoman. Then she goes to the chest of drawers, and adores the portrait there with feelings that are beyond all expression. She does not kiss it or press it to her breast, or shew it any mark of bodily affection; but she takes it in her hands and elevates it, like a priestess. Looking up at the picture*) Oh, I shall never be unworthy of you any

more, my soul's hero: never, never, never. (*She replaces it reverently. Then she selects a novel from the little pile of books. She turns over the leaves dreamily; finds her page; turns the book inside out at it; and, with a happy sigh, gets into bed and prepares to read herself to sleep. But before abandoning herself to fiction, she raises her eyes once more, thinking of the blessed reality, and murmurs*) My hero! my hero!

(*A distant SHOT breaks the quiet of the night. She starts, listening; and TWO MORE SHOTS, much nearer, follow, startling her so that she scrambles out of bed, and hastily blows out the candle on the chest of drawers. Then, putting her fingers in her ears, she runs to the dressing table, blows out the light there, and hurries back to bed in the dark, nothing being visible but the glimmer of the light in the pierced ball before the image, and the starlight seen through the slits at the top of the shutters. The FIRING breaks out again: there is a startling FUSILLADE quite close at hand. Whilst it is still echoing, the shutters disappear, pulled open from without; and for an instant the rectangle of snowy starlight flashes out with the FIGURE OF A MAN silhouetted in black upon it. The shutters close immediately; and the room is dark again. But the silence is now broken by the SOUND OF PANTING. Then there is a scratch; and the FLAME OF A MATCH is seen in the middle of the room.*)

RAINA. (*Crouching on the bed*) Who's there? (*The MATCH is out instantly.*) Who's there? Who is that?

AMAN'S VOICE. (*In the darkness, subduedly, but threateningly*) Sh—sh! Don't call out; or you'll be shot. Be good; and no harm will happen to you. (*She is heard leaving her bed, and making for the door.*) Take care: it's no use trying to run away.

RAINA. But who—

THE VOICE. (*Warning*) Remember: if you raise your

voice my revolver will go off. (*Commandingly.*) Strike a light and let me see you. Do you hear. (*Another moment of silence and darkness as she retreats to the chest of drawers. Then she lights a CANDLE; and the mystery is at an end. He is a MAN of about 35, in a deplorable plight, bespattered with mud and blood and snow, his belt and the strap of his revolver-case keeping together the torn ruins of the blue tunic of a Serbian artillery officer. All that the candlelight and his unwashed unkempt condition make it possible to discern is that he is of middling stature and undistinguished appearance, with strong neck and shoulders, roundish obstinate looking head covered with short crisp bronze curls, clear quick eyes and good brows and mouth, hopelessly prosaic nose like that of a strong minded baby, trim soldierlike carriage and energetic manner, and with all his wits about him in spite of his desperate predicament: even with a sense of the humor of it, without, however, the least intention of trifling with it or throwing away a chance. Reckoning up what he can guess about Raina: her age, her social position, her character, and the extent to which she is frightened, he continues, more politely but still most determinedly*) Excuse my disturbing you; but you recognize my uniform? Serb! If I'm caught I shall be killed. (*Menacingly*) Do you understand that?

RAINA. Yes.

THE MAN. Well, I don't intend to get killed if I can help it. (*Still more formidably*) Do you understand that? (*He locks the door quickly but quietly.*)

RAINA. (*Disdainfully*) I suppose not. (*She draws herself up superbly, and looks him straight in the face, adding, with cutting emphasis*) Some soldiers, I know, are afraid to die.

THE MAN. (*With grim good humor*) All of them, dear lady, all of them, believe me. It is our duty to live as long as we can. Now, if you raise an alarm—

RAINA. (*Cutting him short*) You will shoot me. How do you know that I am afraid to die?

THE MAN. (*Cunningly*) Ah; but suppose I don't shoot

shoot you, what will happen then? A lot of your cavalry will burst into this pretty room of yours and slaughter me here like a pig; for I'll fight like a demon; they shant get me into the street to amuse themselves with: I know what they are. Are you prepared to receive that sort of company in your present undress? (RAINA, suddenly conscious of her nightgown, instinctively shrinks, and gathers it more closely about her neck. He watches her, and adds, pitilessly) Hardly presentable, eh? (She turns to the ottoman. He raises his pistol instantly, and cries) Stop! (She stops.) Where are you going?

RAINA. (*With dignified patience*) Only to get my cloak.

THE MAN. (*Passing swiftly to the ottoman and snatching the cloak*) A good idea! I'll keep the cloak; and you'll take care that nobody comes in and sees you without it. This is a better weapon than the revolver: eh? (*He throws the pistol down on the ottoman.*)

RAINA. (*Revolted*) It is not the weapon of a gentleman!

THE MAN. It's good enough for a man with only you to stand between him and death. (*As they look at one another for a moment, RAINA hardly able to believe that even a Serbian officer can be so cynically and selfishly unchivalrous, they are startled by a sharp FUSILLADE in the street. The chill of imminent death hushes the man's voice as he adds*) Do you hear? If you are going to bring those blackguards in on me you shall receive them as you are.

(*CLAMOR and DISTURBANCE. The pursuers in the street batter at the house door, shouting "Open the door! Open the door! Wake up, will you!" A MAN SERVANT's voice calls to them angrily from within "This is Major Petkoff's house: you can't come in here;" but a renewal of the CLAMOR, and a torrent of BLOWS on the DOOR, end with his letting a chain down with a CLANK, followed by a RUSH OF HEAVY FOOTSTEPS AND A DIN OF TRIUMPHANT YELLS, dominated at last by the voice of CATHERINE, indignantly addressing an officer with*

"What does this mean, sir? Do you know where you are?" *The NOISE subsides suddenly.*)

LOUKA. (*Outside, knocking at the bedroom door*) My lady! my lady! get up quick and open the door. If you don't they will break it down.

THE MAN. (*Throws up his head with the gesture of a man who sees that it is all over with him, and drops the manner he has been assuming to intimidate Raina. Sincerely and kindly*) No use, dear: I'm done for. (*Flinging the cloak to her*) Quick! Wrap yourself up: they're coming.

RAINA. Oh, thank you. (*She wraps herself up with intense relief.*)

THE MAN. (*Between his teeth*) Don't mention it.

RAINA. (*Anxiously*) What will you do?

THE MAN. (*Grimly*) The first man in will find out. Keep out of the way; and don't look. It won't last long; but it will not be nice. (*He draws his sabre and faces the door, waiting.*)

RAINA. (*Impulsively*) I'll help you. I'll save you.

THE MAN. You can't.

RAINA. I can. I'll hide you. (*She drags him towards the window.*) Here! behind the curtains.

THE MAN. (*Yielding to her*) There's just half a chance, if you keep your head.

RAINA. (*Drawing the curtain before him*) S-sh! (*She makes for the ottoman.*)

THE MAN. (*Putting out his head*) Remember—

RAINA. (*Running back to him*) Yes?

THE MAN. —nine soldiers out of ten are born fools.

RAINA. Oh! (*She draws the curtain angrily before him.*)

THE MAN. (*Looking out at the other side*) If they find me, I promise you a fight: a devil of a fight.

(*She stamps at him. He disappears hastily. She takes off her cloak, and throws it across the foot of the bed. Then, with a sleepy, disturbed air, she opens the door. LOUKA enters excitedly.*)

LOUKA. One of those beasts of Serbs has been seen climbing up the waterpipe to your balcony. Our men want to search for him; and they are so wild and drunk and furious. (*She makes for the other side of the room to get as far from the door as possible.*) My lady says you are to dress at once, and to— (*She sees the revolver lying on the ottoman, and stops, petrified.*)

RAINA. (*As if annoyed at being distrubed*) They shall not search here. Why have they been let in?

CATHERINE. (*Coming in hastily*) Raina, darling: are you safe? Have you seen anyone or heard anything?

RAINA. I heard the shooting. Surely the soldiers will not dare come in here?

CATHERINE. I have found a Russian officer, thank Heaven: he knows Sergius. (*Speaking through the door to someone outside*) Sir: will you come in now. My daughter will receive you.

(*A young RUSSIAN OFFICER, in Bulgarian uniform, enters, sword in hand.*)

OFFICER. (*With soft feline politeness and stiff military carriage*) Good evening, gracious lady. I am sorry to intrude; but there is a Serb hiding on the balcony. Will you and the gracious lady your mother please to withdraw whilst we search?

RAINA. (*Petulantly*) Nonsense, sir; you can see that there is no one on the balcony. (*She throws the shutters wide open and stands with her back to the curtain where the MAN is hidden, pointing to the moonlit balcony. A COUPLE OF SHOTS are fired right under the window; and a bullet shatters the glass opposite RAINA, who winks and gasps, but stands her ground; whilst CATHERINE screams, and the officer, with a cry of Take care! rushes to the balcony.*)

THE OFFICER. (*On the balcony, shouting savagely down to the street*) Cease firing there, you fools: do you hear? Cease firing, damn you! (*He glares down for a moment; then turns to RAINA, trying to resume his polite manner.*)

Could anyone have got in without your knowledge? Were you asleep?

RAINA. No: I have not been to bed.

THE OFFICER. (*Impatiently, coming back into the room*) Your neighbors have their heads so full of runaway Serbs that they see them everywhere. (*Politely*) Gracious lady: a thousand pardons. Goodnight. (*Military bow, which RAINA returns coldly. Another to CATHERINE, who follows him out.*)

RAINA. (*Closes the shutters. She turns and sees LOUKA, who has been watching the scene curiously.*) Don't leave my mother, Louka, until the soldiers go away.

(*LOUKA glances at RAINA, at the ottoman, at the curtain; then purses her lips secretively, laughs insolently, and goes out. RAINA, highly offended by this demonstration, follows her to the door, and shuts it behind her with a slam, locking it violently. The MAN immediately steps out from behind the curtain, sheathing his sabre, and closes shutters. Then, dismissing the danger from his mind in a businesslike way, he comes affably to RAINA.*)

THE MAN. A narrow shave; but a miss is as good as a mile. Dear young lady: your servant to the death. I wish for your sake I had joined the Bulgarian army instead of the other one. I am not a native Serb.

RAINA. (*Haughtily*) No: you are one of the Austrians who set the Serbs on to rob us of our national liberty, and who officer their army for them. We hate them!

THE MAN. Austrian! not I. Don't hate me, dear young lady. I am a Swiss, fighting merely as a professional soldier. I joined the Serbs because they came first on the road from Switzerland. Be generous: you've beaten us hollow.

RAINA. Have I not been generous?

THE MAN. Noble! Heroic! But I'm not saved yet. This particular rush will soon pass through; but the pursuit will go on all night by fits and starts. I must take my chance

to get off in a quiet interval. (*Pleasantly*) You don't mind my waiting just a minute or two, do you?

RAINA. (*Putting on her most genteel society manner*) Oh, not at all. Won't you sit down?

THE MAN. Thanks. (*He sits on the foot of the bed. RAINA walks with studied elegance to the ottoman and sits down. Unfortunately she sits on the pistol, and jumps up with a shriek. The MAN, all nerves, skies like a frightened horse to the other side of the room. Irritably*) Don't frighten me like that. What is it?

RAINA. Your revolver! It was staring that officer in the face all the time. What an escape!

THE MAN. (*Vexed at being unnecessarily terrified.*) Oh, is that all?

RAINA. (*Staring at him rather superciliously as she conceives a poorer and poorer opinion of him, and feels proportionately more and more at her ease.*) I am sorry I frightened you. (*She takes up the pistol and hands it to him.*) Pray take it to protect yourself against me.

THE MAN. (*Grinning wearily at the sarcasm as he takes the pistol*) No use, dear young lady: there's nothing in it. It's not loaded. (*He makes a grimace at it, and drops it disparagingly into his revolver case.*)

RAINA. Load it by all means.

THE MAN. I've no ammunition. What use are cartridges in battle? I always carry chocolate instead; and I finished the last cake of that hours ago.

RAINA. (*Outraged in her most cherished ideals of manhood.*) Chocolate! Do you stuff your pockets with sweets—like a schoolboy—even in the field?

THE MAN. (*Grinning*) Yes: isn't it contemptible? (*Hungrily*) I wish I had some now.

RAINA. Allow me. (*She sails away scornfully to the chest of drawers, and returns with the box of confectionery in her hand.*) I am sorry I have eaten them all except these. (*She offers him the box.*)

THE MAN. (*Ravenously*) You're an angel! (*He gobbles the contents.*) Creams! Delicious! (*He looks anxiously to see whether there are any more. There are none: he*

can only scrape the box with his fingers and suck them. When that nourishment is exhausted he accepts the inevitable with pathetic good humor, and says, with grateful emotion) Bless you, dear lady! You can always tell an old soldier by the inside of his holsters and cartridge boxes. The young ones carry pistols and cartridges: the old ones, grub. Thank you. *(He hands back the box. She snatches it contemptuously from him and throws it away. He shies again, as if she had meant to strike him.)* Ugh! Don't do things so suddenly, gracious lady. It's mean to revenge yourself because I frightened you just now.

RAINA. *(Loftily)* Frighten me! Do you know, sir, that though I am only a woman, I think I am at heart as brave as you.

THE MAN. I should think so. You haven't been under fire for three days as I have. I can stand two days without shewing it much; but no man can stand three days: I'm as nervous as a mouse. *(He sits down on the ottoman, and takes his head in his hands.)* Would you like to see me cry?

RAINA. *(Alarmed)* No.

THE MAN. If you would, all you have to do is to scold me just as if I were a little boy and you my nurse. If I were in camp now, they'd play all sorts of tricks on me.

RAINA. *(A little moved)* I'm sorry. I won't scold you. *(Touched by the sympathy in her tone, he raises his head and looks gratefully at her; she immediately draws back and says stiffly)* You must excuse me: our soldiers are not like that. *(She moves away from the ottoman.)*

THE MAN. Oh yes they are. There are only two sorts of soldiers: old ones and young ones. I've served fourteen years: half of your fellows never smelt powder before. Why, how is it that you've just beaten us? Sheer ignorance of the art of war, nothing else. *(Indignantly)* I never saw anything so unprofessional.

RAINA. *(Ironically)* Oh! was it unprofessional to beat you?

THE MAN. Well, come! is it professional to throw a regiment of cavalry on a battery of machine guns, with

the dead certainty that if the guns go off not a horse or man will ever get within fifty yards of the fire? I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it.

RAINA. (*Eagerly turning to him, as all her enthusiasms and her dreams of glory rush back on her*) Did you see the great cavalry charge? Oh, tell me about it. Describe it to me.

THE MAN. You never saw a cavalry charge, did you?

RAINA. How could I?

THE MAN. Ah, perhaps not. No: of course not! Well, it's a funny sight. It's like slinging a handful of peas against a window pane: first one comes; then two or three close behind him; and then all the rest in a lump.

RAINA. (*Her eyes dilating as she raises her clasped hands ecstatically*) Yes, first One! the bravest of the brave!

THE MAN. (*Prosaically*) Hm! you should see the poor devil pulling at his horse.

RAINA. Why should he pull at his horse?

THE MAN. (*Impatient of so stupid a question*) It's running away with him, of course: do you suppose the fellow wants to get there before the others and be killed? Then they all come. You can tell the young ones by their wildness and their slashing. The old ones come bunched up under the number one guard: they know that they're mere projectiles, and that it's no use trying to fight. The wounds are mostly broken knees, from the horses cannoning together.

RAINA. Ugh! But I don't believe the first man is a coward. I know he is a hero!

THE MAN. (*Good humoredly*) That's what you'd have said if you'd seen the first man in the charge today.

RAINA. (*Breathless, forgiving him everything*) Ah, I knew it! Tell me. Tell me about him.

THE MAN. He did it like an operatic tenor. A regular handsome fellow, with flashing eyes and lovely moustache, shouting his war-cry and charging like Don Quixote at the windmills. We did laugh.

RAINA. You dared to laugh!

THE MAN. Yes; but when the sergeant ran up as white as a sheet, and told us they'd sent us the wrong ammunition, and that we couldn't fire a round for the next ten minutes, we laughed at the other side of our mouths. I never felt so sick in my life; though I've been in one or two very tight places. And I hadn't even a revolver cartridge: only chocolate. We'd no bayonets: nothing. Of course, they just cut us to bits. And there was Don Quixote flourishing like a drum major, thinking he'd done the cleverest thing ever known, whereas he ought to be courtmartialled for it. Of all the fools ever let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest. He and his regiment simply committed suicide; only the pistol missed fire; that's all.

RAINA. (*Deeply wounded, but steadfastly loyal to her ideals*) Indeed! Would you know him again if you saw him?

THE MAN. Shall I ever forget him!

RAINA. (*She again goes to the chest of drawers. He watches her with a vague hope that she may have something more for him to eat. She takes the portrait from its stand and brings it to him.*) That is a photograph of the gentleman—the patriot and hero—to whom I am betrothed.

THE MAN. (*Recognizing it with a shock*) I'm really very sorry. (*Looking at her*) Was it fair to lead me on? (*He looks at the portrait again.*) Yes: that's Don Quixote: not a doubt of it. (*He stifles a laugh.*)

RAINA. (*Quickly*) Why do you laugh?

THE MAN. (*Apologetic, but still greatly tickled*) I didn't laugh, I assure you. At least I didn't mean to. But when I think of him charging the windmills and imagining he was doing the finest thing— (*He chokes with suppressed laughter.*)

RAINA. (*Sternly*) Give me back the portrait, sir.

THE MAN. (*With sincere remorse*) Of course. Certainly. I'm really very sorry. (*He hands her the picture. She deliberately kisses it and looks him straight in the face before returning to the chest of drawers to replace it. He*

follows her, apologizing.) Perhaps I'm quite wrong, you know: no doubt I am. Most likely he had got wind of the cartridge business somehow, and knew it was a safe job.

RAINA. That is to say, he as a pretender and a coward! You did not dare say that before.

THE MAN. (*With a comic gesture of despair*) It's no use, dear lady: I can't make you see it from the professional point of view. (*As he turns away to get back to the ottoman, a COUPLE OF DISTANT SHOTS threaten renewed trouble.*)

RAINA. (*Sternly, as she sees him listening to the shots*) So much the better for you!

THE MAN. (*Turning*) How?

RAINA. You are my enemy; and you are at my mercy. What would I do if I were a professional soldier?

THE MAN. Ah, true, dear young lady: you're always right. I know how good you've been to me: to my last hour I shall remember those three chocolate creams. It was unsoldierly; but it was angelic.

RAINA. (*Coldly*) Thank you. And now I will do a soldierly thing. You cannot stay here after what you have just said about my future husband; but I will go out on the balcony and see whether it is safe for you to climb down into the street. (*She turns to the window.*)

THE MAN. (*Changing countenance*) Down that water-pipe! Stop! Wait! I can't! I daren't! The very thought of it makes me giddy. I came up it fast enough with death behind me. But to face it now in cold blood—! (*He sinks on the ottoman.*) It's no use: I give up: I'm beaten. Give the alarm. (*He drops his head on his hands in the deepest dejection.*)

RAINA. (*Disarmed by pity*) Come: don't be disheartened. (*She stoops over him almost maternally: he shakes his head.*) Oh, you are a very poor soldier: a chocolate cream soldier! Come, cheer up! it takes less courage to climb down than to face capture: remember that.

THE MAN. (*Dreamily, lulled by her voice*) No: capture only means death; and death is sleep: oh, sleep, sleep,

sleep, undisturbed sleep! Climbing down the pipe means doing something—exerting myself—thinking! Death ten times over first.

RAINA. (*Softly and wonderingly, catching the rhythm of his weariness*) Are you as sleepy as that?

THE MAN. I've not had two hours undisturbed sleep since I joined. I haven't closed my eyes for forty-eight hours.

RAINA. (*At her wit's end*) But what am I to do with you?

THE MAN. (*Staggering up, roused by her desperation*) Of course. I must do something. (*He shakes himself; pulls himself together; and speaks with rallied vigor and courage.*) You see, sleep or no sleep, hunger or no hunger, tired or not tired, you can always do a thing when you know it must be done. Well, that pipe must be got down: (*He hits himself on the chest.*) do you hear that, you chocolate cream soldier? (*He turns to the window.*)

RAINA. (*Anxiously*) But if you fall?

THE MAN. I shall sleep as if the stones were a feather bed. Goodbye. (*He makes boldly for the window; and his hand is on the shutter when there is a terrible BURST OF FIRING in the street beneath.*)

RAINA. (*Rushing to him*) Stop! (*She seizes him recklessly, and pulls him quite round.*) They'll kill you.

THE MAN. (*Coolly, but attentively*) Never mind: this sort of thing is all in my day's work. I'm bound to take my chance. (*Decisively*) Now do what I tell you. Put out the candles; so that they shan't see the light when I open the shutters. And keep away from the window, whatever you do. If they see me they're sure to have a shot at me.

RAINA. (*Clinging to him*) They're sure to see you: it's bright moonlight. I'll save you. Oh, how can you be so indifferent! You want me to save you, don't you?

THE MAN. I really don't want to be troublesome. (*She shakes him in her impatience.*) I am not indifferent, dear young lady, I assure you. But how is it to be done?

RAINA. Come away from the window. (*She takes him firmly back to the middle of the room. The moment she*

releases him he turns mechanically towards the window again. She seizes him and turns him back, exclaiming) Please! (He becomes motionless, like a hypnotized rabbit, his fatigue gaining fast on him. She releases him, and addresses him patronizingly.) Now listen. You must trust to our hospitality. You do not yet know in whose house you are. I am a Petkoff.

THE MAN. A pet what?

RAINA. (*Rather indignantly*) I mean that I belong to the family of the Petkoffs, the richest and best known in our country.

THE MAN. Oh yes, of course. I beg your pardon. The Petkoffs, to be sure. How stupid of me!

RAINA. You know you never heard of them until this moment. How can you stoop to pretend!

THE MAN. Forgive me: I'm too tired to think; and the change of subject was too much for me. Don't scold me.

RAINA. I forgot. It might make you cry. (*He nods, quite seriously. She pouts and then resumes her patronizing tone.*) I must tell you that my father holds the highest command of any Bulgarian in our army. He is (*Proudly*) a Major.

THE MAN. (*Pretending to be deeply impressed*) A Major! Bless me! Think of that!

RAINA. You shewed great ignorance in thinking that it was necessary to climb up to the balcony because ours is the only private house that has two rows of windows. There is a flight of stairs inside to get up and down by.

THE MAN. Stairs! How grand! You live in great luxury indeed, dear young lady.

RAINA. Do you know what a library is?

THE MAN. A library? A roomful of books?

RAINA. Yes. We have one, the only one in Bulgaria.

THE MAN. Actually a real library! I should like to see that.

RAINA. (*Affectedly*) I tell you these things to shew you that you are not in the house of ignorant country folk who would kill you the moment they saw your Serbian

uniform, but among civilized people. We go to Bucharest every year for the opera season; and I have spent a whole month in Vienna.

THE MAN. I saw that, dear young lady. I saw at once that you knew the world.

RAINA. Have you ever seen the opera of Ernani?

THE MAN. Is that the one with the devil in it in red velvet, and a soldiers' chorus?

RAINA. (*Contemptuously*) No!

THE MAN. (*Stifling a heavy sigh of weariness*) Then I don't know it

RAINA. I thought you might have remembered the great scene where Ernani, flying from his foes just as you are tonight, takes refuge in the castle of his bitterest enemy, an old Castilian noble. The noble refuses to give him up. His guest is sacred to him.

THE MAN. (*Quickly, waking up a little*) Have your people got that notion?

RAINA. (*With dignity*) My mother and I can understand that notion, as you call it. And if instead of threatening me with your pistol as you did you had simply thrown yourself as a fugitive on our hospitality, you would have been as safe as in your father's house.

THE MAN. Quite sure?

RAINA. (*Turning her back on him in disgust*) Oh, it is useless to try to make you understand.

THE MAN. Don't be angry: you see how awkward it would be for me if there was any mistake. My father is a very hospitable man: he keeps six hotels; but I couldn't trust him as far as that. What about your father?

RAINA. He is away at Slivnitza fighting for his country. I answer for your safety. There is my hand in pledge of it. Will that reassure you? (*She offers him her hand.*)

THE MAN. (*Looking dubiously at his own hand*) Better not touch my hand, dear young lady. I must have a wash first.

RAINA. (*Touched*) That is very nice of you. I see that you are a gentleman.

THE MAN. (*Puzzled*) Eh?

RAINA. You must not think I am surprised. Bulgarians of really good standing—people in our position—wash their hands nearly every day. So you see I can appreciate your delicacy. You may take my hand. (*She offers it again.*)

THE MAN. (*Kissing it with his hands behind his back*) Thanks, gracious young lady: I feel safe at last. And now would you mind breaking the news to your mother? I had better not stay here secretly longer than is necessary.

RAINA. If you will be so good as to keep perfectly still whilst I am away.

THE MAN. Certainly. (*He sits down on the ottoman.*)

RAINA. (*Goes to the bed and wraps herself in the fur cloak. His eyes close. She goes to the door. Turning for a last look at him, she sees that he is dropping off to sleep. At the door*) You are not going asleep, are you? (*He murmurs inarticulately: she runs to him and shakes him.*) Do you hear? Wake up: you are falling asleep.

THE MAN. Eh? Falling asleep— Oh no: not the least in the world: I was only thinking. It's all right: I'm wide awake.

RAINA. (*Severely*) Will you please stand up while I am away. (*He rises reluctantly.*) All the time, mind.

THE MAN. (*Standing unsteadily*) Certainly. Certainly: you may depend on me. (*RAINA looks doubtfully at him. He smiles weakly. She goes reluctantly, turning again at the door, and almost catching him in the act of yawning. She goes out. Drowsily*) Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep— (*The words trail off into a murmur. He wakes again with a shock on the point of falling.*) Where am I? That's what I want to know: where am I? Must keep awake. Nothing keeps me awake except danger: remember that: (*Intently*) danger, danger, danger, dan— (*Trailing off again: another shock*) Where's danger? Mus' find it. (*He starts off vaguely round the room in search of it.*) What am I looking for? Sleep—danger—don't know. (*He stumbles against the bed.*) Ah yes: now I know. All right now. I'm to go to bed, but not to sleep. Be sure not to sleep, because of danger. Not to lie down either, only sit down. (*He*

sits on the bed. A blissful expression comes into his face.) Ah! (With a happy sigh he sinks back at full length; lifts his boots into the bed with a final effort; and falls fast asleep instantly.)

(CATHERINE comes in, followed by RAINA.)

RAINA. *(Looking at the ottoman)* He's gone! I left him here.

CATHERINE. Here! Then he must have climbed down from the—

RAINA. *(Seeing him)* Oh! *(She points.)*

CATHERINE. *(Scandalized)* Well! *(She strides to the bed, RAINA following until she is opposite her on the other side.)* He's fast asleep. The brute!

RAINA. *(Anxiously)* Sh!

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

RAINA. *(Catching her arm)* Don't, Mamma: the poor darling is worn out. Let him sleep.

CATHERINE. *(Letting him go, and turning amazed to RAINA)* The poor darling! Raina!!! *(She looks sternly at her daughter.)*

(The MAN sleeps profoundly.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

The sixth of March, 1886. In the garden of Major Petkoff's house. It a fine spring morning: 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 landscape. Looking towards them from within the garden, the side of the house is seen on the Left, with a garden door reached by a little flight of steps. On the Right the stable yard, with its gateway, encroaches on the garden. There are fruit bushes along the paling and house, covered with washing spread out to dry. A path runs by the house, and rises by two steps at the corner, where it turns out of sight. In the Center, 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 Right.

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 servitude, and the imperturbability of the accurate calculator who has no illusions. He wears a white Bulgarian costume: jacket with embroidered border, 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 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 Sola, their custom will be half my capital: their bad word would ruin me.

LOUKA. You have no spirit. I should like to catch them saying 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 months if I babbled 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, she 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 is heard from the stable yard.*)

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 collects the coffee pot and cups on 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 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 Serbian 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. (*Sitting 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 Serbs 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, having at this early hour made only a very perfunctory toilet, wears a Bulgarian apron over a once brilliant but now half-worn dressing gown, and a colored handkerchief tied over her thick black hair, comes from the house with Turkish slippers on her bare feet, 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*) Paul: have you let the Austrians force you to make peace?

PETKOFF. (*Submissively*) My dear: they didn't con-

sult 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 Serbia 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! (*She 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 Philippopolis 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 have 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.

SERGIUS. (*Knocking at the stable gates*) Gate, Nicola!

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. Are you deaf? Don't you hear Major Saranoff knocking? Bring him round this way. (*He pronounces the name with the stress on the second syllable: Sarahn-off.*)

NICOLA. Yes, Major. (*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, if you please.

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 hasn't the slightest chance of promotion until we're 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 chieftan. But his remarkable personal distinctions are of a characteristically civilized type. The ridges of his eyebrows, curving with an interrogative twist round the 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 Parisian salon, shewing that 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. 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 ideals; by his consequent cynical scorn for humanity; by his jejune credulity as to the absolute validity of his concepts and the unworthiness of the world in disregarding them; by his wincings and mockeries under the sting of the petty disillusion which every hour spent among men brings to his sensitive observation, he has acquired the half tragic, half ironic air, the mysterious moodiness, the suggestion of a strange and terrible history that has left nothing but undying remorse, by which Childe Harold fascinated the grandmothers of his English contemporaries. It is clear that here or nowhere is Raina's ideal hero. CATHERINE is hardly less enthusiastic about him than her daughter, 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 dignity against the rail of the steps leading to the house.*)

CATHERINE. You look superb. The campaign has improved you, Sergius. 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. In short, I upset their plans, and wounded their self-esteem. Two Cossack colonels had their regiments routed on the most correct principles of scientific warfare. Two major-generals got killed strictly according to military etiquette. The 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 turn to look at her. She wears an underdress of pale green silk, draped with an overdress of thin ecru canvas embroidered with gold. She is crowned with a dainty eastern cap of gold tinsel. SERGIUS goes impulsively to meet her. Posing regally, she presents 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. When they arrive at 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.

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 shine as

a tradesman; so I have taken the advice of that bagman of a captain that settled the exchange of prisoners with us at Pirot, 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 Serbian 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 Serbs. Egad, there'd have been one war without them!

RAINA. Are there many Swiss officers in the Serbian 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 humbugged us into giving him fifty able-bodied men for two hundred worn out charges. 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 how he escaped after Slivnitsa. 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 sabres he climbed a waterpipe and made his way into the bedroom of a 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 going 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 Philippopolis: there's no forage for them on the Sofia 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 is still offended. She smiles, and stretches out her arms to him.*)

SERGIUS. (*Hastening to her*) Am I forgiven?

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

SERGIUS. My queen! (*He kisses her on the forehead.*)

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 down 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! (*He clasps her reverently.*)

RAINA. (*Returning his embrace*) My lord and my—

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.*) 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 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 looks 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 loftiest exaltation. The movement shifts his field of vision, into the corner of which there now comes the tail of LOUKA's double apron. His attention is arrested at once. He takes a stealthy look at her, and begins to twirl his moustache mischievously, 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 other side 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 for 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 Slivnitsa, 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 his 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. (*Plaintively*) 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*

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