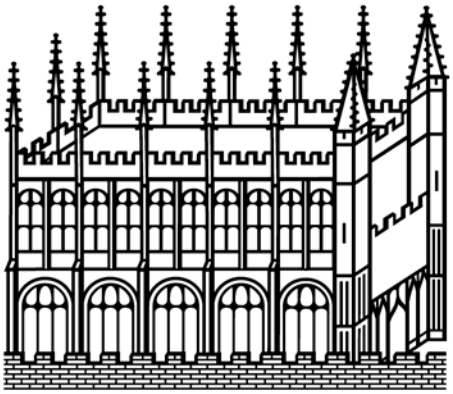

TWO PLAYS BY ANTON TCHEKHOF AND ONE BY ALFRED DE MUSSET

TRANSLATED BY

PLAYS BY
ANTON TCHEKHOF AND
ALFRED DE MUSSET

TWO PLAYS BY
ANTON TCHEKHOF:
THE SEAGULL
THE CHERRY ORCHARD
AND ONE BY
ALFRED DE MUSSET:
PERDICAN AND CAMILLA
(ON NE BADINE PAS AVEC L'AMOUR)

TRANSLATED, WITH AN
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY
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LONDON
GRANT RICHARDS LTD.
ST MARTIN'S STREET
MDCCCCXXIV

Printed in Great Britain
by The Riverside Press Limited
Edinburgh

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TCHEKHOF

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APOLOGETIC

TCHEKHOF wrote five important plays—*Iványof*, *Uncle Ványa*, *The Seagull*, *The Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*. The rest are one-act farces. I have chosen *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard* for this volume as representing him at two extremes. *The Seagull* is easy, *entraînant*, not much unlike a Western play; *The Cherry Orchard* is difficult, *rébarbatif* and very Russian.

While our new Drama is still in its plastic age, still capable of new impressions (for in spite of many obstacles a new Drama seems to be growing obscurely up in England), it is good for all who cherish it, playwrights, critics, and spectators, to keep the best foreign models before their eyes.

It is of course to Life itself that playwrights, like all other artists, must go, both for their matter and for their form. But Life is a very complicated affair. To different nations, to different generations, to different individuals, different views of it seem important. We sit studying one aspect with all our might, till some day we discover that we have been neglecting a hundred others; and off we career to pitch our camp-stools under another tree, whereon learned arboriculturists then hasten to hang a neat label with its proper name, Romanticism, Realism, Post-Impressionism or the like. We peer and pry about, eager to know if anyone has found a new clue to the elusive secret. We do not want to pinch his particular recipe, but we do want to

know all possible methods, to see the lie of the whole country, like carrier-pigeons that fly round in circles before they choose their own way.

With French and German one may do a great deal; there is Hervieu, Donnay, Capus, Maeterlinck, Hauptmann, Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, and a few translated Norsemen and Hollanders, all men with different philosophies of Art and Life, good to be inquired into. But the contribution of the Russians, though less accessible, is not less important. Sologúb, Górky, Brúsov, Blok, Yushkévitch, Tchekhof, have studied aspects to which it is right that we should make ourselves sensitive.

It is in fact my Preface, not my Translation, that calls for apology. For, on the face of it, it is the business of a work of art to explain its own intentions. Still, the perfect work of art requires the perfect spectator; and it is in order to help the reader to become one that I offer him the fruit of my meditations on Tchekhof; I want to clear his eyes, to make his vision "normal," like the unassuming Irishman's. For we Britons, perhaps more than any other nation, come to the contemplation of exotic art with a certain want of ease, a certain doubt where to focus our attention, a bewilderment as to what is foreignness in the matter and what is originality in its presentation.

And I do not think the queer performance of *The Cherry Orchard* (in another version) given before the Stage Society,[1] will have done anything to dispel that bewilderment or forestalled me in elucidating the secrets of Tchekhof's genius.

[1] May 28, 1911.

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THE CENTRIFUGAL METHOD

A competent professional critic would easily stick a label on Tchekhof and push him without more ado into his proper pigeon-hole; but, as a fumbling amateur, I must ask for the reader's indulgence while I go the long way round, retail all the differentiae which I see in him as systematically as I can, and leave it to some experter person to condense them afterwards into the appropriate but undiscoverable word.

The most general idea under which I can sum up the essential characteristics of his plays is this: That the interest of them is, so to speak, "centrifugal" instead of self-centred; that they seek not so much to draw our minds inwards to the consideration of the events they represent, as to cast them outwards to the larger process of the world which those events illuminate; that the sentiments to be aroused by the doings and sufferings of the personages on his stage are not so much hope and fear for their individual fortunes as pity and amusement at the importance which they set on them, and consolation for their particular tragedies in the spectacle of the general comedy of Life in which they are all merged; that Tchekhof's dramatic philosophy resembles in fact that modern theory of Physics which, instead of seeking in Matter itself for the final explanation of its nature, regards its constituent atoms as so many gaps or spaces in the primary substance, and turns the imagination outwards to contemplation of the Ether of which they break the majestic continuity.

low C in the opera-house at Moscow, his discreet crescendo emerged only as a higher ripple of the unemphatic irony in the background.

In the second act, where a squall of nerves is brewing, the conversation and behaviour of the personages have nothing to do with the action of the piece, but are directed to convey the atmosphere of tedium and heat in which such squalls are possible. Here we had yawns and fannings and moppings of the brow. With the entrance of the boorish land agent the passive group-emotion becomes suddenly active. Everyone abandons his listless attitude, alert with the sense of impending perturbation. "There are no horses to be had." A gust of anger goes through all the company; each breaks out in turn, according to the difference of his interest and disposition.

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ENGLISH ACTING

The English method of acting is evidently ill-suited to Tchekhof's work. The "centrifugal" Drama requires above all things "centripetal" acting, acting designed to restore the unity of impression. The French and English pieces on which our players have been brought up are so toughly made, their interest converges so powerfully on a central theme, that, so far from troubling their heads with restoring the unity, they have always been able to indulge their natural propensity to make the parts they play "stand out," like the choir-boy whose voice "was heard above the rest."

In the general struggle for conspicuity a sports-

manlike code has been established to give everyone a fair chance. As each actor opens his mouth to speak, the rest fall petrified into an uncanny stillness, like the courtiers about the Sleeping Beauty, or those pathetic clusters that one sees about a golf-tee, while one of the players is flourishing at his ball in preparation for a blow. But it is the very opposite of this cataleptic method that is required for the acting of Tchekhof. His disjunctive manner is defeated of its purpose unless the whole company keep continuously alive; and each line is so unmistakably coloured with the character of its speaker that there is no need for the rest to hold their breath and "point" that we may know who utters it.

In *The Cherry Orchard*, as the action of the play turns about the sale of the estate, all the means that the stage-manager has at his command for the differentiation of emphasis — as position, movement, change of pace in the delivery of the speeches — should be used to mark the superior importance of whatever concerns that transaction. And above all, the principal parts should be given to players of such imposing personality as to outweigh the rest of the company and throw them, without effort, into the second place.

V

CONTRAST OF MOODS

It is an old trick of novelists and playwrights to make surrounding Nature adapt herself to the moods of their personages; to make the dismal things happen in dismal weather, and the cheerful things in sunshine. In real life people as often as

not make love on a foggy November morning and break it off on a moonlight night in June. The artificiality of the old method may be excused by the unity of effect which it produces in the mind of the spectator; but there is a far finer effect in disharmony, in contrasting instead of attuning the personages and their environment.

In his *Letters on the French Stage*, Heine retails an excellent scene from a comedy called *Mariez-vous donc!* where a man, driven by the extravagance of his faithless wife to fiddle for his bread in a low dancing-ken, relates his misfortunes to a friend, fiddling all the while, and breaking off now and again to skip out among the dancers with a "Chassez!" or "En avant deux!" The discord between his narrative and his occupation sets before us in a very poignant fashion the indifference of Life at large to the individual destiny.

Tchekhof has made a system of such contrasts; you find them in all his plays. One of the chief scenes in *The Cherry Orchard* recalls the episode described by Heine. In Act III. we see Madame Ranévsky waiting to learn the result of the auction. She sits in the midst, a tragic figure, bewailing the imminent destruction of the orchard that is haunted by so many memories of her childhood and her ancestry. But everyone about her is indifferent; they have got in a band of Jewish fiddlers; a medley of ignoble guests and intrusive underlings dances to its silly jigging, "a tedious latter-day dance, with no life, no grace, no vigour in it, not even any desire of the flesh; and they do not realise that the very ground on which they are dancing is passing away

from under their feet." [1] And for a climax of grotesqueness the half-crazy German governess dresses herself in a marionette costume, check trousers and tall hat, and dances a *pas seul* somewhere in the background amid the applause of the company.

The last act of *The Seagull*, where they sit down to play loto (" a tedious game, but all right when you're used to it " ; it takes the place of the dance music in *The Cherry Orchard*) while Sorin, fast hurrying to his grave, dozes in a corner, and Constantine, the deserted lover, wanders restless and melancholy about the house, is a whole symphony of contrasted moods.

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THE ILLUSION OF THE EGO

Subdued to the life about him, each pursues his own separate thoughts and lives his own solitary life. This individual disjunction is a sort of contrapuntal rejoinder to the group-scheme and leads to the most penetratingly ironical discords and solutions.

At the card-table Trigórin and the doctor talk quite independently of Constantine's fortunes as an author ; Madame Arcádina chatters to unheeding ears about her triumph at Khárkof and the bouquets that the students gave her, while Masha, attending strictly to the business of the game, cuts across them all with her incisive crying of the loto-numbers.

So in Act II. when Madame Arcádina explains

[1] See Meyerhold's masterly analysis of the scene at p. 143 of the Sbornik *Teatr*, issued by " Szipòvnik " in 1908.

how she keeps so young, nobody cares; the dingy Masha laments her own decay, and the Doctor, rather bored, turns back to the novel he was reading them.

In Act I. Constantine is all eagerness when the Doctor praises his play and bids him persevere; but his attention wanders as soon as Dorn begins to explain why, and his next question is, "Excuse me, where is Nina?" to which Dorn replies by developing his critical theory, and Constantine loses his temper.

There is a fine instance of this sort of counterpoint in *Ivánof*. Kosýkh, a gambler, dashes into the house of his friends to borrow money, breaks up their conversation, buttonholes each in turn to recount the *débâcle* of a hand that looked like a grand slam:

KOSYKH. I had ace and queen of clubs and four others; ace, ten and a little one in spades . . .

LEBEDEF. (*Stopping his ears*) Spare me, spare me, for the love of Christ!

KOSYKH. (*To* SHABELSKY) You see? Ace, queen and four other clubs; ace, ten and a little one in spades . . .

SHABELSKY. (*Pushing him away*) Go away! I don't want to hear!

KOSYKH. We had the most infernal luck; my ace of spades was ruffed first round . . .

SHABELSKY. (*Picking up a revolver*) Go away, or I'll fire.

KOSYKH. (*With a gesture of despair*) Good God! There's not a soul to talk to anywhere! One might as well be in Australia; no solidarity, no common interests; each lives his own life. . . . However, I must be off.

vii

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY

Life is never pure comedy or pure tragedy. Old age is always pathetic, and usually ridiculous. The Universe does not stand still in awe of our private success or misfortunes.

Tchekhof had that fine comedic spirit which relishes the incongruity between the actual disorder of the world and the underlying order. Seeking as he did to throw our eyes outwards from the individual destiny, to discover its relation to surrounding Life, he habitually mingled tragedy (which is Life seen close at hand) with comedy (which is Life seen from a distance). His plays are tragedies with the texture of comedy.

Some of his characters he endows with his own insight. They see their misfortunes, without malice, from the remote comedic point of view. Old Sorin in *The Seagull*, who is carrying to his grave a keen regret for an unadventurous life, lived without passion, without intensity, without achievement, spends his time in laughing. He sees the fun of the solemn practical joke that Nature has played with him. Masha, who is hopelessly and painfully in love with Constantine Tréplef,[1] when she hears him playing a melancholy waltz to solace his passion for someone else, instead of underlining the pathos, pirouettes slowly to the music, humming, with outstretched arms, before she comments on the situation.

[1] By what strange mistake that eminent Tchekhovian critic, the Russian Eichenwald, convinced himself that Masha was in love with Trigórin, I cannot imagine; but he is very circumstantial about it. See *Pokrovsky*, pp. 856, 857.

As he developed his method Tchekhof sought more and more after the particular quality of life to be derived from the admixture of comedy with pathos. In his last play, *The Cherry Orchard* (his last work indeed, produced only a month or two before his death), the admixture seems at first sight excessive. Some of his personages—Yásha, Dunyásha, Ephikhódof, perhaps Charlotte and Gáyef too—would not be out of place in a knock-about farce. Even the sage, Trophímof, is made shabby and ridiculous, and sent tumbling down-stairs at a tragic moment. It is true that real life is just as unceremonious with philosophers; but for the moment one is shocked. Let it be noted however that these folk are not random laughing-stocks; they are all sub-varieties of the species "nedotëpa" or "job-lot," and are expressly designed to carry out the central motive of the play. And are they indeed more farcical than actual people? Perhaps the respectable uniformity that we attribute to our fellow-men is all a convention, an illusion; they are in reality misshapen, gnomish and grotesque; we need a magician to open our eyes that we may see them as they are. I remember having that feeling very strongly in the street, on coming away from an exhibition of Mr Max Beerbohm's caricatures.

But one should not begin with *The Cherry Orchard.* Art that is too near to Nature always seems strange and unnatural. One should approach gradually, by way of something more conventional, like *The Seagull.*

viii

GOOD AND EVIL

Tchekhof's endeavour to establish the true relation of Man to the surrounding universe did not end in a system of artistic formulae; it was not a mere literary artifice; it embraced a profound philosophy. He endeavoured to establish Man's relation to his environment because it is only by reference to his environment that Man's nature, his doings and his sufferings, can rightly be interpreted.

To sever the individual, to abstract him in thought and try to determine the forces that sway him without reference to the rest of humanity, is as if a philosopher living at the sea's edge, by a gully in the rocks, should watch the water rise and fall in his gully, should observe the fishes and floating weeds and bits of wreckage that pass through it, and endeavour to explain their appearance and disappearance without taking into account the wide sea beyond, with its ebb and flow and changing incidents. He would not be merely limited in the scope of his conclusions; he would be positively wrong. And so, since ever we began to think in Europe, we have been wrong about Man.

To skip and rest and come to morals, we have been wrong, most irreligiously wrong, about Good and Evil. Where suffering is due to human agency we have sought in the individual, not merely for those last movements which make the suffering actual, but for the very fount and origin of Evil itself. We have attributed it to human malevolence, to corrupt and wicked will. (For

the Devil was always half a clown and wholly irresponsible ; saving the perversity of individual men and women he could at any time have been shut altogether out from human life.)

But the Zeitgeist is slowly bringing a new doctrine to light in our generation—revealing it to divers at one time in different places—that Evil in the world does not arise from Evil in men, but is a constant element in life, flowing not *out of* men's souls, but *through* them; that if we examine the causes of suffering, say, in London or St Petersburg at any given moment, we shall find that almost all is caused without evil intention, that it is the result of conditions over which no single person has any control, or of individual action prompted by motives of quite average innocence ; that there are in fact no villains, or if there are, the amount of unhappiness they cause is so small that it may be neglected in a general estimate.

The old doctrine, that the man who did the thing was in himself the cause of his doing it, served well enough as a doctrine of the criminal law, for the criminal law rests, like magic, not on a theory of causation, but on the desire to express an emotion. But something better is needed in the arts, for they go behind common life to search out the hidden sequences.

I am afraid that this new doctrine of irresponsibility looks rather like another of those paradoxes which the writers of this generation, as is well known, now that all the true things have been said so often, are driven to utter in order to get themselves any reputation of originality. It has an air of inconvenience about it. It will never have a chance outside literature. It can have no

hope of recognition among those stout upholders of exploded superstitions, the leaders of the Social Revolution. For with the legend of the Criminal Poor the fable of the Wicked Rich must also go overboard; and without that particular myth in their shot-garlands, they might as well haul down the red flag and put into port again.

Those two great platforms, the tub and the stage, both offer the same temptation to those who discourse from them: to choose the short way, not the right way, of convincing their auditors. When you have only minutes or hours to expound what requires weeks or years, it is no use trying to get new or right ideas into people's heads; the only thing to do is to execute variations on the old wrong ones they have there already. And the doctrine that individual man is the source of evil is such a handy one for the theatre; villains afford such a convenient machinery for developing our old favourite dramatic action, the struggle of opposing wills. Our sympathies need to be enlisted on this side or on that in the contest, by the assurance that the one is right and the other wrong, or a play is likely to be as dull as a cock-fight or a boxing-match where nobody cares which of the combatants wins.

Still, there is a growing disposition among the *sept cents honnêtes gens*, who are pregnant with the public opinion of the next generation, to demand the Truth at any price (after all, Mankind will always adjust itself to the Truth, if only the authorities will allow it); and this new dogma of irresponsibility is at last beginning to grope its way on to the boards. A certain semblance of it is to be found in Mr Galsworthy's plays; but

only a semblance; for there is always a hob-goblin there, a phantom of Society, with an uncommon resemblance to the old bogle of the Wicked Rich, getting unmercifully thwacked in the background. Mr Galsworthy, with his benevolent air, is a great hater, essentially a thwacker. But Tchekhof was like Dostoyévsky; he hated nothing and no one. He would not have said, "Woe unto you!" even to the Pharisees, but would have written short stories to explain their attitude.

For him the channels of Evil are innocent and lovable. Trigórin, who desolates two happy young lives, wakens affection and compassion in the audience. Tchekhof made him the express image of himself, as who should say, "We are all capable of this." Trigórin seemed to himself to have recaptured the lost poetry of his youth; it was the instinct for beauty that set him on the adventure; it was by the irony of Life, not by the badness of his will, that his desire for a beautiful thing destroyed it. He was a simple-minded man with no vanities and no ambitions, with shy, kindly manners, a man who took a harmless delight, like Tchekhof himself, in sitting by a pond and fishing for chub with a worm and a float. Everybody liked him.

It is all very perverse, but it is the perversity of real life.

ix

VILLAINS AND HEROES

Having no villains, it goes without saying that Tchekhof has no heroes. His drama is not a drama

of conflicting wills. He does not invite you to stake your sympathies on this side or on that. All his characters are ranged together against the common enemy, Life, whether they are drawn up in one battalion or in two.

It is idle therefore to discuss where the author's sympathies lie in *The Cherry Orchard*, whether with Lopákhin or with Madame Ranévsky and her brother Gáyef. And yet, thanks to the tradition of the theatre, such a discussion is sure to arise every time that *The Cherry Orchard* is seen on the stage. And the players will already have prejudged it by the reading they have taken of their parts.

On the whole, after the Stage Society performance, the general opinion was that the owners of the Cherry Orchard were meant to be delightful people and Lopákhin a brute. And well-informed Russians over here who had seen the piece in Moscow said that this opinion was undoubtedly right, and that was the way it was played at the Artistic Theatre, to the author's own satisfaction.

Nevertheless, for a hundred reasons, of which I will give only two or three, this opinion is undoubtedly wrong. In the conflict of classes, of traditions and ideals that shook his time, Tchekhof took no part. "I am neither a liberal, nor a conservative, nor a moderate, nor a monk, nor an indifferentist," he wrote to Pleshtchéyef.[1] "I want to be a free artist and nothing more." (What we call the "fine" arts are more finely called the "free" arts in Russia.) "You ought to describe everyday love and family life without villains or angels," he wrote to Leikin.[2] "Be

[1] *Letters*, i. 159. (For a full description of the books referred to in these notes see the Bibliography at the end of the volume.)

[2] *Leikin*, p. 375.

objective," he wrote to Shtcheglóf[1]; "look at everything with your customary kind eyes; sit down and write us a story or play of Russian life, not a criticism of Russian life, but the joyful song of a goldfinch (*shtcheglá*) about Russian life and human life in general, life which is given us but once and which it is foolish to waste on exposing the wickedness of" so and so.

To me he seems to have been most scrupulously fair in sharing out the virtues and vices evenly to all his characters alike. Gáyef and his sister are warm-hearted, generous and picturesque, but then how frivolous, how unpractical, how impossible! They are still the noblesse, but all the faculties of the noblesse for cleaving to their property have evaporated out of them. I think he must have chosen the name Gáyef for the faint flavour that it has of *gáyer*, a mountebank. Lopákhin is illiterate and material; his name suggests shovels and gobbling (*lopáty* and *lópat*); but then how efficient he is, how useful to his generation! He is like St Nicholas, the ploughman-hero in the old ballad, whistling gaily to his team as he drives a furrow from the Dnieper to the Ural. He is tender-hearted and generous; he is an idealist, an artist in his way; he has "thin delicate artist-fingers," he has a "delicate artist-soul." A great part of him indeed is Tchekhof himself. Tchekhof's grandfather was a serf and his father kept a grocer's shop in Taganrog. "Peasant blood flows in my veins," he writes to Suvórin: "and you cannot astonish me with the virtues of the peasantry. I have always believed in Progress from my childhood up, and could not help believing in it, for the difference between the

[1] *Letters*, i. 230.

time when I used to get thrashed and the time when I stopped getting thrashed was something tremendous." It might be Lopákhin speaking.

No; Lopákhin is neither the villain nor the hero of *The Cherry Orchard*. There is no villain and no hero. Tchekhof is merely singing a song of Russian life and human life in general; not indeed the "joyful song of a goldfinch," but rather the plaintive elegy of a ringdove, contemplating our troubled world, a "free artist," from the solitude of the woods.[1]

X

REALISM

Mr Maurice Baring, our principal expounder of modern Russian literature, says the great thing about it is that it represents ordinary life; he says that the Russian goes to the theatre to see what he sees every day outside the theatre; that Tchekhof chooses for the action of his plays "moments which appear at first sight to be trivial." [2]

What a tedious and unnecessary literature it would be if that were true! What, however, are Tolstoy's themes? Seduction and adultery, battle, murder and sudden death. Dostoyévsky's? An innocent gentleman in a felon's prison, a student assassin hunted by the police, a girl who

[1] By no means all well-informed Russians maintain that Lopákhin is the villain of the piece. Górky, Kárpof and G. Petróff (see a deeply-felt article by him "In Defence of Lopákhin" in *The Tchekhof Jubilee Sbornik*) look on him as the hero; indeed, Merezhkóvsky says, "*All the Russian Intelligenz* applauded this triumph of the new life."

[2] *Landmarks in Russian Literature*, p. 21.

sold her virtue to feed her family. Tchekhof's ? There is only one of his plays that does not end with a pistol-shot ; they contain two suicides, a duel and an attempted murder. Surely Mr Baring must have been very unfortunate if he thinks that this is everyday Russian life !

Is it not plain that, Russians and English, we all go to the theatre to see what we do *not* see in everyday life ? For in everyday life we see, with undiscerning eyes, only the little corner penetrated by our own routine. Playwrights show us men and women in extraordinary circumstances ; for it is only extraordinary circumstances that reveal the secrets of their nature and illuminate the whole path of their existence.

The differentia of Tchekhof is that the extraordinary moments which explode in pistol-shots are never the result of sudden causes, but are brought about by the cumulative tragedy of daily life ; not ordinary daily life, in the sense of everyone's daily life, but the life of men tragically situated, like Tréplef, or Ivánof, or Uncle Ványa.

If the Russians are realists, it is not because they go to real life for their matter. Every artist goes to real life for his matter, and from its chaos brings us an idea. Even the least realistic artists are concerned with life to that extent ; and the tragedies of Corneille and Racine are just as much extracts of life as the comedies of Ibsen or Mr Granville Barker.

The specific difference of the realist is that, having extracted his idea, instead of further distilling the extract (as the Classicist does) or disguising it with mysterious essences (as the Romantic does), he endeavours to restore to it the flavour of reality. He endeavours to manifest

the very texture and illusion of Life itself. Having unravelled a thread, he shows it us with a new artful tangle of his own, cheating us by its resemblance to the tangle of the skein from which he drew it.[1]

The Realist does not copy Life (the result would be meaningless); he explains it (that is the business of Art) and gives his explanation the air of a copy. His intention is to take in simple-minded people. What a triumph to have taken in Mr Baring!

xi

SOLILOQUIES

There is one commandment in the decalogue of Realism that Tchekhof habitually breaks, and that is the commandment forbidding soliloquies. This is a law which no playwright must disregard if he would pass for modern. Indeed, one is often puzzled and embarrassed by the sudden silence which descends on a talkative stage-personage, when, by the exit of the others, he happens to be left by himself for a moment on the scene. If he says "Pshaw," or sighs, or clears his throat, it is the most you can expect of him. Usually he lights a cigarette.

But Tchekhof's plays are full of soliloquies; and I venture to protest that Tchekhof is right and the rest are wrong. Certainly the old-fashioned

[1] It is, in the same way, by their method, not by their subject-matter, that Classicism and Romanticism are to be distinguished. "The expressions Classical and Romantic refer only to the spirit of the treatment. The treatment is classical when the form of the representation is identical with the idea represented; the treatment is romantic when the form does not reveal the idea through identity, but lets us divine it by an allegory" (Heine, *Deutschland*, Book I.).

"aside," by which the comedian treated his audience as a confidential friend, winked and grinned, poked it, as it were, in the ribs and invited it to laugh with him at the rest of the company—that was a stupid thing, a mere trick, like cheeking the bandmaster in a pantomime. But to banish that other kind of solitary speaking, by which a man conveys to the audience what is passing in his mind when they could have no other means of learning it, is altogether a mistake. For what, after all, is the subject-matter of a play? It is not mere outward action; it is also thought and will culminating in action, and this latter element is, to the judicious spectator, "much the noblest" part of Drama, and indeed, with Tchekhof, the greater part; for his plays, rightly understood, are more than half soliloquy; the characters seem to converse, but in reality sit side by side and think aloud.[1]

"Our inner life moves in monologues from morning to night, and even our dreams are still monologues of the soul. They are not spoken aloud, that is all; that is the outward difference over which our petty little modern code of æsthetics makes so much ado," says an excellent critic of latter-day drama.[2]

It is true that a man does not talk aloud when he is left alone in a room; but then, to be consistent, we should also drop the curtain, for when a man is alone no one sees him.

[1] See Eichenwald in *Pokrovsky*, p. 891.

[2] R. von Gottschall, *Zur Kritik des modernen Dramas*, 1900, p. 117.

xii

SYMBOLISM

Tchekhof did not often use symbols in the old-fashioned sense, material objects adumbrating immaterial meanings, designed to catch attention by their superficial irrelevance, like the lambs and lilies of pictured saints. Certainly the eponymous seagull that flew about the lake, and then was shot and stuffed and fixed on a wooden stand, is a symbol of that kind, in itself neither better nor worse than the sort of symbols that Ibsen was fond of using; only Tchekhof used his symbol beautifully and pathetically, while in Ibsen's use of symbols, such as that tower from which the Master-builder fell, while his sweetheart hopped about and waved a flag, or that wild duck which the old gentleman kept in the attic, there is always a touch of ugliness and insanity.

Except the seagull I can recall no other example in Tchekhof's plays of a symbol of the artless kind that can be stored in the property-room. But there is a more beautiful and recondite Symbolism, one that harmonises better with the realistic method, and that is the Symbolism by which the events of the Drama are not merely represented for their own sake, but stand also as emblems and generalisations about life at large. The relation of the characters to each other in *The Seagull*, for instance, evidently symbolises the universal frustration of desire (and how intensely the author carries this idea through all the play!): Medvédenko is in love with Masha, Masha is in love with Constantine, Constantine is in love with Nina, Nina is in love with Trigórin,

Pauline is in love with Dorn, and Dorn is in love with himself. Each yearns to change his lot, to go back or to go forward. Trigórin wants youth, Nina and Tréplef want glory; Trigórin has it but has never noticed it; he can only suppose that it "produces no sensation."

Perhaps at bottom all plays are symbolical. Perhaps Life itself is symbolical, and the pursuit of women's love is, as Maupassant divined, only an allegory and image of the pursuit of that "beauté mystique, entrevue et insaisissable" towards which some Protean instinct of our nature urges us.

. . . . . .

The Russian critics are sure that there is a message of substantial hope in Tchekhof's plays, just as the shepherds in Tchekhof's story, *Happiness*, are sure that there is gold hidden in the old Tartar barrows on the steppe. Again and again his characters aver that this age of folly and wrong is drawing to an end, that in two or three hundred years (the date is always given) we may confidently look for the Millennium. And this, they say, is not dramatic and irresponsible; it represents his own view. In private life he more than once declared his faith in Progress. "How beautiful life will be in another three hundred years!" "Once upon a time this place was a wilderness covered with stones and thistles," he said to Kúprin in the garden of his Yalta villa [1]; "but I came and cultivated it and made it beautiful"; then, with an earnest face and in tones of the deepest conviction, "In two or three hundred years all the earth will become a garden full of flowers." Almost the very words used by

[1] See *Pámyati Tchékhova*, 1906, p. 104.

Trophímof and repeated by the trustful Anya in *The Cherry Orchard*.[1]

Well, if anyone finds comfort in believing that Tchekhof's plays support this doctrine of shallow optimism, let him believe it! To me it seems the dolefullest renunciation of all hope. If Tchekhof, who saw so clearly that in real life all tales end badly, had to console himself by supposing that some day they would all begin to end well, it is enough to strike panic into one. Is Life then really so bad that strong earnest men must needs become timid and frivolous rather than face the conclusions to which reason leads them?

I fancy the Russian critics are mistaken. Tchekhof probably said many foolish things in private life, as other great men have done; but I doubt if he repeated them in the same good faith when the wisdom of the artist descended on him. The satirist, like every other writer, goes to himself for much of his material; pen in hand he sees his own foibles with the sobriety of inspiration. Do not believe that Tchekhof the dramatist was gulled by the enthusiasms of that Tchekhof who walked in the garden at Yalta! It is all his sad fun. Into whose mouth does he put the hopefullest sentiments in *The Cherry Orchard*? Into the mouth of Trophímof, the "mouldy gentleman," "the perpetual student"; a fine guarantor for the Millennium! Is not the whole play strown with the shattered illusions of the Trophímofs of the generation before, the men who thought that

[1] In a letter which he wrote in 1902, Tchekhof changed the date to "tens of thousands of years" ahead (*Letters*, p. 262). De Vogüé, in a refreshing article, full of cold water, describes his attitude as "un découragement absolu quant au présent, corrigé par un vague millénarisme, par une foi tremblotante au progrès indéfini" (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, January 1902).

in Emancipation and Education they had found the talisman ? And that constant reference to the date of its advent, the precision of the "two or three hundred years," did Tchekhof not relish the irony of that ?

Surely it is another piece of Symbolism. Each generation believes that it stands on the boundary line between an old bad epoch and a good new one. And still the world grows no better ; rather worse ; hungrier, less various, less beautiful. That is true ; but there is consolation in the assurance that whatever becomes of this husk of a planet, the meaning we put into it, hope itself, God, man's ideal, continually progresses and develops. If that is not what Tchekhof meant, it seems at any rate the best interpretation of what he wrote.

G. CALDERON.

HAMPSTEAD, 1911.

P.S.—I ought to have mentioned that Tchekhof was born in 1860, studied medicine at Moscow, and died in 1904.

THE SEAGULL

"The Seagull" was first produced in 1896 at the Alexandrýnsky Theatre, one of the State theatres in St Petersburg. It was a failure; it was hissed. "Everybody assured me that the characters were all lunatics," Tchekhof wrote to a friend ("Letters," p. 224); "that my play was clumsy in technique, that it was stupid, obscure, idiotic even. . . ." He fled to the country and swore that he would write no more for the stage.

The next year Stanislavsky put it on at the Artistic Theatre in Moscow, and it was a brilliant success. Since then Tchekhof's plays and Stanislavsky's playhouse have made each other famous.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Played by the Scottish Repertory Company at the Royalty Theatre, Glasgow, under Mr Alfred Wareing's management, for a week in November 1909: and again by the Adelphi Play Society at the Little Theatre, London, on Sunday, 31st March 1912.

	Glasgow, 1909	*London*, 1912
MADAME ARCADINA, *an actress*	Miss MARY JERROLD	Miss GERTRUDE KINGSTON
CONSTANTINE TREPLEF, *her son*	Mr MILTON ROSMER	Mr LAWRENCE ANDERSON
SORIN, *her brother*	Mr LAURENCE HANRAY	Mr LEONARD CALVERT
NINA, *daughter of a rich landowner*	Miss IRENE CLARKE	Mme LYDIA YAVORSKA
SHAMRAYEF, *retired lieutenant, Manager of Sórin's estate*	Mr HUBERT HARBEN	Mr LESLIE H. GORDON
PAULINE, *his wife*	Miss MARIE HUDSPETH	Miss HILDA HONISS
MASHA, *their daughter*	Miss LOLA DUNCAN	Miss MARY MACKENZIE
TRIGORIN, *a writer*	Mr CAMPBELL GULLAN	Mr MAURICE ELVEY
DORN, *a doctor*	Mr M. R. MORAND	Mr ROSS SHORE
MEDVEDENKO, *a schoolmaster*	Mr PERCEVAL CLARK	Mr CAMPBELL CARGILL
YAKOF	Mr GRIFFITHS	Mr JOHN R. COLLINS
COOK	Mr GEORGE WYLEY	Mr LINDSAY ELLIS

THE ACTION[1] TAKES PLACE ON SORIN'S ESTATE.
TWO YEARS ELAPSE BETWEEN ACTS III. AND IV.

[1] Or " inaction," as Count de Vogüé prefers to call it.

THE SEAGULL

ACT I

In the park of SORIN'S *estate. A broad avenue runs away from the spectators into the depths of the park towards a lake; the avenue is blocked by a rough stage knocked together for amateur theatricals, concealing the lake. Bushes to right and left. A table and chairs.*

The sun has just set. On the stage behind the curtain, which is down, are YAKOF *and other workmen; coughing and hammering.*

Enter MASHA *and* MEDVEDENKO, *returning from a walk.*

MEDVEDENKO. Why do you always wear black?

MASHA. I'm in mourning for my life. I am unhappy.

MEDVEDENKO. Why? (*Reflectively*) I don't understand. . . . You're healthy, and though your father is not rich he is quite well off. My life is far heavier to bear than yours. I'm paid only forty-eight shillings a month, minus a deduction for the pension fund; but for all that I don't wear mourning. (*They sit*)

MASHA. It isn't a question of money. Even a pauper may be happy.

MEDVEDENKO. In theory, yes; but in point of practice, there's me and my mother, two sisters and my brother, and my salary's only forty-eight shillings a month. One must eat and drink, eh? One must have tea and sugar; one must have tobacco. There's no getting round that.

MASHA. (*Looking round at the stage*) The play begins very soon.

MEDVEDENKO. Yes. Nina Zarétchnaya is to act, and the play is by Constantine Tréplef. They are in love with each other and to-day their spirits will unite in the effort to produce a common artistic image. But my spirit and yours have no common points of contact. I love you; I cannot sit at home for longing for you; every day I come four miles on foot and four miles back again and meet only with a *non possumus*[1] on your part. Naturally. I have no means; we're a big family. Why should anyone want to marry a man who cannot even feed himself.

MASHA. Fiddlesticks. (*Taking snuff*) I am touched by your affection, but I cannot return it; that's all. (*Offering him the snuff-box*) Help yourself.

MEDVEDENKO. Not for me. (*A pause*)

MASHA. It's very close; we shall probably have a storm to-night. You are always either philosophising or talking about money. You think there is no greater misfortune than poverty; but I think it is a thousand times easier to wear rags and beg for bread than . . . However, you wouldn't understand.

Enter SORIN *and* TREPLEF, R.

SORIN. (*Leaning on a stick*) My dear boy, I never *do* feel at home in the country. And naturally, I'm too old to get used to it now. I went to bed at ten last night and woke this morning at nine, feeling as if my brain were sticking to my skull from too much sleep and all the rest of it.

[1] *Non possumus.* The village pedant emerges. In the Russian, Medvédenko says "*indifferentism*" instead of "*ravnodúszie,*" indifference. The words are so much alike in English that a literal rendering would spoil the point.

(*Laughing*) After dinner I fell asleep again without intending it, and now I'm all to pieces, still suffering from nightmare, confound it all. . . .

TREPLEF. Yes, you ought to live in town. (*Seeing* MASHA *and* MEDVEDENKO) Hullo! You'll be called when the play begins; but you mustn't sit here now. I must ask you to go away, please.

SORIN. (*To* MASHA) Márya Ilyínitchna, would you kindly ask your father to have that dog unchained, to keep it from howling? My sister had another sleepless night.

MASHA. You must speak to my father yourself. I'm not going to. So please don't ask me. (*To* MEDVEDENKO) Come on.

MEDVEDENKO. (*To* TREPLEF) Let us know before the play begins, then.

[*Exeunt* MEDVEDENKO *and* MASHA

SORIN. That means that the dog will howl all night again. There you are! I've never had my own way in the country. In the old days, whenever I took a month's holiday and came here to recoup and all the rest of it, I was always worried so with every sort of nonsense, that before the first day was out I was wishing myself back again. (*Laughing*) I always enjoyed the going away most. . . . And now I've retired, I've nowhere to go to, confound it all. Whether one likes it or not one's got to lump it. . . .

YAKOF. (*From the stage, to* TREPLEF) We're going to have a bathe, Constantine Gavrílitch.

TREPLEF. All right. But you must be back at your places in ten minutes. (*Looking at his watch*) It begins very soon.

YAKOF. Very good, sir. [*Exit*

TREPLEF. (*Glancing at the stage*) What do you think of that for a theatre ? Curtain, first wing, second wing, and then empty space. No scenery. You look straight on to the lake and the horizon. The curtain goes up at exactly half-past eight, when the moon rises.

SORIN. Magnificent !

TREPLEF. If Nina is late, of course the whole effect will be spoilt. It's time she arrived. Her father and stepmother are always watching her, and it's as hard for her to escape from the house as it is for a prisoner to escape from jail. (*Puts his uncle's tie straight*) Your hair and beard are all rumpled. You ought to have them cut, don't you think ?

SORIN. (*Smoothing out his beard*) It's the tragedy of my life. Even when I was young I always looked as if I had taken to drink and all the rest of it. Women never loved me. (*Sitting*) Why is your mother in such low spirits ?

TREPLEF. Oh, she's bored. (*Sitting by him*) She's jealous. She's already hostile to me and to the whole performance, because it's Nina Zarétchnaya acting and not she. She hates my play, even before she's seen it.

SORIN. (*Laughing*) Well I never ! Well I never !

TREPLEF. She is vexed at the idea of Nina Zarétchnaya and not herself having a success even in this poor little theatre. (*Looking at his watch*) She is a psychological curiosity, is my mother. A clever and gifted woman, who can cry over a novel, will reel you off all Nekrásof's poems [1] by heart, and is the perfection of a sick nurse ; but venture to praise Eleonora Duse before her !

[1] *Nekrásof's poems.* This shows her tender heart. Nekrásof is one of the *apôtres de la pitié sociale.*

Oho! ho! You must praise nobody but her, write about her, shout about her, and go into ecstasies over her wonderful performance in *La Dame aux Camélias*, or *The Fumes of Life* [1]; but as she cannot have these intoxicating pleasures down here in the country, she's bored and gets spiteful; we are her enemies, she thinks; it's all our fault. Then, she's superstitious, is afraid of the number thirteen, or three candles on a table.[2] She's a miser, too. She has seven thousand pounds in the bank at Odessa; I know it for certain. But ask her to lend you anything and she'll cry.

SORIN. You have got it into your head that she doesn't like your play, and you are nervous and all the rest of it. Set your mind at rest, your mother worships you.

TREPLEF. (*Pulling the petals from a flower*) She loves me, she loves me not, she loves me, she loves me not, she loves me, she loves me not. (*Laughs*) You see, my mother doesn't love me. Why should she? She wants to live, to love, to wear pretty frocks; and I, I am twenty-five years old, and a perpetual reminder that she is no longer young. When I'm not there, she is only thirty-two; when I am, she's forty-three, and she hates me for that. She also knows that I don't believe in the stage. She loves the stage;

[1] *Fumes of Life.* A play by B. Markévitch, produced under the title *Olga Rántseva* at the Alexandrýnsky Theatre, St Petersburg, in 1888. Madame Arcádina evidently starred the provinces in the principal rôles of the famous Sávina. We may imagine her also as Magda and the Second Mrs Tanqueray. Sávina, by the by, played Arcádina in *The Seagull*; Arcádina would have insisted on playing Nina.

[2] *Three candles on a table.* A presage of death; for in Russia three candles are put by a dead body, two at the head and one at the feet. The same superstition holds in Ireland.

she thinks that she is advancing the cause of humanity and her sacred art; but I regard the stage of to-day as mere routine and prejudice. When the curtain goes up and the gifted beings, the high priests of the sacred art, appear by electric light, in a room with three sides to it, representing how people eat, drink, love, walk and wear their jackets; when they strive to squeeze out a moral from the flat, vulgar pictures and the flat, vulgar phrases, a little tiny moral, easy to comprehend and handy for home consumption, when in a thousand variations they offer me always the same thing over and over again—then I take to my heels and run, as Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower, which crushed his brain by its overwhelming vulgarity.

SORIN. We can't get along without the stage.

TREPLEF. We must have new formulae. That's what we want. And if there *are* none, then it's better to have nothing at all. (*Looks at his watch*) I love my mother, I love her dearly; but it's a tomfool life that she leads with this novelist always at her elbow, and her name for ever in the papers—it disgusts me! Sometimes it is just the egotism of the ordinary man that speaks in me; I am sorry that I have a famous actress for my mother, and I feel that if she had been an ordinary woman I should have been happier. Uncle Peter, what position could be more hopeless and absurd than mine was at home with her? Her drawing-room filled with nothing but celebrities, actors and writers, and among them all the only nobody, myself, tolerated only because I was her son. Who am I? What am I? Sent down from the University without a degree through circum-

stances for which the editor cannot hold himself responsible, as they say; with no talents, without a farthing, and according to my passport a Kief artisan; for my father was officially reckoned a Kief artisan, although he was a famous actor. So that when these actors and writers in her drawing-room graciously bestowed their attention on me, it seemed to me that they were merely taking the measure of my insignificance; I guessed their thoughts and felt the humiliation.

SORIN. What sort of man is this novelist, by the by? I can't make him out. He never talks.

TREPLEF. Intelligent, simple, inclined to melancholy. Quite a good chap. Famous already, before he's forty, and sated with everything. . . . As for his writings . . . what shall I say? Charming, talented . . . but . . . you wouldn't want to read Trigórin after Tolstoy or Zola.

SORIN. I love literary people, my boy. There was a time when I passionately desired two things; I wanted to be married, and I wanted to be a literary man, but neither of them came my way. Ah! how pleasant to be even an unknown writer, confound it all.

TREPLEF. (*Listening*) I hear someone coming. (*Embracing* SORIN) I cannot live without her. . . . Even the sound of her footsteps is charming. . . . I am insanely happy.

Enter NINA. TREPLEF *goes quickly to meet her.*

TREPLEF. My lovely one, my dream. . . .

NINA. (*Agitated*) I'm not late . . . I'm sure I'm not late. . . .

TREPLEF. (*Kissing her hands*) No, no, no. . . .

NINA. I've been so anxious all day; I was so frightened. I was afraid father would not let me come. . . . But at last he's gone out, just now, with my stepmother. There's a red glow in the sky, the moon is beginning to rise, and I whipped up the horses as fast as I could. (*Laughing*) But I am happy now. (*Squeezing* SORIN'S *hand heartily*)

SORIN. (*Laughing*) You've been crying, I can see. . . . Hey, hey! You naughty girl!

NINA. It's quite true. You see how out of breath I am. I've got to go in half-an-hour; we must hurry. I must, I must; don't detain me for heaven's sake. Father doesn't know I'm here.

TREPLEF. It's quite true, it's time to begin. I must go and call the others.

SORIN. I'll go, I'll go, confound it all. I won't be a minute. (*Goes* R., *singing*) "To France were returning two Grenadiers!" (*Looks round*) I remember I started singing like that one day, and an Assistant Procureur [1] who was standing by said: "Your Excellency, you have a very strong voice." Then he pondered, and added: "Strong, but ugly!"

[*Exit, laughing*

NINA. My father and his wife won't let me come here. They say that you are all Bohemians. . . . They are afraid of my becoming an actress. But I am drawn towards the lake like a seagull. My heart is full of you. (*Looks round*)

[1] *Assistant Procureur.* Some cheeky junior of forty. Sorin's career has been passed among Procureurs and Assistant Procureurs, a special breed of prosecuting counsel attached to the Ministry of Justice. He has worked his way up to the dignity of Over-Procureur, with the title of Actual State Councillor, on a level with Major-Generals and Rear-Admirals according to Peter the Great's Table of Comparative Precedence.

TREPLEF. We are alone.
NINA. Isn't there someone over there ?
TREPLEF. No, there's no one. (*Kissing her*)
NINA. What sort of tree is that ?
TREPLEF. It's an elm.
NINA. Why is it so dark ?
TREPLEF. It's evening already ; everything looks darker. Don't go away early, I entreat you.
NINA. I must.
TREPLEF. Shall I drive over to-night, Nina ? I will stand all night in the garden and look up at your window.
NINA. You mustn't. The watchman will see you. Trésor is not used to you yet ; he'll bark.
TREPLEF. I love you.
NINA. 'Sh !
TREPLEF. (*Hearing footsteps*) Who's there ? Is that you, Yákof ?
YAKOF. (*On the stage*) Yes, sir.
TREPLEF. Get to your places. It's time to begin. Is the moon up ?
YAKOF. Yes, sir.
TREPLEF. Have you the methylated spirits ? And the sulphur ? (*To* NINA) When the red eyes appear, there has to be a smell of sulphur. You'd better go, you'll find everything there. Are you nervous ?
NINA. Yes, very. I don't mind your mother ; I'm not afraid of her ; but Trigórin will be here. I am frightened at acting before him. Such a famous writer ! Is he young ?
TREPLEF. Yes.
NINA. What wonderful stories he writes !
TREPLEF. (*Coldly*) Does he ? I don't read them.
NINA. Your play is very hard to act. There are no live people in it.

TREPLEF. Live people! why should there be? A writer's business is not to represent life as it is; nor as he thinks it ought to be, but as it appears in reveries.

NINA. There's very little action in your piece; it is all lines.[1] And I think a play ought always to have a love interest in it. . . .

[*Exeunt behind the stage*

Enter PAULINE *and* DORN

PAULINE. It is getting damp. Go back and put on your goloshes.

DORN. I'm too hot.

PAULINE. You take no care of yourself. It's all obstinacy. You're a doctor, and you know perfectly well that the damp air is bad for you; but you like to give me pain; you sat on the verandah the whole of yesterday evening on purpose.

DORN. (*Singing*) "Say not that I have spoilt thy youth."

PAULINE. You were so taken up talking to Madame Arcádina, you did not notice the cold. Confess, that you admire her.

DORN. I am fifty-five.

PAULINE. Nonsense, that's not old for a man. You are well preserved and women still admire you.

DORN. Then what do you want of me?

PAULINE. You men are always ready to fall down and grovel before an actress. Always!

DORN. (*Singing*) "Once more, once more before thee, love." If society is fond of actors and actresses and treats them differently, for in-

[1] *Lines.* Russian, *czitka*, a piece of theatrical slang that Nina is no doubt pleased at knowing.

stance, from shopkeepers, that is very natural. That is idealism.

PAULINE. Women have always fallen in love with you, and thrown themselves at your head. Is that idealism too?

DORN. (*Shrugs his shoulders*) Why, there has always been something charming in the relation of women to me. What they principally liked in me was the skilful doctor. Ten or fifteen years ago, you remember, I was the only decent *accoucheur* in the whole province. Besides, I was always an honest man.

PAULINE. (*Taking his hand*) My beloved!

DORN. Hush! There's somebody coming.

Enter ARCADINA, *arm-in-arm with* SORIN, TRIGORIN, SHAMRAYEF, MEDVEDENKO, MASHA

SHAMRAYEF. In 1873 at the Fair at Poltava she acted superbly! A wonderful piece of acting! Do you happen to know too what's become of Chadin, Paul Chadin, the comedian? As Raspluyef he was simply A1; better than Sadovsky,[1] I assure you. What's become of *him*?

ARCADINA. You are always wanting to know about somebody before the flood. How should I know? (*Sits*)

SHAMRAYEF. (*Sighing*) Good old Paul Chadin! We have no one like that now. The stage has gone to the dogs, Irina Nikolayevna. There were mighty oaks in the old days, but now we see nothing but stumps.

[1] This is like saying: "He was simply splendid in *Ici on parle français*; much funnier than Toole, I can assure you." Sadovsky was a Moscow star who died in 1872; Raspluyef is a low-comedy character in Súkhovo-Kobýlin's play, *Kretchinsky's Wedding*.

DORN. There are not many really brilliant people on the stage now, that is true; but the average actor is far better.

SHAMRAYEF. I can't agree with you. However, it's a matter of taste. De gustibus aut bene, aut nihil.

(TREPLEF *comes out from behind the stage*)

ARCADINA. My dear child, when does the thing begin?

TREPLEF. In a minute. Please be patient.

ARCADINA: "My son,
Thou turnst mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such blank and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct."

TREPLEF. "Leave wringing of your hands. Peace, sit you down,
And let me wring your heart."[1] (*A horn is blown from the stage*) Now then, the play begins. Attention, please! (*A pause*) I speak first. (*He thumps with a stick; raising his voice*) Hearken, ye venerable ancient shades, that hover in the night-time over this lake; send sleep upon us and let us dream of what will be in 200,000 years.

SORIN. In 200,000 years there will be nothing at all.

TREPLEF. Then let them represent that nothing to us.

ARCADINA. Come on! We sleep.

(*The curtain rises; the view opens on the lake; the moon is above the horizon, reflected in the water;* NINA *discovered sitting on a rock, dressed in white*)

[1] In the Russian, Tréplef answers with a garbled version of Shakespeare's "nasty sty" lines. If we quoted them, we should have to be inconveniently exact. For this excellent substitute the translator is indebted to the ingenuity of Mr Hanray, who played Sorin in Glasgow.

NINA. Men and lions, eagles and partridges, antlered deer, geese, spiders, the silent fishes dwelling in the water, star-fish and tiny creatures invisible to the eye—these and every form of life, ay, every form of life, have ended their melancholy round and become extinct. . . . Thousands of centuries have passed since this earth bore any living being on its bosom. All in vain does yon pale moon light her lamp. No longer do the cranes wake and cry in the meadows; the hum of the cockchafers is silent in the linden groves. All is cold, cold, cold. Empty, empty, empty. Terrible, terrible, terrible. (*A pause*) The bodies of living beings have vanished into dust; the Eternal Matter has converted them into stones, into water, into clouds; and all their spirits are merged in one. I am that spirit, the universal spirit of the world. In me is the spirit of Alexander the Great, of Cæsar, of Shakespeare, of Napoleon, and of the meanest of leeches. In me the consciousness of men is merged with the instinct of animals; I remember everything, everything, everything, and in myself relive each individual life.[1]

(*Marsh fires appear*)

ARCADINA. (*In a low voice*) This is going to be something decadent.

TREPLEF. (*With reproachful entreaty*) Mother!

NINA. I am alone. Once in a hundred years I

[1] The play attributed to Constantine is of course a kindly skit on the Decadents. But the philosophy at the bottom of it is a distorted image of the Pantheistic creed which Tchekhof really held. According to Merezhkovsky (p. 54) Deism (and this includes Christianity) is extinct among thinking Russians; they are all Pantheists (not Atheists, as Mr Maurice Baring tendentiously alleges); God for them is neither more nor less than the sum total of all mundane spirits. For Tchekhof, even to pick flowers was a kind of sacrilege (*Na Pamyat*, p. 12).

open my lips to speak, and my voice echoes sadly in this emptiness and no one hears. . . . You too, pale fires, you hear me not. . . . The corruption of the marsh engenders you towards morning, and you wander till the dawn, but without thought, without will, without throb of life. Fearing lest life should arise in you, the father of Eternal Matter, the Devil, effects in you, as in stones and water, a perpetual mutation of atoms; you change unceasingly. In all the universe spirit alone remains constant and unchanging. (*A pause*) Like a captive flung into a deep empty well, I know not where I am nor what awaits me. One thing only is revealed to me, that in the cruel and stubborn struggle with the Devil, the principle of material forces, it is fated that I shall be victorious; and thereafter, spirit and matter are to merge together in exquisite harmony and the reign of Universal Will is to begin. But that cannot be till, little by little, after a long, long series of centuries, the moon, the shining dog-star and the earth are turned to dust. . . . Till then there shall be horror and desolation. . . . (*A pause; against the background of the lake appear two red spots*) Behold, my mighty antagonist, the Devil, approaches. I see his awful, blood-red eyes . . .

ARCADINA. There's a smell of sulphur. Is that part of it?

TREPLEF. Yes.

ARCADINA. (*Laughing*) I see, a scenic effect.

TREPLEF. Mother!

NINA. He is lonely without man.

PAULINE. (*To* DORN) Why, you've taken your hat off. Put it on again, or you'll catch cold.

ARCADINA. The doctor's taking off his hat to the Devil, the father of Eternal Matter.

TREPLEF. (*Angry, in a loud voice*) The play is over! That's enough! Curtain!

ARCADINA. What are you angry about?

TREPLEF. That's enough. Curtain! Lower the curtain! (*Stamping*) Curtain! (*The curtain is lowered*) I must apologise. I ought to have remembered that only a few chosen spirits can write plays or act them. I have been infringing the monopoly. You . . . I . . . (*Is about to add something, but makes a gesture of renouncing the idea, and Exit* L.)

ARCADINA. What's the matter with him?

SORIN. Irene, my dear, you oughtn't to treat a young man's *amour propre* like that.

ARCADINA. Why, what have I said?

SORIN. You have hurt his feelings.

ARCADINA. He warned us beforehand that it was all a joke; I've only taken him at his word and treated it as a joke.

SORIN. But still . . .

ARCADINA. And now it appears that he has written a masterpiece. Mercy on us! So he has got up this performance and stifled us with brimstone not as a joke, but as a demonstration. . . . He wanted to teach us how to write and what we ought to act. Really, this sort of thing gets tedious! These perpetual digs and pin-pricks would wear out the patience of a saint. He's a peevish, conceited boy.

SORIN. He only wanted to give you pleasure.

ARCADINA. Did he? Then why couldn't he choose some ordinary sort of play, instead of making us listen to this decadent nonsense? I don't mind listening to nonsense now and

again for fun; but this pretends to show us new forms, a new era in art. I see no new forms in it; I see nothing but an evil disposition.

TRIGORIN. Everyone writes as he wants to, and as he can.

ARCADINA. Let him write as he wants and can, and welcome; only let him leave me in peace.

DORN. (*Singing*) "Great Jove, art angry yet" . . .

ARCADINA. I'm not Jove, I'm a woman. (*Lighting a cigarette*) Besides, I'm not angry; I only think it's a pity that a young man should spend his time so tediously. I had no intention of hurting his feelings.

MEDVEDENKO. No one has any grounds for differentiating spirit and matter; spirit itself is very likely a collection of material atoms. (*Eagerly to* TRIGORIN) Ah, if only someone would write a play and put it on the stage, showing the life we schoolmasters lead! It's a hard, hard life![1]

ARCADINA. Quite true; but don't let us talk about plays or atoms. What a glorious evening!

[1] If Tchekhof makes Medvedenko a little ridiculous, he is sorry for him too. He was always concerned about the miserable conditions in which village schoolmasters worked. "Good teachers," he said to Gorky, "are the first necessity for village life. Without a general education of the people the Empire will fall to pieces like a house built of badly baked bricks. The schoolmaster ought to be an artist in love with his work, instead of which he is a labourer who goes to it as he would go to exile in Siberia. Hungry, oppressed and terrified, he ought to be the first man in the village." He dreamt, vaguely, of building a sanatorium for sick ushers at Kutchuk-Koi in the Crimea: "a big bright building, with big windows and high ceilings; a library; various musical instruments; a bee walk, an orchard, a kitchen garden; with lectures on agriculture, meteorology, etcetera" (*Pamyati*, 83, 84). Fortunately this dreadful place was never built; but the schoolmasters of the Empire are so grateful for his representations of them in his plays and stories that they are establishing a Teachers' Club in his honour, in connection with their Friendly Society in Moscow (*Jubilee Sbornik*, 6).

Do you hear? The peasants are singing. (*Listening*) How beautiful!

PAULINE. That's on the farther shore. (*A pause*)

ARCADINA (*To* TRIGORIN) Sit by me here. Ten or fifteen years ago there was music and singing to be heard here by the lake almost every evening. There were six big country houses round the shore. It was all laughter, and noise, and the firing of guns . . . and love-making, love-making without end. The *Jeune Premier*, the idol of all six houses, was our friend here. (*Nodding at* DORN) You haven't met? Dr Dorn, Eugene Sergéitch. He is still charming, but in those days he was irresistible. But my conscience is beginning to prick me. Why did I hurt my poor boy's feelings? I feel uneasy. (*Calling*) Constantine! Dear boy! Constantine!

MASHA. I'll go and look for him.

ARCADINA. Do, there's a dear.

MASHA. (*Going* L.) A-oo! Constantine Gavrilovitch! A-oo!

[*Exit*

NINA. (*Coming from behind the stage*) Evidently we're not to go on. I can come out. How do you do? (*Kisses* ARCADINA *and* PAULINE)

SORIN. Bravo, bravo.

ARCADINA. Bravo, bravo. We were all enchanted. With such a face and figure, with such a lovely voice, it is wicked to stay hidden in the country. I am sure that you have talent. Mark my words! You must go on the stage.

NINA. Oh, it is the dream of my life! (*Sighing*) But it can never be realised.

ARCADINA. Who knows? Let me introduce you: Trigórin, Boris Alexéyevitch.

NINA. Oh, I'm so glad. (*Shyly*) I read all you write. . . .

ARCADINA. (*Making* NINA *sit by her*) Don't be shy, my dear. He has a simple soul, although he's a celebrity. You see, he's just as shy himself.

DORN. I suppose we can have the curtain up again now? It feels rather uncanny like this.

SHAMRAYEF. (*Loud*) Yákof, pull the curtain up, my lad, will you?

(*Curtain is raised*)

NINA. (*To* TRIGORIN) It's a strange play, isn't it?

TRIGORIN. I didn't understand a word. However, I enjoyed looking on. You acted with such sincerity. And the scenery was lovely. (*A pause*) No doubt there are a great many fish in this lake?

NINA. Yes.

TRIGORIN. I love fishing. I know no greater pleasure than to sit towards evening by the water and watch a float.

NINA. Surely, for one who has tasted the pleasure of creation, all other pleasures cease to exist.

ARCADINA. (*Laughing*) You mustn't talk to him like that. If people make him pretty speeches he runs away.

SHAMRAYEF. I remember one day in the opera-house at Moscow, the famous Silva took the low C. As luck would have it, there was one of our Synod choirmen [1] sitting in the gallery; imagine our astonishment when all of a sudden we heard a voice from the gallery, "Bravo,

[1] *Synod choirman.* A member of the choir founded in 1892 under the direction of the Holy Synod to serve two of the principal churches in the Kremlin, and to sing in religious street processions in Moscow.

Silva," a whole octave lower. Like this. (*In a deep bass voice*) "Bravo, Silva." The audience was dumbfounded. (*A pause*)

DORN. There's an angel flying over the park.

NINA. I must be off. Good-bye.

ARCADINA. Where are you going ? Why so early ? We won't let you go.

NINA. Papa's expecting me.

ARCADINA. It's too bad of him. (*They kiss*) Well, we can't help it. It's very, very sad to part with you.

NINA. If only you knew how unwilling I am to go.

ARCADINA. Somebody must see you home, darling.

NINA. (*Alarmed*) Oh no, no !

SORIN. (*Imploringly*) Don't go !

NINA. I must, Peter Nikolayevitch.

SORIN. Stay just for an hour, confound it all. It's too bad.

NINA. (*Hesitating ; then crying*) I can't. (*Shakes hands and exit quickly*)

ARCADINA. There's a really unfortunate girl ! They say that her mother left her husband all her huge fortune when she died, down to the last farthing, and now this child is left with nothing, for he's made a will bequeathing it all to his second wife. It's monstrous.

DORN. Yes, her papa's a pretty mean sort of a sneak, to do him justice.

SORIN. (*Rubbing his hands to warm them*) We'd better be going too ; it's getting damp. My legs are beginning to ache.

ARCADINA. They're like bits of wood, you can hardly walk on them. Come along, ill-fated patriarch ! (*Takes his arm*)

SHAMRAYEF. (*Offering his arm to his wife*) Madame ?

SORIN. There's that dog howling again. (*To* SHAMRAYEF) Please tell them to unchain that dog, Ilyá Afanásyevitch.

SHAMRAYEF. Can't be done, Peter Nikolayevitch ; I'm afraid of thieves breaking into the barn. I've got the millet there. (*To* MEDVEDENKO, *who walks beside him*) Yes, a whole octave lower : " Bravo, Silva ! " And not a concert singer, mind you, but an ordinary Synod choirman.

MEDVEDENKO. And what salary does a Synod choirman get ?

[*Exeunt Omnes, except* DORN

DORN. (*Alone*) I don't know. Perhaps I don't understand anything, or I'm going off my head, but the fact is I liked the play. There was something in it. When the girl spoke of her solitude, and then afterwards when the Devil's red eyes appeared, my hands trembled with excitement. It was fresh and naïf. There he comes apparently. I want to say all the nice things I can to him.

Enter TREPLÈF

TREPLEF. They've all gone.

DORN. I'm here.

TREPLEF. Masha's looking for me all over the park. Repulsive female !

DORN. Constantine Gavrilovitch, I liked your play extremely. It was a curious kind of thing and I didn't hear the end, but all the same it made a deep impression on me. You are a man of talent and you must go on.

(TREPLEF *squeezes his hand and embraces him eagerly*)

DORN. What a nervous creature you are! Tears in his eyes! What did I want to say? You have chosen a subject in the realm of abstract ideas. You were quite right; every artistic production ought to express a great thought. Nothing is beautiful unless it is serious. How pale you are!

TREPLEF. So you think that I ought to go on?[1]

DORN. Yes. But represent only what is important and eternal. You know that I have lived my life with variety and discrimination; I'm quite contented; but if ever I felt the elevation of spirit which comes to artists in the moment of creation, I am sure that I should despise my material envelope and all that belongs to it and be carried away from the earth aloft into the heights.

TREPLEF. Excuse me, where is Nina Zarétchnaya?

DORN. And then there's another thing. In every production there must be a clear and well-defined idea. You must know what your object is in writing; otherwise, if you travel this picturesque path without a well-defined aim, you will go astray and your talent will be your ruin.

TREPLEF. (*Impatiently*) Where is Nina Zarétchnaya?

DORN. She's gone home.

TREPLEF. (*In despair*) What am I to do? I want to see her. I *must* see her. I shall drive after her.

[1] Tchekhof, in writing these lines, cannot but have recalled his own feelings of gratitude when, still an unknown young writer, he received a letter of encouragement from the great Grigoróvitch. His letter in answer is the most engagingly warm-hearted thing imaginable (*Letters*, 32).

Enter MASHA

DORN. (*To* TREPLEF) Calm yourself, my friend.

TREPLEF. All the same I shall go after her. I must go after her.

MASHA. Please go up to the house, Constantine Gavrilovitch. Your mother's waiting for you. She's anxious about you.

TREPLEF. Tell her I've gone out. And please, all of you, leave me in peace! Leave me alone! Don't follow me about!

DORN. Come, come, my dear boy. You mustn't talk like that. . . . It isn't right.

TREPLEF. (*With tears in his eyes*) Good-bye, doctor. Thank you.

[*Exit*

DORN. (*Sighing*) Ah, youth! youth!

MASHA. When there is nothing else left to say, people say: "Ah, youth! youth!" (*Takes snuff*)

DORN. (*Taking* MASHA'S *snuff-box and throwing it into the bushes*) A filthy habit! (*Pause*) They seem to be having music up at the house. We must go in.

MASHA. Stop a moment.

DORN. Eh?

MASHA. I want to say something to you again. I want to talk. (*Agitated*) I don't care for my father, but my heart goes out to you. I somehow feel, with all my soul, that you are near to me. . . . Come, help me. Help me, or I shall commit some folly, I shall make havoc of my life. . . . I can't hold out any longer.

DORN. What is it? How am I to help you?

MASHA. I am in pain. No one knows my sufferings. (*Laying her head on his breast, softly*) I am in love with Constantine.

DORN. What bundles of nerves they all are! And what a lot of love. . . . Oh, magic lake! Oh, magic lake! (*Tenderly*) What can I do, my child? What can I do?

CURTAIN

ACT II

The croquet lawn. Far up at the back, on the right, the house with big verandah. On the left the lake is visible, with the reflection of the sun twinkling in the waters. Flower-beds. Midday; hot. At the side of the croquet lawn, in the shade of an old lime-tree, sit ARCADINA, DORN *and* MASHA *on a bench.* DORN *has a book open on his knees.*

ARCADINA. (*To* MASHA) Come, get up. (*They get up*) Let us stand side by side. You are twenty-two and I am nearly twice as much. Eugene Sergéitch, which of us looks the youngest?

DORN. You do of course.

ARCADINA. There! And why? Because I work, because I feel, because I am always on the move. While you remain sitting in one place; you don't live. And I make it a rule, never to look forward into the future. I never think about old age or death. What will be will be.

MASHA. And I, I have a feeling as if I had been born ages and ages ago. I drag my life, a dead weight, after me, like the train of an endless dress. Often I have no desire to live. (*Sits*) Of course, this is all rubbish. One must shake oneself and throw it all off.

DORN. (*Singing softly*) "Tell my lady of love, O gentle flowers!" [1]

ARCADINA. Then again, I am always "correct," like an Englishman. I keep myself up to the mark, as they say, and am always dressed, and

[1] From Siebel's song in Gounod's *Faust*: "Le parlate d'amor, O cari fior." The Translator is indebted to Prince Kropotkin for this note and for some corrections made since the first edition.

have my hair done *comme il faut.* I should never dream of leaving the house, even to come into the garden like this, in a *négligé*, or with my hair undone. Never. The reason I am so well preserved is that I have never been a dowdy, never let myself go as some do. . . . (*Walks up and down the croquet lawn with arms akimbo*) There! you see? as light as a bird; ready to act the part of a girl of fifteen any day.

DORN. Well, I'm going on anyway. (*Taking up his book*) We'd got as far as the cornchandler and the rats.

ARCADINA. And the rats. Go on. (*Sits*) No, give it to me. I'll read. It's my turn. (*Taking the book and looking for the place*) And the rats. Here we are. (*Reading*) "Truly, it is just as dangerous for people of fashion to beguile novelists to their houses as it would be for a cornchandler to rear rats in his granary. And yet they are much sought after. When a woman has chosen the writer that she wishes to take captive, she lays siege to him by means of flattery and delicate attentions. . . ." That may be true in France, but we have nothing of the sort in Russia; we have no programme. As a rule, before a Russian woman takes her writer captive she's head over ears in love with him. No need to look far afield; take me and Trigórin, for instance.

Enter SORIN, *leaning on a stick;* NINA *beside him.* MEDVEDENKO *wheels a chair behind them.*

SORIN. (*As if talking to a child*) Eh? so we're having a treat? We're happy for once, confound it all! (*To* ARCADINA) Such fun! Papa

and stepmamma have gone to Tver, and we're free for three whole days.

NINA. (*Sitting by* ARCADINA *and embracing her*) I am so happy! Now I belong to you.

SORIN. (*Sitting in his chair*) She's in looks to-day.

ARCADINA. Well dressed and interesting. That's a good girl! (*Kisses her*) We mustn't praise you too much for fear of bewitching you.[1] Where is Trigórin?

NINA. Down at the bathing-place, fishing.

ARCADINA. I wonder he doesn't get sick of it! (*Prepares to go on reading*)

NINA. What is the book?

ARCADINA. Maupassant's *On the Water*, my dear. (*Reads a few lines to herself*) The rest's dull and quite untrue. (*Shutting the book*) I am feeling anxious and perturbed. Tell me, what is the matter with my son? Why is he so gloomy and morose? He passes whole days together on the lake and I hardly ever see him.

MASHA. He is troubled at heart. (*To* NINA; *timidly*) I wish you would recite something from his play.

NINA. (*Shrugging her shoulders*) Really? It's so dull.

MASHA. (*With restrained enthusiasm*) When *he* reads anything aloud, his eyes glow and his face turns pale. He has a beautiful melancholy voice, and manners like a poet.

(SORIN *snores audibly*)

DORN. Good-night.

ARCADINA. Peter!

SORIN. Eh?

ARCADINA. Are you asleep?

[1] *Bewitching you—i.e.* exercising the power of the Evil Eye on you, by exciting our own envy.

SORIN. Not I. (*A pause*)

ARCADINA. It's so foolish of you not to undergo a treatment, Peter.

SORIN. I should be delighted, but Dorn won't let me.

DORN. A treatment at sixty !

SORIN. Even at sixty one wants to live.

DORN. (*Testily*) Eh ! Very well then, take Valerian drops.

ARCADINA. I think he ought to go and take the waters somewhere.

DORN. All right. He can go if he likes . . . or he can stop at home if he likes.

ARCADINA. How's one to understand you ?

DORN. There's nothing to understand. It's perfectly plain. (*A pause*)

MEDVEDENKO. Peter Nikolayevitch ought to give up smoking.

SORIN. Rubbish !

DORN. No, it's not rubbish. Wine and tobacco rob us of our individuality. After a cigar or a glass of vodka you are no longer Peter Nikolayevitch but Peter Nikolayevitch plus somebody else. Your ego evaporates, and you think of yourself in the third person ; not as " me " but as " him."

SORIN. (*Laughing*) It's all very well for you to talk. You've lived in your time ; but what about me ? I have spent twenty-eight years in the law courts, but I haven't begun to live yet, haven't had any experiences, confound it all, and isn't it natural that I long to live at last ? You are sated and indifferent and therefore you are disposed to philosophise ; but I want to live, and that's why I drink sherry at dinner and smoke cigars and all the rest of it. That's all.

DORN. One ought to be serious about life. But to take medicine at sixty and lament that one did not have fun enough when one was young, that, if you'll excuse me, is frivolous.

MASHA. (*Rising*) It must be lunch-time. (*Walking lazily*) My leg's gone to sleep. [*Exit*

DORN. She's going to get down a couple of glasses of vodka before lunch.

SORIN. The poor thing gets no enjoyment out of life.

DORN. Rot, your Excellency.

SORIN. You talk like a man who has had his fill.

ARCADINA. Oh dear! oh dear! what can be more tedious than this truly rural country tedium! So hot! so quiet! No one does anything; everyone philosophises.[1] You're pleasant company, my friends, and it's very nice to hear you talk, but . . . Oh, to be sitting in one's hotel, studying one's part, how very much nicer!

NINA. (*Enthusiastically*) Oh, indeed! How well I can understand you!

SORIN. Of course it's better in town. Sitting in one's study, all visitors have to send their names up by the footman, a telephone handy . . . cabs in the street and all the rest of it. . . .

DORN. (*Singing*) "Tell my lady of love, O gentle flowers!"

Enter SHAMRAYEF; *after him* PAULINE

SHAMRAYEF. There they are. Good-day to you.

[1] In a letter of 1889 (*Letters*, 138) Tchekhof speaks of a comedy that he began and put aside. "I wrote two acts and threw it up; it turned out tedious; there is nothing so tedious as a tedious play." The rest of the letter, written in summer, in the depths of the country, where his brother was ill, when "neighbours come, day follows day, conversation follows conversation," recalls this scene enough to suggest that *The Seagull* may have been the tedious comedy in question; either that or *Iványof*.

(*Kisses* ARCADINA'S *hand, then* NINA'S) (*To* ARCADINA) Very glad to see you in such good health. My wife tells me you were thinking of driving into town with her to-day. Is that true ?

ARCADINA. Yes, we're going into town.

SHAMRAYEF. Hm ! That's all very well, but how do you propose to get there, my dear madam ? We're carrying the rye to-day, and all the labourers are busy. What horses are you to have, I should like to know ?

ARCADINA. What horses ? How should I know what horses ?

SORIN. There are the carriage horses.

SHAMRAYEF. (*Excited*) The carriage horses ? And where am I to get collars from ? Where am I to get collars ? It really is extraordinary ! Incomprehensible ! My dear madam, you must excuse me. I have the greatest respect for your talents. I am ready to give ten years of my life for you, but horses I cannot let you have.

ARCADINA. But if I have to go into town ? This is really too much.

SHAMRAYEF. My dear lady ! You do not know what farming means.

ARCADINA. (*Angry*) It is the old story again ! If that is the case, I go back to Moscow to-day. Send to the village to hire horses for me, or I shall go to the station on foot.

SHAMRAYEF. (*Angry*) In that case I resign my post ! You must look for a new agent !

[*Exit*

ARCADINA. It is the same thing every summer ; every summer I am insulted here. I will never set foot in this place again.

[*Exit* L., *towards the bathing-place*

(*A minute later she is seen going up to the house.* TRIGORIN *follows her with fishing rods and pail*)

SORIN. (*Angry*) This is effrontery! This is beyond all bounds! I'll stand it no more, confound it all! Let *all* the horses be brought here at once!

NINA. (*To* PAULINE) Refuse Madame Arcádina, the famous actress! Is not every lightest wish of hers, or even caprice, of more importance than your farming arrangements? It is absolutely incredible.

PAULINE. (*In despair*) What can I do? Imagine yourself in my position. What can I do?

SORIN. (*To* NINA) Let us follow my sister. We will all entreat her not to go away, eh? (*Looking in the direction where* SHAMRAYEF *went out*) Hateful fellow! Tyrant!

NINA. (*Preventing him from rising*) Sit down, sit down. We will wheel you. (*She and* MEDVEDENKO *wheel the chair*) What an awful thing to have happened!

SORIN. Perfectly awful. But he shall not get out of it like that. I shall give him a piece of my mind.

[*Exeunt.* DORN *and* PAULINE *remain*

DORN. How monotonous people are! Of course the right thing would have been to fire your husband right out and have done with him, but the end of it will be that this old woman Peter Sorin and his sister will apologise and ask him to forgive them. You'll see.

PAULINE. He has sent the carriage horses to help carry the rye. These misunderstandings happen day after day. If you knew how agitating it all is for me. I shall be ill; see, I am all trembling. . . . His bad manners are more than I can bear.

(*Entreating*) Eugene, my dearest, my darling, let me leave him and come to you. Time is flying over us, we are no longer young; let us have done with concealment and falsehood before our days are ended. (*A pause*)

DORN. I am fifty-five. It is too late to change my way of life.

PAULINE. I know why you refuse. It is because there are other women besides myself who are dear to you. You cannot let them all come to you. I understand. Forgive me; you are tired of me.

(NINA *appears near the house picking flowers*)

DORN. No, no, I'm not tired of you.

PAULINE. I suffer agonies of jealousy. Of course you are a doctor; you cannot avoid women. I understand.

DORN. (*To* NINA, *who comes down*) How are they getting on?

NINA. Madame Arcádina is crying and Monsieur Sorin has got asthma.

DORN. (*Rising*) I must go and give them both some Valerian drops.

NINA. (*Giving him her flowers*) These are for you.

DORN. Merci bien. (*Goes towards the house*)

PAULINE. (*Following him*) What pretty flowers! (*Near the house, in a low voice*) Give me those flowers! Give me those flowers! (*She tears them up and throws them aside*)

[*Exeunt into the house*

NINA. (*Alone*) How strange to see an eminent actress in tears, and all about such a trifle! And is it not wonderful that a famous writer, the darling of the public, mentioned daily in the papers, with his photograph in the shop windows, his books translated into foreign

languages, should spend his whole day fishing and be delighted because he has caught two chub.[1] I imagined that famous people were proud and inaccessible, that they despised the crowd, and by their fame, by the glamour of their names, as it were, revenged themselves on the world for giving birth and riches the first place. But it seems they cry, fish, play cards, laugh, and get angry like everyone else. . . .

Enter TREPLEF, *hatless, with a gun and a dead seagull*

TREPLEF. (*At the gate*) Are you alone ?

NINA. Yes. (TREPLEF *lays the bird at her feet*)

NINA. What does that mean ?

TREPLEF. I have been brute enough to shoot this seagull. I lay it at your feet.

NINA. What is the matter with you ? (*She takes up the gull and looks at it*)

TREPLEF. (*After a pause*) I shall soon kill myself in the same way.

NINA. You are not yourself.

TREPLEF. No, not since you ceased to be yourself. You have changed towards me ; you look coldly at me ; you are not at ease when I am by.

NINA. You have grown nervous and irritable of late ; you express yourself incomprehensibly in what seems to be symbols. This seagull seems to be another symbol ; but, I am afraid I don't understand. (*Laying it on the seat*) I am too simple to understand you.

TREPLEF. It began the night of the idiotic fiasco of my play. Women cannot forgive failure. I have burnt everything, everything to the last

[1] Fishing with a float and looking for mushrooms were Tchekhof's own favourite occupations when he was in the country.

scrap. If only you knew how unhappy I am! Your sudden indifference to me is terrible, incredible, as if I woke one morning and behold, this lake had dried up or run away into the earth. You said just now that you are too simple to understand me. Oh, what is there to understand? My play was a failure; you despise my inspiration; you look on me as commonplace and worthless, like hundreds of others. . . . (*Stamping*) How well I understand it! How well I can understand it! I feel as if there were a nail being driven into my brain. The devil take it. The devil take my vanity too, which sucks out my blood, sucks it out like a snake. (*Seeing* TRIGORIN, *who reads a notebook as he walks*) There goes the man of real talent; he walks like Hamlet; with a book too. (*Mocking*) "Words, words, words!" This sun has not yet risen on you, yet you smile already, your looks are melted in his rays. I will not stand in your way.

[*Exit quickly*

TRIGORIN. (*Writing in his book*) Takes snuff and drinks vodka. . . . Always dressed in black. Schoolmaster in love with her.

NINA. Good-morning, Boris Alexéyevitch.

TRIGORIN. Good-morning.[1] It appears that owing to some unexpected turn of events we are leaving to-day. You and I are hardly likely to meet again. I am sorry. I do not often come across young women, young interesting women; I have already forgotten how one feels

[1] The actor who plays Trigórin would do well to imitate Tchekhof himself as his friends describe him: A sad, thoughtful face, a soft, intimate way of talking, a childlike shyness; shrinking from praise, gentle in all his movements; then, when the moment comes, a sort of exaltation.

at eighteen or nineteen and I cannot imagine it very clearly; so that the young women in my stories and novels are generally untrue to life. How I should like to be in your place, if only for an hour, so as to know what you think and what manner of creature you are altogether.

NINA. And how I should like to be in your place!

TRIGORIN. Why?

NINA. So as to know how it feels to be a gifted and famous writer. What does fame feel like? What sensation does it produce in you?

TRIGORIN. What sensation? Evidently, none. I never thought about it. (*Reflecting*) One of two things; either you exaggerate my fame, or fame produces no sensation.

NINA. But if you read about yourself in the papers?

TRIGORIN. When they praise me I like it; when they abuse me I feel low-spirited for a day or two.

NINA. What a world to live in! How I envy you, if you but knew it! How different are the lots of different people! Some can hardly drag on their tedious, insignificant existence, they are all alike, all miserable; others, like you for instance—you are one in a million—are blessed with a brilliant, interesting life, all full of meaning. . . . You are happy.

TRIGORIN. Am I? (*Shrugging his shoulders*) Hm! . . . You talk of fame and happiness, of some brilliant, interesting life; but for me all these pretty words, if I may say so, are just like marmalade, which I never eat. You are very young and very kind.

NINA. What a delightful life is yours!

TRIGORIN. What is there so very fine about it?

(*Looking at his watch*) I must be off to my writing in a moment. You must excuse me; I can't stop. (*Laughs*) You have trodden on my favourite corn,[1] as they say, and you see, I begin to get excited and angry at once. However, let us talk. We'll talk about my delightful, brilliant life. . . . Come on; where shall we begin? (*Meditating*) You have heard of obsessions, when a man is haunted day and night, say, by the idea of the moon or something? Well, I've got my moon. Day and night I am obsessed by the same persistent thought; I must write, I must write, I must write. . . . No sooner have I finished one story than I am somehow compelled to write another, then a third, after the third a fourth. I write without stopping, except to change horses like a post-chaise. I have no choice. What is there brilliant or delightful in that, I should like to know? It's a dog's life! Here I am talking to you, excited and delighted, yet never for one moment do I forget that there is an unfinished story waiting for me indoors. I see a cloud shaped like a grand piano. I think: I must mention somewhere in a story that a cloud went by, shaped like a grand piano. I smell heliotrope. I say to myself: Sickly smell, mourning shade, must be mentioned in describing a summer evening. I lie in wait for each phrase, for each word that falls from my lips or yours and hasten to lock all these words and phrases away in my literary storeroom: they may come in handy some day. When I finish a piece of work, I fly

[1] *Favourite corn.* A piece of English humour strayed over to Russia, probably in the pages of Jerome K. Jerome, who is much *goûté* over there.

to the theatre or go fishing, in the hope of resting, of forgetting myself, but no, a new subject is already turning, like a heavy iron ball, in my brain, some invisible force drags me to my table and I must make haste to write and write. And so on for ever and ever. I have no rest from myself; I feel that I am devouring my own life, that for the honey which I give to unknown mouths out in the void, I rob my choicest flowers of their pollen, pluck the flowers themselves and trample on their roots. Surely I must be mad? Surely my friends and acquaintances do not treat me as they would treat a sane man? "What are you writing at[1] now? What are we going to have next?" So the same thing goes on over and over again, until I feel as if my friends' interest, their praise and admiration, were all a deception; they are deceiving me as one deceives a sick man, and sometimes I'm afraid that at any moment they may steal on me from behind and seize me and carry me off, like Póprishtchin,[2] to a madhouse. In the old days, my young best days, when I was a beginner, my work was a continual torture. An unimportant writer, especially when things are going against him, feels clumsy, awkward and superfluous; his nerves are strained and tormented; he cannot keep from hovering about people who have to do with art and literature, unrecognised, unnoticed, afraid to look men frankly in the eye, like a passionate

[1] *Writing at*; *popísyvat* instead of *pisát*; one of their charming compound verbs, half frequentative and half diminutive. It suggests that his writing is a sort of game, something that serves to keep him out of mischief. The critic Mikhailovsky used it, in early days, of Tchekhof's compositions.

[2] *Póprishtchin.* The hero of Gogol's *Diary of a Madman.*

gambler who has no money to play with. The reader that I never saw presented himself to my imagination as something unfriendly and mistrustful. I was afraid of the public; it terrified me; and when each new play of mine was put on, I felt every time that the dark ones in the audience were hostile and the fair ones coldly indifferent. How frightful it was! What agony I went through!

NINA. But surely inspiration and the process of creation give you sublime and happy moments?

TRIGORIN. Yes. It's a pleasant feeling writing; . . . and looking over proofs is pleasant too. But as soon as the thing is published my heart sinks, and I see that it is a failure, a mistake, that I ought not to have written it at all; then I am angry with myself and feel horrible. . . . (*Laughing*) And the public reads it and says: "How charming! How clever! . . . How charming, but not a patch on Tolstoy!" or "It's a delightful story, but not so good as Turgénef's *Fathers and Sons*." And so on, to my dying day, my writings will always be clever and charming, clever and charming, nothing more. And when I die, my friends, passing by my grave, will say: "Here lies Trigórin. He was a charming writer, but not so good as Turgénef."

NINA. You must excuse me; I *refuse* to understand you. You are simply spoilt by success.

TRIGORIN. By what success? I've never satisfied *myself*. I do not care for myself as a writer. The worst of it is that I live in a kind of bewilderment and often do not understand what I write. I love water like this, trees, sky; I have the feeling for nature; it wakes a passion

in me, an irresistible desire to write. But I am something more than a landscape-painter; I am a citizen as well; I love my country, I love the people; I feel that if I am a writer I am bound to speak of the people, of its sufferings, of its future, to speak of science, of the rights of man, etcetera, etcetera: and I speak about it all, volubly, and am attacked angrily in return by everyone; I dart from side to side like a fox run down by the hounds; I see that life and science fly farther and farther ahead of me, and I fall farther and farther behind, like the countryman running after the train[1]; and in the end I feel that the only thing I can write of is the landscape, and in everything else I am untrue to life, false to the very marrow of my bones.

NINA. You work too hard; you have no time or wish to realise your own importance. You may be dissatisfied with yourself, but in the eyes of others you are great and wonderful. If I were a writer like you I would sacrifice my whole life to the million, but I would realise that its only happiness was to raise itself up to me; they should pull my chariot along.

TRIGORIN. Chariot indeed! . . . Am I an Agamemnon then, eh? (*They both smile*)

NINA. For such happiness as to be a writer or an actress I would endure the hatred of my nearest and dearest. I would endure poverty and disillusionment. I would lodge in a garret and live on black bread. I would suffer dissatisfaction with myself, the consciousness of my own imperfections, but in return I would demand glory . . . real, ringing glory. (*Covering her face with her hands*) My head swims. Ouf!

[1] In some story, one presumes.

ARCADINA. (*Heard from the house*) Boris Alexéyevitch !

TRIGORIN. I'm being called. To pack, no doubt. But I don't want to go away. (*Looking at the lake*) Isn't it heavenly ? Just look at it !

NINA. You see that house and garden on the farther shore ?

TRIGORIN. Yes.

NINA. They used to belong to my mother. I was born there. I have spent the whole of my life by this lake and I know every little island on it.

TRIGORIN. It's perfectly delicious here ! (*Seeing the seagull*) And what's this ?

NINA. A seagull. Constantine Gavrilovitch shot it.

TRIGORIN. It's a lovely bird. I don't want to go away at all. Persuade Madame Arcádina to stay. (*Writes in his notebook*)

NINA. What are you writing ?

TRIGORIN. I was just making a note.[1] A subject occurred to me. (*Putting notebook away*) A subject for a short story. A girl—like yourself, say—lives from her childhood on the shores of a lake. She loves the lake like a seagull, and is happy and free like a seagull. But a man comes along by chance and sees her and ruins her, like this seagull, just to amuse himself. (*A pause.* ARCADINA *appears at a window*)

ARCADINA. Where are you, Boris Alexéyevitch ?

[1] Tchehkof himself had whole pocket-books full of subjects for stories (*Pámyati*, 170) ; but he discouraged the random use of notes as positively harmful to an imaginative writer. " There is no need to write down comparisons, neat characterisations, or details of natural scenes : all this must present itself of its own accord, when it is wanted. But a naked fact, a rare name, a technical appellation, should be entered in a book ; otherwise it will get scattered and lost." For the rest, he said, " what is important will stick ; and the details you can always discover or invent " (*ibid.*, 131).

TRIGORIN. Coming! (*Looks back at* NINA *as he goes. At the window, to* ARCADINA) What is it?

ARCADINA. We're staying on.

[*Exit* TRIGORIN *into the house*

NINA. (*Coming down to the footlights. After a pause and meditation*) It's like a dream!

CURTAIN

ACT III

Dining-room in SORIN*'s house. Doors right and left. Sideboard. Cupboard with medicaments. Table* C. *Trunks and bandboxes; preparations for departure.* TRIGORIN *lunching,* MASHA *standing by the table.*

MASHA. I tell you all this because you're a novelist. You can make use of it, if you like. I tell you candidly, if he had wounded himself seriously I should not have consented to live another minute. And yet I'm a brave woman. I've made up my mind; I will tear this love out of my heart, I will tear it out by the roots.

TRIGORIN. How are you going to do that?

MASHA. I am marrying, marrying Medvédenko.

TRIGORIN. The schoolmaster?

MASHA. Yes.

TRIGORIN. I don't see the necessity.

MASHA. What? to love without hope, for years and years to be waiting and waiting. . . . No. Once I am married, there will be no question of love; new cares will drown all traces of the old life. And yet it's a wrench. . . . Shall we have another go?

TRIGORIN. Won't it be rather a lot?

MASHA. Nonsense. (*Pours out a glass of vodka for each*) Don't look at me like that. More women drink than you think. Some drink openly like I do; most of them drink secretly. Yes, it's always vodka or brandy. (*They clink glasses*) Here's luck. You're a simple-minded soul; I am sorry you're going. (*They drink*)

TRIGORIN. I don't want to go myself.

MASHA. Ask her to stop on.

TRIGORIN. No, she won't stop now. Her son has been behaving extremely tactlessly. First he tried to shoot himself, and now I'm told he wants to challenge me to a duel. And why? He sulks and sneers and preaches new forms. . . . Well, there's room for all of us, both new and old; why should we jostle one another?

MASHA. He's jealous too. However, it's no affair of mine. (*A pause.* YAKOF *crosses* R. *to* L., *with a portmanteau. Enter* NINA, *and stops by the window*) My schoolmaster's not particularly clever, but he's a good fellow, poor devil, and devoted to me. I'm sorry for him. I'm sorry for his old mother too. Well, I wish you the best of everything. Think no evil of us. (*Shakes him warmly by the hand*) Thank you for all your friendliness. Send me your books, and mind and put your autograph in them. Only don't write: "To my friend" So and So from the author," but just: "To MASHA, 22, of no occupation,[1] born into this world for no apparent purpose." Good-bye.

[*Exit*

NINA. (*Holding out her clenched hand towards* TRIGORIN) Odd or even?

TRIGORIN. Even.

NINA. (*Sighing*) "No." I have only one pea in my hand. The question was, whether I was to become an actress or not. If only someone would advise me!

TRIGORIN. It's a question one can't advise on. (*A pause*)

NINA. We are parting to-day and very likely we shall never meet again. Please accept this little

[1] Literally: "To Mary, who does not remember her parentage"; a formula of police protocols.

medallion as a keepsake. I have had your initials engraved on it . . . and on the other side the name of your book, *Days and Nights.*

TRIGORIN. How graceful! (*Kissing the medallion*) What a charming present!

NINA. Think of me sometimes.

TRIGORIN. I will indeed. I will think of you as you were that sunny day, do you remember? a week ago, when you wore a cotton frock [1] . . . and we talked . . . and there was a seagull lying on the seat.

NINA. (*Meditatively*) A seagull, yes. (*A pause*) We can't talk any more; there's somebody coming. . . . Give me two minutes before you go, I entreat you. . . .

[*Exit* L.

At the same moment enter ARCADINA R., SORIN *in swallowtail coat, with the star of an order; then* YAKOF, *busy with luggage.*

ARCADINA. (*To* SORIN) Stay at home, you old man. You oughtn't to go gadding about with your rheumatism. (*To* TRIGORIN) Who was it just went out? Nina?

TRIGORIN. Yes.

ARCADINA. *Pardon!* We interrupted you. (*Sitting*) I think I've packed everything. I'm worn out.

TRIGORIN. (*Reading the inscription on the medallion*) "*Days and Nights*, page 121, lines 11 and 12."

YAKOF. (*Clearing the table*) Am I to pack the fishing rods too, sir?

TRIGORIN. Yes, I shall want them again. And you can give the books away.

[1] Literally: "bright-coloured frock."

YAKOF. Very good, sir.

TRIGORIN. (*To himself*) "Page 121, lines 11 and 12." What can those lines contain? (*To* ARCADINA) Have you got my books anywhere in the house?

ARCADINA. Yes, in Peter's study; in the corner cupboard.

TRIGORIN. "Page 121."

[*Exit*

ARCADINA. You'd really better stop at home, Peter.

SORIN. I shall feel dreadfully dull without you when you're gone.

ARCADINA. And will you be any the better for running into town?

SORIN. I don't suppose I shall, but all the same . . . (*Laughing*) There's the laying the foundation stone of the new Council-house and all the rest of it. . . . I must shake off this stickleback life if it's only for an hour or two; I've been lying too long on the shelf like an old cigarette-holder. I've ordered my cart at one; we'll start together.

ARCADINA. (*After a pause*) Well, be happy here; don't be bored; don't catch cold. Keep an eye on my boy. Take care of him. Give him good advice. (*A pause*) I shall go away without having found out why Constantine tried to shoot himself. I expect the chief reason was jealousy; and the sooner I take Trigórin away the better.

SORIN. Well, now, how shall I put it? . . . there were other reasons too. It's very natural; a clever young man, living in the depths of the country, with no money, no position, no future. He has no occupation. He is ashamed and afraid

of his indolence. I love him dearly and he is fond of me, but still, confound it all, he feels as if he were in the way here, only a parasite, a hanger-on. It's very natural, a man's vanity . . .

ARCADINA. He's a great trial. (*Meditating*) He might go into a Government office, perhaps. . . .

SORIN. (*Whistling; then hesitatingly*) I fancy the best thing would be if you were to . . . if you were to let him have a little money. In the first place he ought to be dressed like a human being and all the rest of it. He's been wearing the same jacket these three years; he hasn't got an overcoat at all. . . . (*Laughing*) Then the lad ought to see life a bit. . . . Go abroad and all that. . . . It don't cost much.

ARCADINA. Still. . . . Well, I might manage the clothes, but as for going abroad . . . No, I can't manage the clothes either just at present. (*Resolutely*) I haven't any money. (SORIN *laughs*) I haven't.

SORIN. (*Whistling*) Well, well! Don't be angry, my dear. I believe you. . . . You're a large-hearted, admirable woman.

ARCADINA. (*Crying*) I haven't any money.

SORIN. If I had any myself, of course, I'd let him have it, but I have nothing, not a penny piece. (*Laughing*) Shamrayef collars all my pension and spends it on the farm, the cattle and the bees, and no one ever sees it again. The bees die, the cows die, I can never have any horses. . . .

ARCADINA. Well, I have got some money; but remember, please, I'm an artiste; my wardrobe alone has simply ruined me.

SORIN. You're a dear good thing . . . I respect you . . . I . . . But I'm feeling queer again.

(*Staggers*) My head's going round. (*Holding on to the table*) I feel faint and all the rest of it.

ARCADINA. (*Frightened*) Peter! (*Trying to support him*) Petrusha, my darling! (*Shouting*) Help! help! (*Enter* TREPLEF, *with bandage on head, and* MEDVEDENKO) He's fainting!

SORIN. All right, all right! (*Smiles and drinks some water*) It's gone and all the rest of it.

TREPLEF. Don't be afraid, mother, there's no danger. Uncle Peter often gets like that nowadays. (*To* SORIN) You'd better lie down, uncle.

SORIN. Yes, I will for a bit. But I'll go into town all the same. I'll lie down first; of course, of course.

[*Goes* R., *leaning on stick*

MEDVEDENKO. (*Giving him an arm*) There's a riddle: He walks on four legs in the morning, on two at noon, on three in the evening. . . .

SORIN. (*Laughing*) Quite so. And on his back at night. Don't you trouble, I can manage. . . .

MEDVEDENKO. Nonsense! come along!

[*Exeunt* MEDVEDENKO *and* SORIN R.

ARCADINA. He quite frightened me.

TREPLEF. It's bad for his health living in the country. He's miserable. Now if, in a sudden burst of generosity, you could lend him a couple of hundred pounds, he would be able to spend the whole year in town.

ARCADINA. I haven't any money. I'm an actress, not a banker. (*A pause*)

TREPLEF. Please change my bandage, mother. You do it so well.

ARCADINA. (*Getting iodoform and a drawerful of bandages from the medicine cupboard*) The doctor's late.

TREPLEF. It's twelve and he promised to be here by ten.

ARCADINA. Sit down. (*Taking off bandage*) You look as if you had a turban on. A man asked the servants yesterday what nationality you were. It's almost healed up. There's hardly anything left there. (*Kissing his head*) You promise not to play at chik-chik again while I'm away ? [1]

TREPLEF. I promise, mother. That was in a moment of mad despair when I had lost all self-control. It won't happen again. (*Kissing her hand*) You have the hands of an angel. I remember a long time ago, when you were still on the Imperial stage—I was quite little then—there was a fight in the courtyard of the house we lived in ; a washerwoman who lodged there got awfully knocked about. You remember ? She was picked up senseless. . . . You were always going in to see her, taking her medicine and bathing her children in the wash-tub. Don't you remember ?

ARCADINA. No. (*Putting on a new bandage*)

TREPLEF. There were two ballet-girls lodging in the same place. . . . They used to come in for coffee. . . .

ARCADINA. I remember that.

TREPLEF. They were very pious. (*A pause*) These last few days I have loved you just as tenderly and trustfully as when I was a child. I have nobody left now but you. But why, oh why, do you submit to this man's influence ?

ARCADINA. You don't understand him, Constantine. He has the noblest nature in the world. . . .

[1] *Chik-chik* : a playful onomatopoeia for the click of the pistol trigger.

TREPLEF. Yet when he was told that I meant to challenge him to fight, his noble nature did not prevent him from playing the coward. He is going away. It's an ignominious flight!

ARCADINA. What rubbish! It was I who asked him to go.

TREPLEF. The noblest nature in the world! Here are you and I almost quarrelling about him, and where is he? In the garden or the drawing-room laughing at us, improving Nina's mind, and trying to persuade her that he's a genius.

ARCADINA. It seems to give you pleasure to try and hurt my feelings. I respect Trigórin and I must ask you not to abuse him to my face.

TREPLEF. And I *don't* respect him. You want *me* to believe him a genius too; but you must excuse me, I can't tell lies; his writings make me sick.

ARCADINA. This is mere envy. Conceited people with no talent have no resource but to jeer at really talented people. It relieves their feelings, no doubt!

TREPLEF. (*Ironically*) Really talented people! (*Angry*) I am more talented than all of you put together if it comes to that! (*Tearing off the bandages*) You apostles of the commonplace have taken the front seat in all the arts for yourselves and call nothing but what you do yourselves legitimate and real; you persecute and stifle all the rest. I don't believe in any of you; I don't believe in *you* and I don't believe in *him*!

ARCADINA. Decadent!

TREPLEF. Go back to your beloved theatre and act your pitiful stupid plays!

ARCADINA. I never acted in such plays. Leave

me! You cannot even write a miserable vaudeville if you try! Kiev artisan! Parasite!

TREPLEF. Skinflint!

ARCADINA. Tatterdemalion! (TREPLEF *sits down and cries quietly*) You insignificant nobody! (*Walking up and down agitatedly*) Don't cry. Don't cry, I say. (*Crying*) Please don't cry. (*Kissing his forehead, cheeks and head*) My darling child, forgive me. . . . Forgive your wicked mother! Forgive your unhappy mother!

TREPLEF. (*Embracing her*) If only you knew! I have lost everything. She doesn't love me and I cannot write any more . . . all my hopes are lost.

ARCADINA. Don't lose heart. It will be all right in the end. He is going away; she will love you again. (*Wiping away his tears*) Stop crying. We are friends once more.

TREPLEF. (*Kissing her hands*) Yes, mother.

ARCADINA. (*Tenderly*) Be friends with him too. You mustn't have a duel. You won't have one?

TREPLEF. Very well. But you mustn't let me meet him any more, mother. It hurts me; it is too much for me. (*Enter* TRIGORIN) There! I will go away. (*Hastily puts the medicaments away in the cupboard*) The doctor shall bandage me when he comes.

TRIGORIN. (*Looking for the place in a book*) Page 121. Lines 11 and 12. Ha! (*Reading*) "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it."

[TREPLEF *picks up his bandage and goes*

ARCADINA. (*Looking at the time*) The horses will soon be round.

TRIGORIN. (*To himself*) "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it."

ARCADINA. You've got your things all packed, I hope?

TRIGORIN. (*Impatiently.*) Yes, yes. (*Reflectively*) Why do I hear the sound of anguish in this cry of a pure spirit? Why does my heart sink so painfully? "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it." (*To* ARCADINA) Let us stay another day. (*She shakes her head*) Let us stay.

ARCADINA. Dear friend, I know what makes you want to stay. You should have some self-control. You've lost your senses a little; come back to reason.

TRIGORIN. And do you too come back to reason; be thoughtful and considerate, I beseech you; look at all this like a real friend. (*Pressing her hand*) You are capable of a sacrifice. Be kind and set me free!

ARCADINA. (*In deep agitation*) Are you so much in love?

TRIGORIN. Something beckons me towards her. Perhaps this is the very thing that I really need. . . .

ARCADINA. The love of a provincial girl? Oh, how little you know yourself.

TRIGORIN. People sometimes sleep as they walk; and even while I talk to you, it is as if I were asleep and saw her in my dreams. . . . Wonderful sweet visions possess me. . . . Set me free!

ARCADINA. (*Trembling*) No, no. I am an ordinary woman; I cannot be talked to so. Don't torment me, Boris. I am frightened.

TRIGORIN. If you will try you can be an extraordinary woman. A sweet poetical young love,

wafting me away into the world of reveries, there is nothing on earth can give happiness like that. Such a love I have never yet experienced. As a young man I had no time; I was wearing out editors' thresholds, struggling with poverty [1] . . . and now at last it stands before me beckoning, this love. . . . Should I not be a fool to fly from it?

ARCADINA. (*Angrily*) You have gone out of your mind.

TRIGORIN. Who cares?

ARCADINA. You are all banded together to-day to torment me. (*Crying*)

TRIGORIN. (*Taking his head between his hands*) She doesn't understand. She refuses to understand.

ARCADINA. Am I so old and ugly already that men can say what they like about other women to me? (*Embracing and kissing him*) Oh, you are mad, mad! My darling, wonderful Boris! Last page of my life! (*Kneeling*) My joy, my pride, my bliss. (*Embracing his knees*) If you desert me even for an hour, I cannot survive it, I shall go out of my mind, my splendid incomparable friend, my king.

TRIGORIN. Someone might come in. (*Helping her to rise*)

ARCADINA. Who cares? I am not ashamed of my love for you. (*Kissing his hands*) You are rash and wild, my treasure; what you want to do is madness; you shall not, I will not let you. (*Laughing*) You are mine! mine! This

[1] So Tchekhóf himself complained that success had come to him too late in life. He had spent his strength to no purpose in the struggle for existence (*Pámyati*, 162). He used to support all his family by writing for comic papers when he was still a student at the University.

forehead is mine, these eyes are mine, this lovely silky hair is mine. . . . You are all mine! You are so clever, so gifted, the best of all the writers of the day, you are the only hope of Russia. . . . You have such a gift of sincerity, simplicity, freshness and bracing humour. . . . In a single stroke you give the essence of a character or a landscape; your people are all alive. Oh, no one can read you without delight! Do you think this is mere incense and flattery? Come, look me in the eyes, right in the eyes. Do I look like a liar? You see, there is nobody but me who knows your true value; nobody; I am the only person who tells you the truth, my precious darling. . . . You'll come? Say you will. You won't desert me?

TRIGORIN. I have no will of my own. I never had a will of my own. Weak-kneed, flabby and submissive; everything that women hate. Take me, carry me away, but never let me stir an inch from your side.

ARCADINA. (*To herself*) He's mine! (*Carelessly*) Well, stay if you like. I'll go to-day and you follow a week later. After all, why should you hurry?

TRIGORIN. No. We'll go together.

ARCADINA. As you please. We'll go together if you like. (*A pause.* TRIGORIN *writes in his notebook*) What's that?

TRIGORIN. I heard a good expression this morning: the corn was "shuckled" by the wind.[1] It may come in some time. (*Stretching*) So we are off? Railway carriages again, stations,

[1] "*Shuckled.*" The translator has palmed off a handy substitute, instead of rendering Trigórin's own *trouvaille*, which seems to mean "the maids' spinney."

refreshment rooms, mutton chops and conversations.

Enter SHAMRAYEF

SHAMRAYEF. I have the melancholy honour of announcing that the carriage is round. It's time to start for the station, dear lady; the train comes in at two-five. Now don't forget to inquire, if you'll be so good, Irina Nikolayevna, what has become of Suzdáltsef. Is he alive? Is he well? Many's the drink we had together. He was inimitable in *The Lyons Mail.* He was playing at that time at Elizavétgrad with Izmailov the tragedian, another remarkable man. . . . No hurry, my dear lady, we've still got another five minutes to spare. They played the conspirators once in a melodrama, and when they were suddenly found out, the line was: "We are caught like rats in a trap"; but Izmailov said, "like trats in a rap"! instead. (*Laughing*) "Trats in a rap"!

(*While he is speaking* YAKOF *is busy with the luggage; a housemaid brings* ARCADINA *her hat, mantle, parasol and gloves; everyone helps* ARCADINA *to dress. A man-cook looks in* L. *and after a little while enters irresolutely. Enter* PAULINE, *then* SORIN *and* MEDVEDENKO)

PAULINE. (*Offering a basket*) Here are some plums for the journey. They're nice and sweet. I thought you might enjoy them.

ARCADINA. How kind of you, Pauline Andréyevna.

PAULINE. Good-bye, my dear. If there was ever anything amiss, forgive it. (*Crying*)

ARCADINA. (*Embracing her*) Everything has been perfect, perfect! Only you mustn't cry.

PAULINE. Our sands are running out.

ARCADINA. It can't be helped.

SORIN. (*With cape-coat, hat, stick; entering* L. *and crossing room*) Time to be off, Irene; you mustn't be late, confound it all. I'm going to get in.

MEDVEDENKO. I shall go to the station on foot to see you off. I'll be there in no time.

[*Exit*

ARCADINA. Good-bye, everyone. If we're alive and well we shall meet again in the summer. (*Housemaid, man-cook and* YAKOF *kiss her hand*) Don't forget me. (*Giving the cook a rouble*) There's a rouble to divide among you.[1]

COOK. Our humblest thanks, lady. A good journey to you! We are very content with you!

YAKOF. Heaven send you happy times!

SHAMRAYEF. Make us happy with a little letter. (*To* TRIGORIN) Good-bye, Boris Alexéyevitch!

ARCADINA. Where's Constantine? Tell him that I am off. We must say good-bye. (*To* YAKOF) Think no evil of us. I've given the cook a rouble. It's for the three of you.

[*Exeunt all* R. *Stage empty. Noise of farewells and departure behind the scene. Housemaid comes back for the basket of plums, and exit with it*

TRIGORIN. (*Coming back*) I've left my stick behind. I think she's out there on the verandah. (*Goes* L. *and meets* NINA, *entering*) Ah, it's you. We're off.

NINA. I felt that we should meet again. (*Agitatedly*) Boris Alexéyevitch, I have made up my mind beyond recall; the die is cast; I am going on the stage. To-morrow I shall be

[1] *A rouble*: worth two shillings and a penny.

gone from here; I am leaving my father; I am giving up everything and beginning a new life. I am going where you are going . . . to Moscow. We shall meet there.

TRIGORIN. (*Looking round*) Stop at the "Slavyansky Bazaar." Let me know at once. Molchanóvska, Grokhólsky's house . . . I'm in a hurry. . . . (*A pause*)

NINA. One minute more.

TRIGORIN. (*Murmuring*) How beautiful you are! . . . What joy to think that we shall meet again so soon. (*She lays her head on his bosom*) I shall see these lovely eyes once more, this inexpressibly tender, charming smile, this sweet face, this expression of angelic purity. . . . My darling! (*A long kiss*)

CURTAIN

Two years elapse between the third and fourth Acts.

ACT IV

One of the drawing-rooms in SORIN'S *house, converted by* CONSTANTINE *into a study. Doors* R. *and* L. *A glass door in the back on to the verandah. Besides usual drawing-room furniture, a writing-table stands up* R., *a Turkish divan by the door* L., *bookcase, books on window-sills and chairs. Evening. Twilight. One lamp alight, with shade. The wind howls in the trees and chimneys. Watchman beats a board outside as he passes.*

Enter MEDVEDENKO *and* MASHA

MASHA. (*Calling*) Constantine Gavrilovitch! Constantine Gavrilovitch! (*Looking about*) There's no one here. The old man keeps asking every minute "Where's Constantine? Where's Constantine?" He can't live without him.

MEDVEDENKO. He's afraid of solitude. (*Listening*) What a fearful storm! It's been like this for two whole days.

MASHA. (*Turning up the lamp*) There are waves on the lake, great big ones.

MEDVEDENKO. How dark it is in the garden! They ought to have that stage in the garden pulled down. It stands all bare and ugly like a skeleton, and the curtain flaps in the wind. As I came by yesterday evening I thought I heard someone crying there.

MASHA. Did you? (*A pause*)

MEDVEDENKO. Let's get home, Masha.

MASHA. (*Shaking her head*) I shall stay the night here.

MEDVEDENKO. (*Imploringly*) Come home, Masha. Our baby must be starving.

MASHA. Rubbish. Matróna will feed it. (*A pause*)

MEDVEDENKO. Poor little beggar; three nights away from its mother.

MASHA. What a bore you are! In the old days you used at any rate to philosophise; but now it's always baby, baby, home, home. Can't you find anything new to say?

MEDVEDENKO. Let's go, Masha.

MASHA. Go yourself.

MEDVEDENKO. Your father won't let me have a horse.

MASHA. Yes, he will. You ask him, he'll let you have one fast enough.

MEDVEDENKO. Well, I'll try. Then you'll come to-morrow?

MASHA. (*Taking snuff*) All right. Can't you leave me alone? (*Enter* TREPLEF, *carrying pillows and blankets, and* PAULINE *with sheets. They put them on the Turkish divan and* TREPLEF *goes and sits at the writing-table*) What's this about, mother?

PAULINE. Monsieur Sorin wants his bed made in Constantine's room.

MASHA. I'll help. (*Spreading sheets*)

PAULINE. (*Sighing*) Old folk are just like children. (*Goes to writing-table, leans on her elbow and looks over* CONSTANTINE'S *manuscript. A pause*)

MEDVEDENKO. Well, I'll be off. Good-bye, Masha. (*Kissing his wife's hand*) Good-bye, mother. (*Offering to kiss* PAULINE'S *hand*)

PAULINE. (*Sourly*) There, go along, do!

MEDVEDENKO. Good-bye, Constantine Gavrilovitch. (CONSTANTINE *shakes hands silently*)

[*Exit* MEDVEDENKO

PAULINE. (*Looking at the manuscript*) Nobody ever imagined that you would become a real writer, Constantine. But now, thank heaven,

the magazines send you money for your stories. (*Stroking his hair*) And you've grown so handsome. Dear, good Constantine, try and be kinder to my Masha.

MASHA. (*Laying the bed*) Do leave him alone, mother.

PAULINE. (*To* CONSTANTINE) She's such a dear. (*A pause*) All that a woman asks, Constantine, is to be looked at kindly. I know it myself. . . . (CONSTANTINE *rises and leaves the room silently*)

MASHA. Now you've made him angry. Why couldn't you leave him alone ?

PAULINE. I'm so sorry for you, Masha.

MASHA. No need, thank you.

PAULINE. My heart aches again for you. I see it all ; I understand it all.

MASHA. Bah ! Hopeless love only exists in novels. Rubbish ! One only has to keep oneself in hand, and not to sit waiting and waiting for what can never come. If love strikes root in one's heart, one must turn it out. Well, they've promised to transfer Simeon to another district. Once we get there I shall forget everything ; I will tear it out by the roots.

(*A melancholy waltz is played two rooms away*)

PAULINE. There's Constantine playing. That means he's unhappy.

MASHA. (*Silently dancing a few turns to the waltz*) The chief thing is not to have him always before one's eyes. If only they will transfer my Simeon. Once we're there I shall forget him in a month. This is all fiddlesticks.

Enter DORN *and* MEDVEDENKO L., *wheeling* SORIN *in a chair.*

MEDVEDENKO. I have six mouths in the house

to feed now. And flour's four and sixpence a hundredweight.

DORN. You won't get much change out of that.

MEDVEDENKO. Ah! It's all very well for you to laugh. You're rolling in money.

DORN. Rolling in money? After thirty years of practice, my dear fellow, thirty years of anxious practice, during which I could never call my soul my own day or night, all that I managed to scrape together was two hundred pounds, and that I spent when I went abroad just lately. I haven't a farthing.

MASHA. (*To* MEDVEDENKO) So you've not gone yet?

MEDVEDENKO. (*Apologetically*) How can I, if they won't let me have a horse?

MASHA. (*Murmuring, bitterly*) I wish my eyes might never light on you again.

(SORIN'S *chair is placed on the* L. *side of the stage.* PAULINE, MASHA *and* DORN *sit by it.* MEDVEDENKO, *downcast, goes apart*)

DORN. Why, what a lot of changes you've been making. You've turned the drawing-room into a study.

MASHA. It's more convenient for Constantine Gavrilovitch to work here. When he feels inclined he can go out into the garden to think.

(*The watchman beats his board outside*)

SORIN. Where's Irene?

DORN. Gone to the station to meet Trigórin. She'll be back immediately.

SORIN. If you thought it necessary to send for my sister to come, I must be dangerously ill. (*A pause*) It's too bad, here am I dangerously ill and nobody will give me any medicine!

DORN. Well, what medicine do you want? Valerian drops? Soda? Quinine?

SORIN. Oh! more philosophy, I suppose. It's simply the devil! (*Nodding at the divan*) Is that laid for me?

PAULINE. Yes, it's for you, Peter Nikolayevitch.

SORIN. Many thanks.

DORN. (*Singing*) "The moon swims by in the clouds of night."

SORIN. I shall give Constantine a subject for a story. It's to be called "The Man who wanted to," "*L'homme qui a voulu.*" When I was a young man I wanted to be a writer, and I didn't become one; I wanted to be a good speaker and was a vile one. (*Mimicking himself*) "And, er, so to speak, er, as I was saying . . ." And my perorations that went on and on, till one was bathed in perspiration. . . . I wanted to marry and remained a bachelor; I wanted to live and die in town, and here I am ending my days in the country and all the rest of it.

DORN. You wanted to be made an Actual State Councillor,[1] and you were.

SORIN. (*Laughing*) I never tried for that. It came of its own accord.

DORN. To express dissatisfaction with life at sixty-two, you must confess, is ungenerous.

SORIN. What a pigheaded fellow you are! Don't you understand? I want to *live*!

DORN. That's frivolous. By the laws of nature every life must come to an end.

SORIN. You talk as a man who has had his fill. You're sated and therefore indifferent to life; it's all the same to you. But even you will be afraid of death.

[1] *Actual State Councillor.* See the note to Act I., p. 42.

DORN. The fear of death is an animal fear. One ought to repress it. The only people who are consciously afraid of death are those who believe in eternal life; they are frightened by the knowledge of their sins. But you, in the first place, you're an unbeliever, and in the second, what sins can you have on your mind? You've served twenty-five years in the Law Courts, nothing more.

SORIN. (*Laughing*) Twenty-eight.

Enter TREPLEF, *and sits on a footstool at* SORIN'S *feet.* MASHA *cannot keep her eyes off him.*

DORN. We are preventing Constantine Gavrilovitch from working.

TREPLEF. No, it's all right. (*A pause*)

MEDVEDENKO. Allow me to ask you, doctor, what town pleased you most abroad?

DORN. Genoa.

TREPLEF. Why Genoa?

DORN. The crowd in the streets is so charming in Genoa. If you go out from your hotel in the evening you find the whole street overflowing with people. You go about aimlessly in the crowd, zigzagging to and fro, you live with its life, you fuse your individuality with its, and you begin to believe that a Universal Spirit is really possible, like that one that Nina Zarétchnaya once acted in your play. By the by, where *is* Nina Zarétchnaya? How's she getting on?

TREPLEF. She's quite well, I imagine.

DORN. I was told she was living some curious sort of life. What was it?

TREPLEF. It's a long story, doctor.

DORN. Well, make it a short one. (*A pause*)

TREPLEF. She ran away from home and went to Trigórin. That you know.

DORN. Yes, I know.

TREPLEF. She had a baby. The baby died. Trigórin got tired of her and went back to his old ties, as one might have expected. Besides, he never gave up his old ties, but, like the back-boneless creature he is, managed to carry on with both at the same time. As far as I can make out from what I've heard, Nina's private life has been disastrous.

DORN. And on the stage ?

TREPLEF. Still worse, I should say. She came out first at a summer theatre near Moscow, and then went off to the provinces. I kept her in sight for some time and followed her wherever she went. She was always trying to do big parts, but acted crudely and inartistically, mouthing her words and making awkward gestures. There were moments when she showed some talent in screaming and dying, but they were only moments.

DORN. Still, you think she has some gift for it ?

TREPLEF. It was hard to make out. I should think so, certainly. I saw her, but she refused to see me, and the servants wouldn't let me into her rooms. I understood her mood and did not insist on an interview. (*A pause*) What else is there to tell you ? Afterwards, when I got back home I used to get letters from her, nice, friendly, interesting letters ; she didn't complain, but I could see that she was pro-foundly unhappy ; in every line one felt her strained and tortured nerves. Her imagination was a little disordered. She signed herself

"Seagull." In *Rusalka* [1] the miller says he is a raven; so she said in her letters that she was a seagull. And now she's here.

DORN. How do you mean, here?

TREPLEF. Down in the town, at an inn. She's been in rooms there five or six days. I drove in in the hope of seeing her. Marya Ilyínitchna [2] (*indicating* MASHA) went too, but she won't see anyone. Medvédenko declares he saw her crossing the fields yesterday afternoon, a mile and a half from here.

MEDVEDENKO. Yes, I saw her. She was going the other way, towards the town. I took off my hat and asked why she didn't come and stay with us. She said she would.

TREPLEF. She won't. (*A pause*) Her father and stepmother refuse to know her. They've put watchmen everywhere to prevent her even getting near the grounds. (TREPLEF *and* DORN *go to the writing-table*) How easy it is to be a philosopher on paper, doctor, and how hard it is in real life!

SORIN. What a charming girl she was!

DORN. Eh, what?

SORIN. I say what a charming girl she was. His Excellency Councillor Sorin was in love with her for a time.

DORN. Old Don Juan!

(SHAMRAYEF'S *laugh is heard without*)

PAULINE. It sounds as if they were back from the station.

TREPLEF. Yes, I can hear mother.

[1] *Rusalka.* Pushkin's poem; more likely to be known to the reader as Dargomyzhsky's opera. *Rusalka* is Russian for a nixie.

[2] Ilyínitchna, daughter of Ilyá, or Elias, Shamráyef's Christian name.

Enter ARCADINA *and* TRIGORIN, SHAMRAYEF *following*

SHAMRAYEF. (*As he enters*) We all grow old and battered under the influence of the elements, but you, dear lady, are as young as ever, with your lovely frocks, such life, such grace . . .

ARCADINA. You want to bewitch me with praise again, you tiresome man!

TRIGORIN. (*To* SORIN) How do you do, Peter Nikolayevitch? What do you mean by being ill? It's very wrong of you. (*Seeing* MASHA, *delighted*) Marya Ilyínitchna!

MASHA. Not forgotten me? (*Shaking hands*)

TRIGORIN. Married?

MASHA. Long ago.

TRIGORIN. Happy? (*Salutes* DORN *and* MEDVEDENKO, *then goes irresolutely towards* TREPLEF) Irina Nikolayevna[1] said that you had overlooked the past and forgiven me.

(TREPLEF *gives him his hand*)

ARCADINA. (*To her son*) Trigórin has brought the magazine with your new story.

TREPLEF. (*Taking the magazine; to* TRIGORIN) Many thanks. You're very kind. (*They both sit*)

TRIGORIN. Your admirers send you their respects. . . . People in Moscow and St Petersburg are interested in you; I am always being asked about you. They want to know what you look like, how old you are, dark or fair. For some reason or other they all imagine that you're no longer young. And nobody knows your real name, of course, as you write under a *nom de plume*. You're a mystery, like the Man in the Iron Mask.

[1] *I.e.* Madame Arcádina.

TREPLEF. Have you come for long?

TRIGORIN. No, I mean to go to Moscow to-morrow. I can't stop. I'm trying to get a novel finished, and then I've promised to write something for an annual. In fact, it's the old story.

(*While they are talking* ARCADINA *and* PAULINE *bring a card-table to the middle of the room and open it;* SHAMRAYEF *lights the candles and brings chairs. Things for a game of loto are brought from a cupboard*)

TRIGORIN. Your weather welcomes me here in the most inhospitable manner. It's a cruel wind. To-morrow morning, if it goes down, I shall go and fish in the lake. And I want to look round the garden and see the place where your play was acted, you remember? I've got a subject ready for writing; I want to refresh my memory as to the scene of action.

MASHA. (*To* SHAMRAYEF) Papa, will you let Simeon have a horse? He's got to go home.

SHAMRAYEF. (*Ironical*) A horse! Go home! (*Severely*) Didn't you see for yourself, the horses have just been to the station? They can't go out again.

MASHA. But they're not the only ones. . . . (*Seeing that her father won't answer, she makes a gesture of breaking off*) You're all more trouble than you're worth!

MEDVEDENKO. I'll do it on foot, Masha. It's all right. . . .

PAULINE. (*Sighing*) On foot, in weather like this. . . . (*Seating herself at the card-table*) Now come along, everyone.

MEDVEDENKO. It's not more than four miles. . . . Good-bye (*Kissing his wife's hand*) Good-

bye, mother. (PAULINE, *his mother-in-law, unwillingly gives him her hand to kiss*) I wouldn't have troubled anyone, only the baby . . . (*He bows to the company*) Good-bye.

[*Exit, with a guilty air*

SHAMRAYEF. He'll get there right enough. He's not a general.

PAULINE. (*Rapping on the table*) Now then, come along. Don't let's waste time; they'll be calling us to supper very soon.

(SHAMRAYEF, MASHA *and* DORN *sit at the card-table*)

ARCADINA. (*To* TRIGORIN) When the long autumn evenings begin we always play loto here. Just look; the old loto-set that we used to play with with mother, when we were children. Won't you have a game with us till supper-time? (*She and* TRIGORIN *sit at the card-table*) It's a tedious game, but it's all right when you're used to it. (*She deals three cards to each*)

TREPLEF. (*Looking through the magazine*) He's read his own story and hasn't even cut mine. (*Puts magazine on writing-table, then goes to the door* L.; *as he passes his mother he kisses her on the head*)

ARCADINA. Aren't you coming, Constantine?

TREPLEF. No, thanks; I don't feel like it. I'm going for a turn round the house. [*Exit*

ARCADINA. The stake's twopence. Put in for me, doctor.

DORN. Very good, mum.

MASHA. Everybody put in? I begin. . . . Twenty-two!

ARCADINA. Yes.

MASHA. Three!

DORN. Here you are.

MASHA. Have you marked three? Eight! Eighty-one! Ten!

SHAMRAYEF. Not so quick.

ARCADINA. Such a reception I had at Kharkof! Saints in heaven! My head still goes round with it.

MASHA. Thirty-four!

(*A melancholy waltz behind the scenes*)

ARCADINA. The students gave me quite an ovation. Three baskets of flowers, two bouquets and look at that! (*Taking a brooch from her bosom and throwing it on the table*)

SHAMRAYEF. Why, that's no end of a . . .

MASHA. Fifty!

DORN. Five O.

ARCADINA. I was wearing a charming frock . . . my frocks are one of my strong points.

PAULINE. (*Listening to the music*) Do you hear Constantine? He's unhappy, poor lamb.

SHAMRAYEF. They abuse him a good deal in the papers.

MASHA. Seventy-seven!

ARCADINA. Who cares for the papers!

TRIGORIN. He has no luck. He can't somehow get into his natural stride. There's always something queer and vague about it, almost like delirium at times. Never a single living character.

MASHA. Eleven!

ARCADINA. (*Looking round at* SORIN) Are you bored, Peter? (*A pause*) He's asleep.

DORN. The Actual State Councillor is asleep.

MASHA. Seven! Ninety!

TRIGORIN. If I lived in a country house like this, by a lake, do you think I would ever write another line? I would conquer the passion and spend my whole time fishing.

MASHA. Twenty-eight !

TRIGORIN. To catch a roach or a perch . . . what bliss ![1]

DORN. For my part, I believe in Constantine. He'll do something. He'll do something! He thinks in pictures, his stories are bright and full of colour ; I feel them very deeply. It's a pity only that he has no definite purpose before his eyes. He produces an impression and there he stops ; producing impressions won't take you very far. Are you glad you've a son who is a writer, Irina Nikolayevna ?

ARCADINA. Fancy, I've never read a line of his. I never have time.

MASHA. Twenty-six !

Enter TREPLEF *quietly ; he goes to his table.*

SHAMRAYEF. (*To* TRIGORIN) We've still got that thing of yours, Boris Alexéyevitch.

TRIGORIN. What thing ?

SHAMRAYEF. Constantine Gavrilovitch shot a seagull one day, and you asked me to have it stuffed for you.

TRIGORIN. Did I ? (*Meditating*) I don't remember.

MASHA. Sixty-six ! One !

TREPLEF. (*Opening the window and listening*) How dark it is ! I wonder why I feel so uneasy. . . .

ARCADINA. Shut the window, dear ; it makes a draught. (TREPLEF *shuts it*)

MASHA. Eighty-eight !

TRIGORIN. Ha, ha ! I've won.

ARCADINA. (*Gaily*) Well done ! Well done !

SHAMRAYEF. Bravo.

ARCADINA. Trigórin is always lucky wherever he

[1] Cf. *Letters*, p. 82. " To catch a *sudak* ! It is nobler and sweeter than love."

goes. (*Rising*) And now let's go and get something to eat. The eminent novelist has had no dinner to-day. We'll go on after supper. Constantine, put your writing away and come to supper.

TREPLEF. I don't want anything thanks, mother. I'm not hungry.

ARCADINA. As you please. (*Waking* SORIN) Supper-time, Peter. (*Taking* SHAMRAYEF'S *arm*) I will tell you all about my reception at Kharkof.

(PAULINE *puts out the candles on the card-table; she and* DORN *wheel* SORIN'S *chair. Exeunt omnes* L. TREPLEF *remains alone at his writing-table*)

TREPLEF. (*Preparing to write; reads through what he has already written*) I have talked so much about new formulae, and now I feel that I'm slipping back little by little into the old commonplaces. (*Reading*) "The placard on the hoarding informed the public . . ." "Her pale face framed in masses of dark hair . . ." "Informed the public," "Framed in masses" . . . How cheap![1] (*Scratching out*) I'll begin with the hero being woken by the sound of the rain, and throw the rest overboard. The description of the moonlight night is tedious and artificial. Trigórin has worked himself out a method, it's easy for him. The neck of a broken bottle glimmering on the mill-dam and the black shadow of the water-wheel, and there's your

[1] Constantine criticises himself almost in the same words as Tchekhof once criticised a young writer, Zhirkévitch, who had sent him one of his stories in manuscript. "It is only ladies who nowadays write, 'the placard informed the public,' 'her face framed in hair'" (*Letters*, p. 208).

moonlight night complete; but here am I with my tremulous rays and the twinkling stars and the distant sound of a piano fainting on the perfumed air. . . . It's frightful! (*A pause*) Yes, I'm coming more and more to the conclusion that it doesn't matter whether the formulae are new or old; a man's got to write without thinking of form at all, just because it flows naturally out of his soul. (*Someone knocks at the window by the table*) What's that? (*Looking out*) I don't see anything. (*Opens the glass door and looks into the garden*) Someone ran down the steps. (*Calling*) Who's there? (*Goes out; walks quickly along the verandah outside, and returns a moment later with* NINA ZARETCHNAYA) Nina! Nina! (NINA *lays her head on his bosom and sobs restrainedly*) (*With emotion*) Nina! Nina! Is it you? is it you? I had a sort of presentiment; all day my heart has been in anguish. (*Takes off her hat and cloak.*[1]) Oh, my dearest, my loveliest! She has come at last! We mustn't cry, we mustn't cry!

NINA. Is there anyone here?

TREPLEF. No one.

NINA. Lock the door; they may come in.

TREPLEF. No one will come in.

NINA. I know that Irina Nikolayevna is here. Lock the door.

TREPLEF. (*Locks the door* R. *and goes to the door* L.) There's no lock on this one. I'll put a chair against it. (*Puts an arm-chair against the door*) Don't be afraid, no one will come in.

NINA. (*Looking him hard in the face*) Let me look at you. (*Looking round the room*) How warm

[1] *Cloak*: strictly speaking, her "talma"; the word is English too; a sort of big cape named after the tragedian.

and cosy. . . . This used to be the drawing-room. Am I much changed?

TREPLEF. Yes. You're thinner and your eyes are bigger. Nina, how strange it is to see you at last! Why would you not let me in when I visited you? Why have you not come before? I know you have been here nearly a week. I've been to the inn several times every day and stood under your window like a beggar.

NINA. I was afraid you must hate me. I dream every night that you look at me and do not recognise me. If only you knew! Every day since I came I've been walking up here by the lake. I've been so often near the house but did not dare to come in. Let's sit down. (*They sit*) Let's sit here and talk and talk. How pleasant it is here, how warm and comfortable. . . . Do you hear the wind? There's a passage in Turgénef: "Blessed is he who sits beneath a roof on such a night, in his own comfortable corner." I am a seagull. No, that's wrong. (*Rubs her forehead*) What was I saying? Yes . . . Turgénef. . . . "And the Lord help all homeless wanderers." . . . I'm all right. (*Sobbing*)

TREPLEF. Nina! you're crying again. . . . Nina!

NINA. I'm all right. I feel the better for it . . . I haven't cried for two years. Yesterday evening I came into the garden to see if our stage was still standing. It's still there. I cried for the first time in two years, and felt relieved, and easier in my mind. See, I'm not crying any more. (*Taking his hand*) So you've become a writer. You're a writer and I'm an actress. We're both caught up in the vortex. Once I lived so

happily, with a child's happiness; I would wake of a morning and sing with glee; I loved you and dreamed of fame; and now? Early to-morrow morning I must travel to Yeletz,[1] third class, with peasants, and at Yeletz I shall have to put up with the attentions of the educated shopkeepers. . . . How brutal life is!

TREPLEF. Why Yeletz?

NINA. I've accepted an engagement for the whole winter. I must start to-morrow.

TREPLEF. Nina, I cursed you and hated you at first; I tore up your letters and your photographs; but all the time I knew that my heart was bound to you for ever. Try as I may, I cannot cease loving you, Nina. Ever since I lost you and began to get my stories printed, my life has been intolerable. How I have suffered! . . . My youth was snatched from me, as it were, and I feel as if I had lived for ninety years. I call to you; I kiss the ground where you have passed; wherever I look I see your face with that caressing smile which shone upon me in the best years of my life. . . .

NINA. (*Wildly*) Why does he say that? Why does he say that?

TREPLEF. I am alone in the world, unwarmed by any affection; it chills me like a dungeon, and whatever I write is hollow, dull and gloomy. Stay here, Nina, I beseech you, or let me come away with you! (NINA *puts on her hat and cloak quickly*) Nina, why are you doing that? For God's sake, Nina . . . (*He watches her putting on her things*) (*A pause*)

[1] *Yeletz.* A little old town in Central Russia, now growing brisk and commercial, with "residential suburbs." It is like being booked for a season at Norwich or Shrewsbury.

NINA. My trap is at the garden gate. Don't come and see me out. I'll manage all right. (*Crying*) Give me some water.

TREPLEF. (*Giving her water*) Where are you going to?

NINA. Back to the town. (*A pause*) Is Irina Nikolayevna here?

TREPLEF. Yes. . . . Uncle Peter was taken ill on Thursday; we wired for her to come.

NINA. Why do you say you kissed the ground where I had walked? You ought to kill me. (*Leaning against the table*) Oh, I am so tired! If I could only rest . . . if I could only rest. (*Raising her head*) I am a seagull . . . no, that's wrong. I am an actress. Yes, yes. (*Hearing* ARCADINA *and* TRIGORIN *laughing, she listens, then runs to the door* R. *and looks through the keyhole*) So he's here too! . . . (*Coming back to* TREPLEF) Yes, yes. . . . I'm all right. . . . He didn't believe in the stage; he always laughed at my ambitions; little by little I came not to believe in it either; I lost heart. . . . And on the top of that the anxieties of love, jealousy, perpetual fear for the child . . . I became trivial and commonplace; I acted without meaning . . . I did not know what to do with my hands, or how to stand on the stage, I had no control over my voice. You can't imagine how you feel when you know that you are acting atrociously. I am a seagull. No, that's wrong. . . . Do you remember, you shot a seagull? "A man comes along by chance and sees her, and, just to amuse himself, ruins her. . . . A subject for a short story." . . . No, that's not it. . . . (*Rubbing her forehead*) What was I talking about? . . . Ah, about acting. I'm not

like that now . . . I'm a real actress now. When I act I rejoice, I delight in it; I am intoxicated and feel that I am splendid. Since I got here I have been walking all the time and thinking, thinking and feeling how my inner strength grows day by day . . . and now I see at last, Constantine, that in our sort of work, whether we are actors or writers, the chief thing is not fame or glory, not what I dreamed of, but the gift of patience. One must bear one's cross and have faith. My faith makes me suffer less, and when I think of my vocation I am no longer afraid of life.

TREPLEF. (*Sadly*) You have found your road, you know where you are going; but I am still adrift in a welter of images and dreams, and cannot tell what use it all is to anyone. I have no faith and I do not know what my vocation is.

NINA. (*Listening*) 'Sh. . . . I'm going. Goodbye. When I am a great actress, come and see me act. You promise? And now . . . (*Shaking his hand*) It's late. I can hardly stand up, I'm so tired and hungry. . . .

TREPLEF. Stay here. I'll get you some supper.

NINA. No, no. Don't see me out; I can find my way. The trap is quite near. . . . So she brought him here with her? Well, well, it's all one. When you see Trigórin don't tell him I've been. . . . I love him; yes, I love him more than ever. . . . "A subject for a short story." . . . I love him, love him passionately, desperately. How pleasant it was in the old days, Constantine! You remember? How clear and warm, how joyful and how pure our life was! And our feelings—they were like the sweetest,

daintiest flowers. . . . You remember? (*Reciting*) "Men and lions, eagles and partridges, antlered deer, geese, spiders, the silent fishes dwelling in the water, star-fish and tiny creatures invisible to the eye—these and every form of life, ay, every form of life, have ended their melancholy round and become extinct. Thousands of centuries have passed since this earth bore any living being on its bosom. All in vain does yon pale moon light her lamp. No longer do the cranes wake and cry in the meadows; the hum of the cockchafers is silent in the linden groves. . . ." (*She embraces* TREPLEF *impulsively and runs out by the glass door*)

TREPLEF. (*After a pause*) I hope nobody will meet her in the garden and tell mother. Mother might be annoyed. . . .

(*For two minutes he silently tears up all his manuscripts and throws them under the table, then unlocks the door* R. *and exit*)

DORN. (*Trying to open the door* L.) Funny. It seems to be locked. . . . (*Entering and putting back the arm-chair in its place*) H'm, obstacle race.

Enter ARCADINA *and* PAULINE; *behind them* YAKOF, *with bottles, and* MASHA; *then* SHAMRAYEF *and* TRIGORIN.

ARCADINA. Put the claret and beer here on the table for Boris Alexéyevitch. We'll drink while we play. Now come along and sit down, all of you.

PAULINE. (*To* YAKOF) And bring tea at once.

(*Lighting the candles and sitting at the card-table*)

SHAMRAYEF. (*Taking* TRIGORIN *to the cupboard*)

There's the thing I was talking of. . . . (*Gets a stuffed seagull out*) You asked to have it done.

TRIGORIN. (*Looking at the seagull*) I don't remember. (*After thinking*) No, I don't remember.

(*Report of a pistol behind the scenes* R. *Everyone starts*)

ARCADINA. (*Alarmed*) What's that?

DORN. It's all right. I expect something's busted in my travelling medicine-chest. Don't be alarmed. (*Exit* R., *and returns a moment later*) As I expected. My ether bottle's burst. (*Singing*) "Once more, once more before thee, love."

ARCADINA. (*Sitting at the table*) Good heavens, I was quite frightened. It reminded me of that time when . . . (*Covering her face with her hands*) I felt quite faint. . . .

DORN. (*Taking up* TREPLEF'S *magazine and turning over the pages; to* TRIGORIN) There was an article in this paper a month or two ago . . . a letter from America, and I wanted to ask you, among other things . . . (*Puts his arm round* TRIGORIN'S *waist and brings him to the footlights*) . . . I'm very much interested in the question . . . (*In a lower tone*) Get Irina Nikolayevna away from here. The fact is, Constantine has shot himself. . . .

CURTAIN

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

"The Cherry Orchard" was Tchekhof's last work. It was produced by the Moscow Artistic Theatre in 1904, *when the author was already a dying man. The first performance was the occasion of a public scene of homage to his successful genius. The cherry orchard that inspired him was his own at Melikhovo.*

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

This version has not been produced on the stage. But theatre-goers will be interested to read the names of the Actors who played in another English version, produced for the Stage Society at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on Sunday and Monday, 28th and 29th May 1911.

	Stage Society, 1911
MADAME RANEVSKY,[1] *a landowner*	Miss KATHARINE POLE
ANYA, *her daughter, aged seventeen*	Miss VERA COBURN
BARBARA, *her adopted daughter, aged twenty-seven*	Miss MARY JERROLD
LEONID GAYEF, *brother of Madame Ranévsky*	Mr FRANKLIN DYALL
LOPAKHIN, *a merchant*	Mr HERBERT BUNSTON
PETER TROPHIMOF, *a student*	Mr HARCOURT WILLIAMS
SIMEONOF-PISHTCHIK, *a landowner*	Mr NIGEL PLAYFAIR
CHARLOTTE, *a governess*	Miss LOLA DUNCAN
EPHIKHODOF, *a clerk*	Mr IVAN BERLYN
DUNYASHA, *a housemaid*	Miss MURIEL POPE
FIRS,[2] *a man-servant, aged eighty-seven*	Mr E. H. PATERSON
YASHA, *a young man-servant*	Mr EDMOND BREON
TRAMP	Mr C. HERBERT HEWETSON

Stationmaster, Post Office Officials, Guests, Servants, etc.

THE ACTION TAKES PLACE ON MADAME RANEVSKY'S PROPERTY.

[1] The part of Madame Ranévsky was played in Moscow by Tchekhof's wife, Mademoiselle Knipper.

[2] *Firs.* Pronounce like a Scotsman saying " fierce."

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

ACT I

A room which is still called the nursery. One door leads to ANYA'S *room. Dawn, the sun will soon rise. It is already May, the cherry-trees are in blossom, but it is cold in the garden and there is a morning frost. The windows are closed.*

Enter DUNYASHA *with a candle, and* LOPAKHIN *with a book in his hand*

LOPAKHIN. So the train has come in, thank heaven. What is the time?

DUNYASHA. Nearly two. (*Putting the candle out*) It is light already.

LOPAKHIN. How late is the train? A couple of hours at least. (*Yawning and stretching*) What do you think of me? A fine fool I have made of myself. I came on purpose to meet them at the station and then I went and fell asleep, fell asleep as I sat in my chair. What a nuisance it is! You might have woke me up anyway.

DUNYASHA. I thought that you had gone. (*She listens*) That sounds like them driving up.

LOPAKHIN. (*Listening*) No; they have got to get the luggage out and all that. (*A pause*) Madame Ranévsky has been five years abroad. I wonder what she has become like. What a splendid creature she is! So easy and simple in her ways. I remember when I was a youngster of fifteen my old father (he used to keep a shop here in the village then) struck me in the face with his fist and set my nose bleeding. We had come for some reason or other, I forget what, into the courtyard, and he had been drinking.

Madame Ranévsky, I remember it like yesterday, still a young girl, and oh, so slender, brought me to the wash-hand stand, here, in this very room, in the nursery. "Don't cry, little peasant," she said, "it'll mend by your wedding."[1] (*A pause*) "Little peasant!" . . . My father, it is true, was a peasant, and here am I in a white waistcoat and brown boots; a silk purse out of a sow's ear,[2] as you might say; just turned rich, with heaps of money, but when you come to look at it, still a peasant of the peasants. (*Turning over the pages of the book*) Here's this book that I was reading and didn't understand a word of; I just sat reading and fell asleep.

DUNYASHA. The dogs never slept all night, they knew that their master and mistress were coming.

LOPAKHIN. What's the matter with you, Dunyásha? You're all . . .

DUNYASHA. My hands are trembling, I feel quite faint.

LOPAKHIN. You are too refined, Dunyásha, that's what it is. You dress yourself like a young lady, and look at your hair! You ought not to do it; you ought to remember your place.

Enter EPHIKHODOF *with a nosegay. He is dressed in a short jacket and brightly polished boots which squeak noisily. As he comes in he drops the nosegay.*

EPHIKHODOF. (*Picking it up*) The gardener has

[1] *It'll mend by your wedding*: a proverbial phrase.

[2] *Sow's ear.* A proverb; literally, "With a swine's snout into Manchet Row"—*i.e.* the part of the market where the bakers of fine rolls have their shops.

sent this; he says it is to go in the dining-room. (*Handing it to* DUNYASHA)

LOPAKHIN. And bring me some quass.

DUNYASHA. Yes, sir.

[*Exit* DUNYASHA

EPHIKHODOF. There's a frost this morning, three degrees, and the cherry-trees all in blossom. I can't say I think much of our climate; (*sighing*) that is impossible. Our climate is not adapted to contribute; and I should like to add, with your permission, that only two days ago I bought myself a new pair of boots, and I venture to assure you they do squeak beyond all bearing. What am I to grease them with?

LOPAKHIN. Get out; I'm tired of you.

EPHIKHODEF. Every day some misfortune happens to me; but do I grumble? No; I am used to it; I can afford to smile. (*Enter* DUNYASHA, *and hands a glass of quass to* LOPAKHIN) I must be going. (*He knocks against a chair, which falls to the ground*) There you are! (*In a voice of triumph*) You see, if I may venture on the expression, the sort of incidents *inter alia*. It really is astonishing!

[*Exit* EPHIKHODOF

DUNYASHA. To tell you the truth, Yermolái Alexéyitch, Ephikhódof has made me a proposal.

LOPAKHIN. Hmph!

DUNYASHA. I hardly know what to do. He is such a well-behaved young man, only so often when he talks one doesn't know what he means. It is all so nice and full of good feeling, but you can't make out what it means. I fancy I am rather fond of him. He adores me passionately. He is a most unfortunate man; every day

something seems to happen to him. They call him "Twenty-two misfortunes," that's his nickname.

LOPAKHIN. (*Listening*) There, surely that is them coming!

DUNYASHA. They're coming! Oh, what is the matter with me? I am all turning cold.

LOPAKHIN. Yes, there they are, and no mistake. Let's go and meet them. Will she know me again, I wonder? It is five years since we met.

DUNYASHA. I am going to faint! . . . I am going to faint!

(*Two carriages are heard driving up to the house.* LOPAKHIN *and* DUNYASHA *exeunt quickly. The stage remains empty. A hubbub begins in the neighbouring rooms.* FIRS *walks hastily across the stage, leaning on a walking-stick. He has been to meet them at the station. He is wearing an old-fashioned livery and a tall hat; he mumbles something to himself but not a word is audible. The noise behind the scenes grows louder and louder. A voice says: "Let's go this way." Enter* MADAME RANEVSKY, ANYA, CHARLOTTE, *leading a little dog on a chain, all dressed in travelling dresses;* BARBARA *in greatcoat, with a kerchief over her head,* GAYEF, SIMEONOF-PISHTCHIK, LOPAKHIN, DUNYASHA, *carrying parcel and umbrella, servants with luggage, all cross the stage*)

ANYA. Come through this way. Do you remember what room this is, mamma?

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Joyfully, through her tears*) The nursery.

[1] *Twenty-two misfortunes.* The twenty-two seems to have no specific association. It is a sort of round number. Cf. *Letters*, 52: "What are your twenty-two hesitations?"

BARBARA. How cold it is. My hands are simply frozen. (*To* MADAME RANEVSKY) Your two rooms, the white room and the violet room, are just the same as they were, mamma.

MADAME RANEVSKY. My nursery, my dear, beautiful nursery! This is where I used to sleep when I was a little girl. (*Crying*) I am like a little girl still. (*Kissing* GAYEF *and* BARBARA *and then* GAYEF *again*) Barbara has not altered a bit, she is just like a nun, and I knew Dunyasha at once. (*Kissing* DUNYASHA)

GAYEF. Your train was two hours late. What do you think of that? There's punctuality for you!

CHARLOTTE. (*To* SIMEONOF-PISHTCHIK) My little dog eats nuts.

PISHTCHIK. (*Astonished*) You don't say so! well I never!

[*Exeunt all but* ANYA *and* DUNYASHA

DUNYASHA. At last you've come!

(*She takes off* ANYA'S *overcoat and hat*)

ANYA. I have not slept for four nights on the journey. I am frozen to death.

DUNYASHA. It was Lent when you went away. There was snow on the ground, it was freezing; but now! Oh, my dear! (*Laughing and kissing her*) How I have waited for you, my joy, my light! Oh, I must tell you something at once, I cannot wait another minute.

ANYA. (*Without interest*) What, again?

DUNYASHA. Ephikhódof, the clerk, proposed to me in Easter week.

ANYA. Same old story. . . . (*Putting her hair straight*) All my hairpins have dropped out. (*She is very tired, staggering with fatigue*)

DUNYASHA. I hardly know what to think of it. He loves me! oh, how he loves me!

ANYA. (*Looking into her bedroom, affectionately*) My room, my windows, just as if I had never gone away! I am at home again! When I wake up in the morning I shall run out into the garden. . . . Oh, if only I could get to sleep! I have not slept the whole journey from Paris, I was so nervous and anxious.

DUNYASHA. Monsieur Trophímof arrived the day before yesterday.

ANYA. (*Joyfully*) Peter?

DUNYASHA. He is sleeping outside in the bath-house; he is living there. He was afraid he might be in the way. (*Looking at her watch*) I'd like to go and wake him, only Mamzelle Barbara told me not to. "Mind you don't wake him," she said.

Enter BARBARA *with bunch of keys hanging from her girdle*

BARBARA. Dunyásha, go and get some coffee, quick. Mamma wants some coffee.

DUNYASHA. In a minute!

[*Exit* DUNYASHA

BARBARA. Well, thank heaven, you have come. Here you are at home again. (*Caressing her*) My little darling is back! My pretty one is back!

ANYA. What I've had to go through!

BARBARA. I can believe you.

ANYA. I left here in Holy Week. How cold it was! Charlotte would talk the whole way and keep doing conjuring tricks. What on earth made you tie Charlotte round my neck?

BARBARA. Well, you couldn't travel alone, my pet. At seventeen!

ANYA. When we got to Paris, it was so cold! there was snow on the ground. I can't talk French a bit. Mamma was on the fifth floor of a big house. When I arrived there were a lot of Frenchmen with her, and ladies, and an old Catholic priest with a book, and it was very uncomfortable and full of tobacco smoke. I suddenly felt so sorry for mamma, oh, so sorry! I took her head in my arms and squeezed it and could not let it go, and then mamma kept kissing me and crying.

BARBARA. (*Crying*) Don't go on, don't go on!

ANYA. She's sold her villa near Mentone already. She's nothing left, absolutely nothing; and I hadn't a farthing either. We only just managed to get home. And mamma won't understand! We get out at a station to have some dinner, and she asks for all the most expensive things and gives the waiters a florin each for a tip; and Charlotte does the same. And Yásha wanted his portion too. It was too awful! Yásha is mamma's new man-servant. We have brought him back with us.

BARBARA. I've seen the rascal.

ANYA. Come, tell me all about everything! Has the interest on the mortgage been paid?

BARBARA. How could it be?

ANYA. Oh dear! Oh dear!

BARBARA. The property will be sold in August.

ANYA. Oh dear! Oh dear!

LOPAKHIN. (*Looking in at the door and mooing like a cow*) Moo-oo!

[*He goes away again*

BARBARA. (*Laughing through her tears, and shaking her fist at the door*) Oh, I should like to give him one!

ANYA. (*Embracing* BARBARA *softly*) Barbara, has he proposed to you? (BARBARA *shakes her head*). And yet I am sure he loves you. Why don't you come to an understanding? What are you waiting for?

BARBARA. I don't think anything will come of it. He has so much to do; he can't be bothered with me; he hardly takes any notice. Confound the man, I can't bear to see him! Everyone talks about our marriage; everyone congratulates me, but, as a matter of fact, there is nothing in it; it's all a dream. (*Changing her tone*) You've got on a brooch like a bee.

ANYA. (*Sadly*) Mamma bought it me. (*Going into her room, talking gaily, like a child*) When I was in Paris, I went up in a balloon!

BARBARA. How glad I am you are back, my little pet! my pretty one! (DUNYASHA *has already returned with a coffee-pot and begins to prepare the coffee*) (*Standing by the door*) I trudge about all day looking after things, and I think and think. What are we to do? If only we could marry you to some rich man it would be a load off my mind. I would go into a retreat, and then to Kief, to Moscow; I would tramp about from one holy place to another, always tramping and tramping. What bliss!

ANYA. The birds are singing in the garden.[1] What time is it now?

BARBARA. It must be past two. It is time to go to bed, my darling. (*Following* ANYA *into her room*) What bliss!

Enter YASHA *with a shawl and a travelling bag*

[1] The anti-realists bring it up against Stanislavsky that the birds really did sing at the Artistic Theatre.

YASHA. (*Crossing the stage, delicately*) May I pass this way, mademoiselle ?

DUNYASHA. One would hardly know you, Yásha. How you've changed abroad !

YASHA. Ahem ! and who may you be ?

DUNYASHA. When you left here I was a little thing like that. (*Indicating with her hand*) My name is Dunyásha, Theodore Kozoyédof's daughter. Don't you remember me ?

YASHA. Ahem ! You little cucumber !

(*He looks round cautiously, then embraces her. She screams and drops a saucer. Exit* YASHA *hastily*)

BARBARA. (*In the doorway, crossly*) What's all this ?

DUNYASHA. (*Crying*) I've broken a saucer.

BARBARA. Well, it brings luck.

Enter ANYA *from her room*

ANYA. We must tell mamma that Peter's here.

BARBARA. I've told them not to wake him.

ANYA. (*Thoughtfully*) It's just six years since papa died. And only a month afterwards poor little Grisha was drowned in the river ; my pretty little brother, only seven years old ! It was too much for mamma ; she ran away, ran away without looking back. (*Shuddering*) How well I can understand her, if only she knew ! (*A pause*) Peter Trophímof was Grisha's tutor ; he might remind her.[1]

Enter FIRS *in long coat and white waistcoat*

FIRS. (*Going over to the coffee-pot, anxiously*) My mistress is going to take coffee here. (*Putting*

[1] When Anya and Barbara tell each other what both of them know so well, it is not a clumsy stage device to inform the audience ; " each looks deep into her heart and thinks aloud, recounting her own thoughts and impressions " (Eichenwald in *Pokrovsky*, 891).

on white gloves) Is the coffee ready? (*Sternly, to* DUNYASHA) Here, girl, where's the cream?

DUNYASHA. Oh, dear! oh dear!

[*Exit* DUNYASHA *hastily*

FIRS. (*Bustling about the coffee-pot*) Ah, you . . . job-lot![1] (*Mumbling to himself*) She's come back from Paris. The master went to Paris once in a post-chaise. (*Laughing*)

BARBARA. What is it, Firs?

FIRS. I beg your pardon? (*Joyfully*) My mistress has come home; at last I've seen her. Now I'm ready to die.

He cries with joy. Enter MADAME RANEVSKY, LOPAKHIN, GAYEF *and* PISHTCHIK; PISHTCHIK *in Russian breeches and coat of fine cloth.*[2] GAYEF *as he enters makes gestures as if playing billiards.*

MADAME RANEVSKY. What was the expression? Let me see. "I'll put the red in the corner pocket; double into the middle——"

GAYEF. I'll chip the red in the right-hand top. Once upon a time, Lyuba, when we were children, we used to sleep here side by side in

[1] *Job-lot.* In the original, *nedotëpa*, a word invented by Tchekhof, and now established as classical. Derived from *ne*, not, and *dotyápat*, to finish chopping. The implication is: You're a bungling piece of work, chopped out with a hatchet, and not finished at that. "Botchment" or "underbungle" would have been more literal. "You are one of those who never get there," was the Stage Society rendering. Batyushkof looks on it as the key to the whole play (the word occurs several times); they are all *nedotëpas*, Madame Ranévsky, Gáyef, Lopákhin, Trophímof, Ephikhódof, Yásha, even the tramp who lurches across in Act II. That is the tragedy of it, and of Russian life at the present moment (*Pokrovsky*, 67).

[2] *Simeónof-Píshtchik.* To judge from a picture of the actor who played this personage at the Artistic Theatre, Pishtchik is a fine old Russian gentleman of the old school: a jolly fellow with a big white beard, dressed in a coat that is more of a gown than a coat, and a white woolly shirt that hangs nearly down to his knees, confined by a silken rope about his formidable waist.

two little cots, and now I'm fifty-one, and can't bring myself to believe it.

LOPAKHIN. Yes; time flies.

GAYEF. Who's that?

LOPAKHIN. Time flies, I say.

GAYEF. There's a smell of patchouli!

ANYA. I am going to bed. Good-night, mamma. (*Kissing her mother*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. My beloved little girl! (*Kissing her hands*) Are you glad you're home again? I can't come to my right senses.

ANYA. Good-night, uncle.

GAYEF. (*Kissing her face and hands*) God bless you, little Anya. How like your mother you are! (*To* MADAME RANEVSKY) You were just such another girl at her age, Lyuba.

(ANYA *shakes hands with* LOPAKHIN *and* SIMEONOF-PISHTCHIK, *and exit, shutting her bedroom door behind her*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. She's very, very tired.

PISHTCHIK. It must have been a long journey.

BARBARA. (*To* LOPAKHIN *and* PISHTCHIK) Well, gentlemen, it's past two; time you were off.

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Laughing*) You haven't changed a bit, Barbara! (*Drawing her to herself and kissing her*) I'll just finish my coffee, then we'll all go. (FIRS *puts a footstool under her feet*) Thank you, friend. I'm used to my coffee. I drink it day and night. Thank you, you dear old man. (*Kissing* FIRS)

BARBARA. I'll go and see if they've got all the luggage.

[*Exit* BARBARA

MADAME RANEVSKY. Can it be me that's sitting here? (*Laughing*) I want to jump and wave my arms about. (*Pausing and covering her face*)

Surely I must be dreaming! God knows I love my country. I love it tenderly. I couldn't see out of the window from the train, I was crying so. (*Crying*) However, I must drink my coffee. Thank you, Firs; thank you, you dear old man. I'm so glad to find you still alive.

FIRS. The day before yesterday.

GAYEF. He's hard of hearing.

LOPAKHIN. I've got to be off for Kharkof by the five o'clock train. Such a nuisance! I wanted to stay and look at you and talk to you. You're as splendid as you always were.

PISHCTHIK. (*Sighing heavily*) Handsomer than ever and dressed like a Parisian . . . perish my waggon and all its wheels![1]

LOPAKHIN. Your brother, Leoníd Andréyitch, says I'm a snob, a money-grubber. He can say what he likes. I don't care a hang. Only I want you to believe in me as you used to; I want your wonderful, touching eyes to look at me as they used to. Merciful God in heaven! My father was your father's serf, and your grandfather's serf before him; but you, you did so much for me in the old days that I've forgotten everything, and I love you like a sister—more than a sister.

MADAME RANEVSKY. I can't sit still! I can't do it! (*Jumping up and walking about in great agitation*) This happiness is more than I can bear. Laugh at me! I am a fool! (*Kissing a cupboard*) My darling old cupboard! (*Caressing a table*) My dear little table!

GAYEF. Nurse is dead since you went away.

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Sitting down and drinking coffee*) Yes, Heaven rest her soul. They wrote and told me.

[1] *Perish my waggon.* This seems to be a sort of oath or asseveration.

GAYEF. And Anastási is dead. Squint-eyed Peter has left us and works in the town at the Police Inspector's now.

(GAYEF *takes out a box of sugar candy from his pocket, and begins to eat it*)

PISHTCHIK. My daughter Dáshenka sent her compliments.

LOPAKHIN. I long to say something charming and delightful to you. (*Looking at his watch*) I'm just off; there's no time to talk. Well, yes, I'll put it in two or three words. You know that your cherry orchard is going to be sold to pay the mortgage: the sale is fixed for the twenty-second of August; but don't you be uneasy, my dear lady; sleep peacefully; there's a way out of it. This is my plan. Listen to me carefully. Your property is only fifteen miles from the town; the railway runs close beside it; and if only you will cut up the cherry orchard and the land along the river into building lots and let it off on lease for villas, you will get at least two thousand five hundred pounds a year out of it.

GAYEF. Come, come! What rubbish you're talking!

MADAME RANEVSKY. I don't quite understand what you mean, Yermolái Alexéyitch.

LOPAKHIN. You will get a pound a year at least for every acre from the tenants, and if you advertise the thing at once, I am ready to bet whatever you like, by the autumn you won't have a clod of that earth left on your hands. It'll all be snapped up. In two words, I congratulate you; you are saved. It's a first-class site, with a good deep river. Only of course you will have to put it in order and clear the ground;

you will have to pull down all the old buildings —this house, for instance, which is no longer fit for anything; you'll have to cut down the cherry orchard. . . .

MADAME RANEVSKY. Cut down the cherry orchard! Excuse me, but you don't know what you're talking about. If there is one thing that's interesting, remarkable in fact, in the whole province, it's our cherry orchard.

LOPAKHIN. There's nothing remarkable about the orchard except that it's a very big one. It only bears once every two years, and then you don't know what to do with the fruit. Nobody wants to buy it.

GAYEF. Our cherry orchard is mentioned in Andréyevsky's Encyclopaedia.

LOPAKHIN. (*Looking at his watch*) If we don't make up our minds or think of any way, on the twenty-second of August the cherry orchard and the whole property will be sold by auction. Come, make up your mind! There's no other way out of it, I swear—absolutely none.

FIRS. In the old days, forty or fifty years ago, they used to dry the cherries and soak 'em and pickle 'em, and make jam of 'em; and the dried cherries . . .

GAYEF. Shut up, Firs.

FIRS. The dried cherries used to be sent in waggons to Moscow and Kharkof. A heap of money! The dried cherries were soft and juicy and sweet and sweet-smelling then. They knew some way in those days.

MADAME RANEVSKY. And why don't they do it now?

FIRS. They've forgotten. Nobody remembers how to do it.

PISHTCHIK. (*To* MADAME RANEVSKY) What about Paris? How did you get on? Did you eat frogs?

MADAME RANEVSKY. Crocodiles.

PISHTCHIK. You don't say so! Well I never!

LOPAKHIN. Until a little while ago there was nothing but gentry and peasants in the villages; but now villa residents have made their appearance. All the towns, even the little ones, are surrounded by villas now. In another twenty years the villa resident will have multiplied like anything. At present he only sits and drinks tea on his verandah, but it is quite likely that he will soon take to cultivating his three acres of land, and then your old cherry orchard will become fruitful, rich and happy. . . .

GAYEF. (*Angry*) What gibberish!

Enter BARBARA *and* YASHA

BARBARA. (*Taking out a key and noisily unlocking an old-fashioned cupboard*) There are two telegrams for you, mamma. Here they are.

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Tearing them up without reading them*) They're from Paris. I've done with Paris.

GAYEF. Do you know how old this cupboard is, Lyuba? A week ago I pulled out the bottom drawer and saw a date burnt in it. That cupboard was made exactly a hundred years ago. What do you think of that, eh? We might celebrate its jubilee. It's only an inanimate thing, but for all that it's a historic cupboard.

PISHTCHIK. (*Astonished*) A hundred years? Well, I never!

GAYEF. (*Touching the cupboard*) Yes, it's a wonderful thing. . . . Beloved and venerable cupboard; honour and glory to your existence,

which for more than a hundred years has been directed to the noble ideals of justice and virtue. Your silent summons to profitable labour has never weakened in all these hundred years. (*Crying*) You have upheld the courage of succeeding generations of our human kind; you have upheld faith in a better future and cherished in us ideals of goodness and social consciousness. (*A pause*)

LOPAKHIN. Yes. . . .

MADAME RANEVSKY. You haven't changed, Leonid.

GAYEF. (*Embarrassed*) Off the white in the corner, chip the red in the middle pocket! [1]

LOPAKHIN. (*Looking at his watch*) Well, I must be off.

YASHA. (*Handing a box to* MADAME RANEVSKY) Perhaps you'll take your pills now.

PISHTCHIK. You oughtn't to take medicine, dear lady. It does you neither good nor harm. Give them here, my friend. (*He empties all the pills into the palm of his hand, blows on them, puts them in his mouth and swallows them down with a draught of quass*) There!

[1] Some people have a right to express their feelings and some have not. All Gáyef's female relatives combine to check his eloquence: it is a bad habit picked up at little local public dinners and "occasions." This address to the cupboard should be uttered lightly and quickly, or it will greatly queer the pitch (as it did at the Stage Society) for Madame Ranévsky's touching apostrophe to the cherry orchard a little later. There is nothing moony about Gáyef. He is bright and virile, even spiteful; he is drawn from the same original as the caustic Count in *Ivánof*. (*Pámyati*, 46.) If he assumes a stupid look now and then, that is part of the defensive pride of the noblesse (he is a typical remnant of the heavy swell), as when he snubs impertinence with his idiotic "Who's that?" (in the original, *kovó?* is used, as a joke, for *tchevó?* what?). It should be noticed, by the by, that he always plays a declaration game at billiards, no flukes allowed.

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Alarmed*) Have you gone off your head?

PISHTCHIK. I've taken all the pills.

LOPAKHIN. Greedy feller! (*Everyone laughs*)

FIRS. (*Mumbling*) They were here in Easter week and finished off a gallon of pickled gherkins.

MADAME RANEVSKY. What's he talking about?

BARBARA. He's been mumbling like that these three years. We've got used to it.

YASHA. Advancing age.

(CHARLOTTE *crosses in a white frock, very thin, tightly laced, with a lorgnette at her waist*)

LOPAKHIN. Excuse me, Charlotte Ivánovna, I've not paid my respects to you yet. (*He prepares to kiss her hand*)

CHARLOTTE. (*Drawing her hand away*) If one allows you to kiss one's hand, you will want to kiss one's elbow next, and then one's shoulder.

LOPAKHIN. I'm having no luck to-day. (*All laugh*) Charlotte Ivánovna, do us a conjuring trick.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Charlotte, do do us a conjuring trick.

CHARLOTTE. No, thank you. I'm going to bed.

[*Exit* CHARLOTTE

LOPAKHIN. We shall meet again in three weeks. (*Kissing* MADAME RANEVSKY'S *hand*) Meanwhile, good-bye. I must be off. (*To* GAYEF) So-long. (*Kissing* PISHTCHIK) Ta-ta. (*Shaking hands with* BARBARA, *then with* FIRS *and* YASHA) I hate having to go. (*To* MADAME RANEVSKY) If you make up your mind about the villas, let me know, and I'll raise you five thousand pounds at once. Think it over seriously.

BARBARA. (*Angrily*) For heaven's sake do go!

LOPAKHIN. I'm going, I'm going.

[*Exit* LOPAKHIN

GAYEF. Snob! . . . However, *pardon*! Barbara's going to marry him; he's Barbara's young man.

BARBARA. You talk too much, uncle.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Why, Barbara, I shall be very glad. He's a nice man.

PISHTCHIK. Not a doubt about it. . . . A most worthy individual. My Dáshenka, she says . . . oh, she says . . . lots of things. (*Snoring and waking up again at once*) By the by, dear lady, can you lend me twenty-five pounds? I've got to pay the interest on my mortgage to-morrow.

BARBARA. (*Alarmed*) We can't! we can't!

MADAME RANEVSKY. It really is a fact that I haven't any money.

PISHTCHIK. I'll find it somewhere. (*Laughing*) I never lose hope. Last time I thought: "Now I really am done for, I'm a ruined man," when behold, they ran a railway over my land and paid me compensation. And so it'll be again; something will happen, if not to-day, then to-morrow. Dáshenka may win the twenty-thousand-pound prize; she's got a ticket in the lottery.

MADAME RANEVSKY. The coffee's finished. Let's go to bed.

FIRS. (*Brushing* GAYEF'S *clothes, admonishingly*) You've put on the wrong trousers again. Whatever am I to do with you?

BARBARA. (*Softly*) Anya is asleep. (*She opens the window quietly*) The sun's up already; it isn't cold now. Look, mamma, how lovely the trees are. Heavens! what a sweet air! The starlings are singing!

GAYEF. (*Opening the other window*) The orchard is all white. You've not forgotten it, Lyuba?

This long avenue going straight on, straight on, like a ribbon between the trees? It shines like silver on moonlight nights. Do you remember? You've not forgotten?

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Looking out into the garden*) Oh, my childhood, my pure and happy childhood! I used to sleep in this nursery. I used to look out from here into the garden. Happiness awoke with me every morning; and the orchard was just the same then as it is now; nothing is altered. (*Laughing with joy*) It is all white, all white! Oh, my cherry orchard! After the dark and stormy autumn and the frosts of winter you are young again and full of happiness; the angels of heaven have not abandoned you. Oh! if only I could free my neck and shoulders from the stone that weighs them down! If only I could forget my past!

GAYEF. Yes; and this orchard will be sold to pay our debts, however impossible it may seem. . . .

MADAME RANEVSKY. Look! There's mamma walking in the orchard . . . in a white frock! (*Laughing with joy*) There she is!

GAYEF. Where?

BARBARA. Heaven help you!

MADAME RANEVSKY. There's no one there really. It only looked like it; there on the right where the path turns down to the summer-house; there's a white tree that leans over and looks like a woman. (*Enter* TROPHIMOF *in a shabby student uniform and spectacles*) What a wonderful orchard, with its white masses of blossom and the blue sky above!

TROPHIMOF. Lyubóf Andréyevna! (*She looks round at him*) I only want to say, "How do you do," and go away at once. (*Kissing her hand*

eagerly) I was told to wait till the morning, but I hadn't the patience.

(MADAME RANEVSKY *looks at him in astonishment*)

BARBARA. (*Crying*) This is Peter Trophímof.

TROPHIMOF. Peter Trophímof; I was Grisha's tutor, you know. Have I really altered so much?

(MADAME RANEVSKY *embraces him and cries softly*)

GAYEF. Come, come, that's enough, Lyuba!

BARBARA. (*Crying*) I told you to wait till tomorrow, you know, Peter.

MADAME RANEVSKY. My little Grisha! My little boy! Grisha . . . my son. . . .

BARBARA. It can't be helped, mamma. It was the will of God.

TROPHIMOF. (*Gently, crying*) There, there!

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Crying*) He was drowned. My little boy was drowned. Why? What was the use of that, my dear? (*In a softer voice*) Anya's asleep in there, and I am speaking so loud, and making a noise. . . . But tell me, Peter, why have you grown so ugly? Why have you grown so old?

TROPHIMOF. An old woman in the train called me a "mouldy gentleman."

MADAME RANEVSKY. You were quite a boy then, a dear little student, and now your hair's going and you wear spectacles. Are you really still a student? (*Going towards the door*)

TROPHIMOF. Yes, I expect I shall be a perpetual student.[1]

[1] The "Perpetual Student" has become a common type in Russia during the last fifteen or twenty years. "Ten years is the normal time for graduating," it is said: "five for study, four in exile, and one lost because the University is closed."

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Kissing her brother and then* BARBARA) Well, go to bed. You've grown old too, Leoníd.

PISHTCHIK. (*Following her*) Yes, yes; time for bed. Oh, oh, my gout! I'll stay the night here. Don't forget, Lyubóf Andréyevna, my angel, to-morrow morning . . . twenty-five.

GAYEF. He's still on the same string.

PISHTCHIK. Twenty-five . . . to pay the interest on my mortgage.

MADAME RANEVSKY. I haven't any money, my friend.

PISHTCHIK. I'll pay you back, dear lady. It's a trifling sum.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Well, well, Leoníd will give it you. Let him have it, Leoníd.

GAYEF. (*Ironical*) I'll give it him right enough! Hold your pocket wide! [1]

MADAME RANEVSKY. It can't be helped. . . . He needs it. He'll pay it back.

[*Exeunt* MADAME RANEVSKY, TROPHIMOF, PISHTCHIK *and* FIRS. GAYEF, BARBARA *and* YASHA *remain*

GAYEF. My sister hasn't lost her old habit of scattering the money. (*To* YASHA) Go away, my lad! You smell of chicken.

YASHA. (*Laughing*) You're just the same as you always were, Leoníd Andréyevitch!

GAYEF. Who's that? [2] (*To* BARBARA) What does he say?

BARBARA. (*To* YASHA) Your mother's come up from the village. She's been waiting for you since yesterday in the servants' hall. She wants to see you.

[1] *Hold your pocket wide.* A proverbial piece of irony.
[2] *Who's that?* See the note on Gáyef at p. 128.

YASHA. What a nuisance she is!

BARBARA. You wicked, unnatural son!

YASHA. Well, what do I want with her? She might just as well have waited till to-morrow.

[*Exit* YASHA

BARBARA. Mamma is just like she used to be; she hasn't changed a bit. If she had her way, she'd give away everything she has.

GAYEF. Yes. (*A pause*) If people recommend very many cures for an illness, that means that the illness is incurable. I think and think, I batter my brains; I know of many remedies, very many, and that means really that there is none. How nice it would be to get a fortune left one by somebody! How nice it would be if Anya could marry a very rich man! How nice it would be to go to Yaroslav and try my luck with my aunt the Countess. My aunt is very, very rich, you know.

BARBARA. (*Crying softly*) If only God would help us!

GAYEF. Don't howl! My aunt is very rich, but she does not like us. In the first place, my sister married a solicitor, not a nobleman. (ANYA *appears in the doorway*) She married a man who was not a nobleman, and it's no good pretending that she has led a virtuous life. She's a dear, kind, charming creature, and I love her very much, but whatever mitigating circumstances one may find for her, there's no getting round it that she's a sinful woman. You can see it in her every gesture.

BARBARA. (*Whispering*) Anya is standing in the door!

GAYEF. Who's that? (*A pause*) It's very odd, something's got into my right eye. I can't see

properly out of it. Last Thursday when I was down at the District Court . . .

(ANYA *comes down*)

BARBARA. Why aren't you asleep, Anya?

ANYA. I can't sleep. It's no good trying.

GAYEF. My little pet! (*Kissing* ANYA'S *hands and face*) My little girl! (*Crying*) You're not my niece; you're my angel; you're my everything. Trust me, trust me. . . .

ANYA. I do trust you, uncle. Everyone loves you, everyone respects you; but dear, dear uncle, you ought to hold your tongue, only to hold your tongue. What were you saying just now about mamma? about your own sister? What was the good of saying that?

GAYEF. Yes, yes. (*Covering his face with her hand*) You're quite right; it was awful of me! Lord, Lord! save me from myself! And a little while ago I made a speech over a cupboard. What a stupid thing to do! As soon as I had done it, I knew it was stupid.

BARBARA. Yes, really, uncle. You ought to hold your tongue. Say nothing; that's all that's wanted.

ANYA. If only you would hold your tongue, you'd be so much happier!

GAYEF. I will! I will! (*Kissing* ANYA'S *and* BARBARA'S *hands*) I'll hold my tongue. But there's one thing I must say; it's business. Last Thursday, when I was down at the District Court, a lot of us were there together, we began to talk about this and that, one thing and another, and it seems I could arrange a loan on note of hand to pay the interest into the bank.

BARBARA. If only Heaven would help us!

GAYEF. I'll go in on Tuesday and talk it over again. (*To* BARBARA) Don't howl! (*To* ANYA) Your mamma shall have a talk with Lopákhin. Of course he won't refuse her. And as soon as you are rested you must go to see your grandmother, the Countess, at Yaroslav. We'll operate from three points, and the trick is done. We'll pay the interest, I'm certain of it. (*Taking sugar candy*) I swear on my honour, or whatever you will, the property shall not be sold. (*Excitedly*) I swear by my hope of eternal happiness! There's my hand on it. Call me a base, dishonourable man if I let it go to auction. I swear by my whole being!

ANYA. (*Calm again and happy*) What a dear you are, uncle, and how clever! (*Embraces him*) Now I'm easy again. I'm easy again! I'm happy!

Enter FIRS

FIRS. (*Reproachfully*) Leoníd Andréyevitch, have you no fear of God? When are you going to bed?

GAYEF. I'm just off—just off. You get along, Firs. I'll undress myself all right. Come, children, bye-bye! Details to-morrow, but now let's go to bed. (*Kissing* ANYA *and* BARBARA) I'm a good Liberal, a man of the eighties. People abuse the eighties, but I think that I may say I've suffered something for my convictions in my time. It's not for nothing that the peasants love me. We ought to know the peasants; we ought to know with what . . .

ANYA. You're at it again, uncle!

BARBARA. Why don't you hold your tongue, uncle?

FIRS. (*Angrily*) Leoníd Andréyevitch!

GAYEF. I'm coming; I'm coming. Now go to bed. Off two cushions in the middle pocket! I start another life! . . .

[*Exit, with* FIRS *hobbling after him*

ANYA. Now my mind is at rest. I don't want to go to Yaroslav; I don't like grandmamma; but my mind is at rest, thanks to Uncle Leoníd. (*She sits down*)

BARBARA. Time for bed. I'm off. Whilst you were away there's been a scandal. You know that nobody lives in the old servants' quarters except the old people, Ephim, Pauline, Evstignéy and old Karp. Well, they took to having in all sorts of queer fish to sleep there with them. I didn't say a word. But at last I heard they had spread a report that I had given orders that they were to have nothing but peas to eat; out of stinginess, you understand? It was all Evstignéy's doing. "Very well," I said to myself, "you wait a bit." So I sent for Evstignéy. (*Yawning*) He comes. "Now then, Evstignéy," I said, "you old imbecile, how do you dare . . ." (*Looking at* ANYA) Anya, Anya! (*A pause*) She's asleep.[1] (*Taking* ANYA'S *arm*) Let's go to bed. Come along. (*Leading her away*) Sleep on, my little one! Come along; come along! (*They go towards* ANYA'S *room. In the distance beyond the orchard a shepherd plays his pipe.* TROPHIMOF *crosses the stage and, seeing* BARBARA *and* ANYA, *stops*) 'Sh! She's asleep, she's asleep! Come along, my love.

[1] "Anya falls asleep by the open window, where the white blossom of the cherry-trees looks in, with the May sun shining on her" (*Pokrovsky*, p. 892).

ANYA. (*Drowsily*) I'm so tired! Listen to the bells! Uncle, dear uncle! Mamma! Uncle!

BARBARA. Come along, my love! Come along.

[*Exeunt* BARBARA *and* ANYA *to the bedroom*

TROPHIMOF. (*With emotion*) My sunshine! My spring!

CURTAIN

ACT II

In the open fields; an old crooked half-ruined shrine. Near it a well; big stones, apparently old tombstones; an old bench. Road to the estate beyond. On one side rise dark poplar-trees. Beyond them begins the cherry orchard. In the distance a row of telegraph poles, and, far away on the horizon, the dim outlines of a big town, visible only in fine, clear weather. It is near sunset.

CHARLOTTE, YASHA *and* DUNYASHA *sit on the bench.* EPHIKHODOF *stands by them and plays on a guitar; they meditate.* CHARLOTTE *wears an old peaked cap.*[1] *She has taken a gun from off her shoulders and is mending the buckle of the strap.*

CHARLOTTE. (*Thoughtfully*) I have no proper passport. I don't know how old I am; I always feel I am still young. When I was a little girl my father and mother used to go about from one country fair to another, giving performances, and very good ones too. I used to do the *salto mortale* and all sorts of tricks. When papa and mamma died an old German lady adopted me and educated me. Good! When I grew up I became a governess. But where I come from and who I am, I haven't a notion. Who my parents were—very likely they weren't married—I don't know. (*Taking a cucumber from her pocket and beginning to eat*) I don't know anything about it. (*A pause*) I long to talk so, and I have no one to talk to, I have no friends or relations.

[1] *Furázhka*, the commonest men's headgear in Russia, shaped like a yachting cap.

EPHIKHODOF. (*Playing on the guitar and singing*)

" What is the noisy world to me ?
Oh, what are friends and foes ? "

How sweet it is to play upon a mandoline !

DUNYASHA. That's a guitar, not a mandoline. (*She looks at herself in a hand-glass and powders her face*)

EPHIKHODOF. For the madman who loves, it is a mandoline. (*Singing*)

" Oh, that my heart were cheered
By the warmth of requited love."

(YASHA *joins in*)

CHARLOTTE. How badly these people do sing ! Foo ! Like jackals howling !

DUNYASHA. (*To* YASHA) What happiness it must be to live abroad !

YASHA. Of course it is ; I quite agree with you. (*He yawns and lights a cigar*)

EPHIKHODOF. It stands to reason. Everything abroad has attained a certain culnimation.[1]

YASHA. That's right.

EPHIKHODOF. I am a man of cultivation ; I have studied various remarkable books, but I cannot fathom the direction of my preferences ; do I want to live or do I want to shoot myself, so to speak ? But in order to be ready for all contingencies, I always carry a revolver in my pocket. Here it is. (*Showing revolver*)

CHARLOTTE. That's done. I'm off. (*Slinging the rifle over her shoulder*) You're a clever fellow, Ephikhódof, and very alarming. Women must fall madly in love with you. Brrr ! (*Going*)

[1] *Culnimation.* This represents a similar blunder of Ephikhódof's in the original.

These clever people are all so stupid ; I have no one to talk to. I am always alone, always alone ; I have no friends or relations, and who I am, or why I exist, is a mystery.

[*Exit slowly*

EPHIKHODOF. Strictly speaking, without touching upon other matters, I must protest *inter alia* that destiny treats me with the utmost rigour, as a tempest might treat a small ship. If I labour under a misapprehension, how is it that when I woke up this morning, behold, so to speak, I perceived sitting on my chest a spider of praeternatural dimensions, like that (*indicating with both hands*) ? And if I go to take a draught of quass, I am sure to find something of the most indelicate character, in the nature of a cockroach. (*A pause*) Have you read Buckle ? [1] (*A pause*) (*To* DUNYASHA) I should like to trouble you, Avdotya Fëdorovna,[2] for a momentary interview.

DUNYASHA. Talk away.

EPHIKHODOF. I should prefer to conduct it *tête-à-tête*. (*Sighing*)

DUNYASHA. (*Confused*) Very well, only first please fetch me my cloak.[3] It's by the cupboard. It's rather damp here.

EPHIKHODOF. Very well, mademoiselle. I will go

[1] Buckle's *History of Civilisation* is better known in Russia than here. To have read it is a sort of cachet of popular erudition, equivalent, say, to knowing your Herbert Spencer in England. Ephikhódof is a new type, evolved since the Liberation and the Reforms of Alexander II. He is just the opposite of Lopákhin. Ephikhódof is stupid and has intellectual aspirations. Lopákhin is clever and has no intellectual aspirations. (See Bátyushkof in *Pokrovsky*, p. 67).

[2] *Avdotya Fëdorovna* (the ë is to be pronounced like the *yach* in *yacht*). Dunya (diminutive Dunyásha) stands for Avdotya, formally Evdokiya, representing the Greek Eudoxia.

[3] *Cloak. Talmotchka*, a diminutive of *talma*, for which see the note on *The Seagull*, Act IV., p. 104.

and fetch it, mademoiselle. Now I know what to do with my revolver.

[*Takes his guitar and exit, playing*

YASHA. Twenty-two misfortunes! Between you and me, he's a stupid fellow. (*Yawning*)

DUNYASHA. Heaven help him, he'll shoot himself! (*A pause*) I have grown so nervous, I am always in a twitter. I was quite a little girl when they took me into the household, and now I have got quite disused to common life, and my hands are as white as white, like a lady's. I have grown so refined, so delicate and genteel, I am afraid of everything. I'm always frightened. And if you deceive me, Yásha, I don't know what will happen to my nerves.

YASHA. (*Kissing her*) You little cucumber! Of course every girl ought to behave herself properly; there's nothing I dislike as much as when girls aren't proper in their behaviour.

DUNYASHA. I've fallen dreadfully in love with you. You're so educated; you can talk about anything! (*A pause*)

YASHA. (*Yawning*) Yes. . . . The way I look at it is this; if a girl falls in love with anybody, then I call her immoral. (*A pause*) How pleasant it is to smoke one's cigar in the open air. (*Listening*) There's someone coming. It's the missis and the rest of 'em. . . . (DUNYASHA *embraces him hastily*) Go towards the house as if you'd just been for a bathe. Go by this path or else they'll meet you and think that I've been walking out with you. I can't stand that sort of thing.

DUNYASHA. (*Coughing softly*) Your cigar has given me a headache. [*Exit* DUNYASHA

(YASHA *remains sitting by the shrine. Enter* MADAME RANEVSKY, GAYEF *and* LOPAKHIN)

LOPAKHIN. You must make up your minds once and for all. Time waits for no man. The question is perfectly simple. Are you going to let off the land for villas or not? Answer in one word; yes or no? Only one word!

MADAME RANEVSKY. Who's smoking horrible cigars here? (*She sits down*)

GAYEF. How handy it is now they've built that railway. (*Sitting*) We've been into town for lunch and back again. . . . Red in the middle! I must just go up to the house and have a game.

MADAME RANEVSKY. There's no hurry.

LOPAKHIN. Only one word—yes or no! (*Entreatingly*) Come, answer the question!

GAYEF. (*Yawning*) Who's that?

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Looking into her purse*) I had a lot of money yesterday but there's hardly any left now. Poor Barbara tries to save money by feeding us all on milk soup; the old people in the kitchen get nothing but peas, and yet I go squandering aimlessly. . . . (*Dropping her purse and scattering gold coins; vexed*) There, I've dropped it all!

YASHA. Allow me, I'll pick it up. (*Collecting the coins*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. Yes, please do, Yásha! Whatever made me go into town for lunch? I hate your horrid restaurant with the organ and the tablecloths all smelling of soap. Why do you drink so much, Leonid? Why do you eat so much? Why do you talk so much? You talked too much at the restaurant again, and most unsuitably, about the seventies, and

the decadents. And to whom? Fancy talking about decadents to the waiters!

LOPAKHIN. Quite true.

GAYEF. (*With a gesture*) I'm incorrigible, that's plain. (*Irritably to* YASHA) What do you keep dodging about in front of me for?

YASHA. (*Laughing*) I can't hear your voice without laughing.

GAYEF. (*To* MADAME RANEVSKY) Either he or I . . .

MADAME RANEVSKY. Go away, Yásha; run along.

YASHA. (*Handing* MADAME RANEVSKY *her purse*) I'll go at once. (*Restraining his laughter with difficulty*) This very minute.

[*Exit* YASHA

LOPAKHIN. Derigánof, the millionaire, wants to buy your property. They say he'll come to the auction himself.

MADAME RANEVSKY. How did you hear?

LOPAKHIN. I was told so in town.

GAYEF. Our aunt at Yaroslav has promised to send something; but I don't know when, or how much.

LOPAKHIN. How much will she send? Ten thousand pounds? Twenty thousand pounds?

MADAME RANEVSKY. Oh, come . . . A thousand or fifteen hundred at the most.

LOPAKHIN. Excuse me, but in all my life I never met anybody so frivolous as you two, so crazy and unbusiness-like! I tell you in plain Russian your property is going to be sold, and you don't seem to understand what I say.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Well, what are we to do? Tell us what you want us to do.

LOPAKHIN. Don't I tell you every day? Every day I say the same thing over and over again.

You must lease off the cherry orchard and the rest of the estate for villas; you must do it at once, this very moment; the auction will be on you in two twos! Try and understand. Once you make up your mind there are to be villas, you can get all the money you want, and you're saved.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Villas and villa residents, oh, please, . . . it's so vulgar!

GAYEF. I quite agree with you.

LOPAKHIN. I shall either cry, or scream, or faint. I can't stand it! You'll be the death of me. (*To* GAYEF) You're an old woman!

GAYEF. Who's that?

LOPAKHIN. You're an old woman! (*Going*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Frightened*) No, don't go. Stay here, there's a dear! Perhaps we shall think of some way.

LOPAKHIN. What's the good of thinking!

MADAME RANEVSKY. Please don't go; I want you. At any rate it's gayer when you're here. (*A pause*) I keep expecting something to happen, as if the house were going to tumble down about our ears.

GAYEF. (*In deep abstraction*) Off the cushion on the corner; double into the middle pocket. . . .

MADAME RANEVSKY. We have been very, very sinful!

LOPAKHIN. You! What sins have you committed?

GAYEF. (*Eating candy*) They say I've devoured all my substance in sugar candy. (*Laughing*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. Oh, the sins that I have committed . . . I've always squandered money at random like a madwoman; I married a man who made nothing but debts. My husband

drank himself to death on champagne; he was a fearful drinker. Then for my sins I fell in love and went off with another man; and immediately—that was my first punishment—a blow full on the head . . . here, in this very river . . . my little boy was drowned; and I went abroad, right, right away, never to come back any more, never to see this river again. . . . I shut my eyes and ran, like a mad thing, and *he* came after me, pitiless and cruel. I bought a villa at Mentone, because he fell ill there, and for three years I knew no rest day or night; the sick man tormented and wore down my soul. Then, last year, when my villa was sold to pay my debts, I went off to Paris, and he came and robbed me of everything, left me and took up with another woman, and I tried to poison myself. . . . It was all so stupid, so humiliating. . . . Then suddenly I longed to be back in Russia, in my own country, with my little girl. . . . (*Wiping away her tears*) Lord, Lord, be merciful to me; forgive my sins! Do not punish me any more! (*Taking a telegram from her pocket*) I got this to-day from Paris. . . . He asks to be forgiven, begs me to go back. . . . (*Tearing up the telegram*) Isn't that music that I hear? (*Listening*)

GAYEF. That's our famous Jewish band. You remember? Four fiddles, a flute and a double bass.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Does it still exist? We must make them come up some time; we'll have a dance.

LOPAKHIN. (*Listening*) I don't hear anything. (*Singing softly*)

"The Germans for a fee will turn
A Russ into a Frenchman."

(*Laughing*) I saw a very funny piece at the theatre last night; awfully funny!

MADAME RANEVSKY. It probably wasn't a bit funny. You people oughtn't to go and see plays; you ought to try to see yourselves; to see what a dull life you lead, and how much too much you talk.

LOPAKHIN. Quite right. To tell the honest truth, our life's an imbecile affair. (*A pause*) My papa was a peasant, an idiot; he understood nothing; he taught me nothing; all he did was to beat me when he was drunk, with a walking-stick. As a matter of fact I'm just as big a blockhead and idiot as he was. I never did any lessons; my handwriting's abominable; I write so badly I'm ashamed before people; like a pig.

MADAME RANEVSKY. You ought to get married.

LOPAKHIN. Yes, that's true.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Why not marry Barbara? She's a nice girl.

LOPAKHIN. Yes.

MADAME RANEVSKY. She's a nice straightforward creature; works all day; and what's most important, she loves you. You've been fond of her for a long time.

LOPAKHIN. Well, why not? I'm quite willing. She's a very nice girl. (*A pause*)

GAYEF. I've been offered a place in a bank. Six hundred pounds a year. Do you hear?

MADAME RANEVSKY. You in a bank! Stay where you are.

Enter FIRS, *carrying an overcoat.*

FIRS. (*To* GAYEF) Put this on, please, master; it's getting damp.

GAYEF. (*Putting on the coat*) What a plague you are, Firs!

FIRS. What's the use. . . . You went off and never told me. (*Examining his clothes*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. How old you've got, Firs!

FIRS. I beg your pardon?

LOPAKHIN. She says how old you've got!

FIRS. I've been alive a long time. When they found me a wife, your father wasn't even born yet. (*Laughing*) And when the Liberation came I was already chief valet. But I wouldn't have any Liberation then; I stayed with the master. (*A pause*) I remember how happy everybody was, but why they were happy they didn't know themselves.

LOPAKHIN. It was fine before then. Anyway they used to flog 'em.

FIRS. (*Mishearing him*) I should think so! The peasants minded the masters, and the masters minded the peasants, but now it's all higgledy-piggledy; you can't make head or tail of it.

GAYEF. Shut up, Firs. I must go into town again to-morrow. I've been promised an introduction to a general who'll lend money on a bill.

LOPAKHIN. You'll do no good. You won't even pay the interest; set your mind at ease about that.

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*To* LOPAKHIN) He's only talking nonsense. There's no such general at all.

Enter TROPHIMOF, ANYA *and* BARBARA

GAYEF. Here come the others.

ANYA. Here's mamma.

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Tenderly*) Come along, come along, . . . my little ones. . . . (*Embracing*

ANYA *and* BARBARA) If only you knew how much I love you both! Sit beside me . . . there, like that. (*Everyone sits*)

LOPAKHIN. The Perpetual Student's always among the girls.

TROPHIMOF. It's no affair of yours.

LOPAKHIN. He's nearly fifty and still a student.

TROPHIMOF. Stop your idiotic jokes!

LOPAKHIN. What are you losing your temper for, silly?

TROPHIMOF. Why can't you leave me alone?

LOPAKHIN. (*Laughing*) I should like to know what your opinion is of me?

TROPHIMOF. My opinion of you, Yermolái Alexéyitch, is this. You're a rich man; you'll soon be a millionaire. Just as a beast of prey which devours everything that comes in its way is necessary for the conversion of matter, so you are necessary too.

(*All laugh*) [1]

BARBARA. Tell us something about the planets, Peter, instead.

[1] "Lopákhin is by no means a representative of the new life that is to take the place of the old one passing away. He is as weak and superfluous as the rest, as passive as those he displaces. There are no representatives of the new life in the play. . . . When Peter compares him to a bird of prey they all laugh, because there is nothing of the bird of prey in him at all, as there should be to accord with his function in society. . . . He is as deeply unhappy a man as the rest of them" (Glinka in *Pokrovsky*, 898, 899). As for Trophímof, he is "the most real of students, such a student as was probably never seen before on the Russian stage; and Katchálof the actor made him a living figure by his subtle acting; the smile, the mimicry, the gestures, the frank, sincere, wholly Russian way of talking and arguing. . . . As if snatched alive from the Málaya Brónnaya, from the free 'Committee' dining-rooms. There are students there as like him as two drops of water" (*Idem ibid.* 907). Mr Harcourt Williams, with wonderful tact, performed the more difficult feat of making Trophímof a sympathetic character to an English audience.

MADAME RANEVSKY. No. Let's go on with the conversation we were having yesterday.

TROPHIMOF. What about?

GAYEF. About the proud man.

TROPHIMOF. We had a long talk yesterday, but we didn't come to any conclusion. There is something mystical in the proud man in the sense in which you use the words. You may be right from your point of view, but, if we look at it simple-mindedly, what room is there for pride? Is there any sense in it, when man is so poorly constructed from the physiological point of view, when the vast majority of us are so gross and stupid and profoundly unhappy? We must give up admiring ourselves. The only thing to do is to work.

GAYEF. We shall die all the same.

TROPHIMOF. Who knows? And what does it mean, to die? Perhaps man has a hundred senses, and when he dies only the five senses that we know perish with him, and the other ninety-five remain alive.

MADAME RANEVSKY. How clever you are, Peter.

LOPAKHIN. (*Ironically*) Oh, extraordinary!

TROPHIMOF. Mankind marches forward, perfecting its strength. Everything that is unattainable for us now will one day be near and clear; but we must work; we must help with all our force those who seek for truth. At present only a few men work in Russia. The vast majority of the educated people that I know seek after nothing, do nothing, and are as yet incapable of work. They call themselves the "Intelligentsia," they say "thou" and "thee" to the servants, they treat the peasants like animals, learn nothing, read nothing serious, do absolutely nothing,

only talk about science, and understand little or nothing about art. They are all serious; they all have solemn faces; they only discuss important subjects; they philosophise; but meanwhile the vast majority of us, ninety-nine per cent., live like savages; at the least thing they curse and punch people's heads; they eat like beasts and sleep in dirt and bad air; there are bugs everywhere, evil smells, damp and moral degradation. . . . It's plain that all our clever conversations are only meant to distract our own attention and other people's. Show me where those crèches are, that they're always talking so much about; or those reading-rooms. They are only things people write about in novels; they don't really exist at all. Nothing exists but dirt, vulgarity and Asiatic ways. I am afraid of solemn faces; I dislike them; I am afraid of solemn conversations. Let us rather hold our tongues.

LOPAKHIN. Do you know, I get up at five every morning, I work from morning till night; I am always handling my own money or other people's, and I see the sort of men there are about me. One only has to begin to do anything to see how few honest and decent people there are.[1] Sometimes, as I lie awake in bed, I think: "O Lord, you have given us mighty forests, boundless fields and immeasurable horizons, and we, living in their midst, ought really to be giants.

[1] *Honest and decent people.* "In Russia," Tchekhof said to Górky, "an honest man is a sort of bogey that nurses frighten children with" (*Pámyati*, 88). It is wonderful how like Górky Tchekhof talked when he talked to Górky.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Oh dear, you want giants! They are all very well in fairy stories; but in real life they are rather alarming. (EPHIKHODOF *passes at the back of the scene, playing on his guitar*) (*Pensively*) There goes Ephikhódof.

ANYA. (*Pensively*) There goes Ephikhódof.

GAYEF. The sun has set.

TROPHIMOF. Yes.

GAYEF. (*As if declaiming, but not loud*) O Nature, wonderful Nature, you glow with eternal light; beautiful and indifferent, you whom we call our mother, uniting in yourself both life and death, you animate and you destroy. . . .

BARBARA. (*Entreatingly*) Uncle!

ANYA. You're at it again, uncle!

TROPHIMOF. You'd far better double the red into the middle pocket.

GAYEF. I'll hold my tongue! I'll hold my tongue!

(*They all sit pensively. Silence reigns, broken only by the mumbling of old* FIRS. *Suddenly a distant sound is heard as if from the sky, the sound of a string breaking, dying away, melancholy*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. What's that?

LOPAKHIN. I don't know. It's a lifting-tub given way somewhere away in the mines. It must be a long way off.

GAYEF. Perhaps it's some sort of bird . . . a heron, or something.

TROPHIMOF. Or an owl. . . .

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Shuddering*) There's something uncanny about it!

FIRS. The same thing happened before the great misfortune: the owl screeched and the samovar kept humming.

GAYEF. What great misfortune?

FIRS. The Liberation. (*A pause*) [1]

MADAME RANEVSKY. Come, everyone, let's go in; it's getting late. (*To* ANYA) You've tears in your eyes. What is it, little one? (*Embracing her*)

ANYA. Nothing, mamma. I'm all right.

TROPHIMOF. There's someone coming.

(*A* TRAMP *appears in a torn white peaked cap and overcoat. He is slightly drunk*)

TRAMP. Excuse me, but can I go through this way straight to the station?

GAYEF. Certainly. Follow this path.

TRAMP. I am uncommonly obliged to you, sir. (*Coughing*) We're having lovely weather. (*Declaiming*) "Brother, my suffering brother" . . . "Come forth to the Volga. Who moans?" . . . (*To* BARBARA) Mademoiselle, please spare a sixpence for a hungry fellow-countryman.

(BARBARA, *frightened, screams*)

LOPAKHIN. (*Angrily*) There's a decency for every indecency to observe!

MADAME RANEVSKY. Take this; here you are. (*Fumbling in her purse*) I haven't any silver. . . . Never mind, take this sovereign.

TRAMP. I am uncommonly obliged to you, madam.

[*Exit* TRAMP. *Laughter* [2]

[1] The sound of a tub falling in a mine is a very old remembrance, an impression of boyhood got in the steppes (*Pámyati*, 43). Tchekhof made use of it once before, in his tale, *Happiness*. "Something gave a threatening ach! struck a rock and ran over the steppe crying 'tach! tach! tach!'" It follows a story of disappointment there, of fortune nearly achieved. It gives the sense of laughter from afar, the mirth of an ironical spirit, half like a distant sigh. It comes again at the end of this play, and is answer enough to those who think that Trophímof with his handy little Millennium voices was Tchekhof's own philosophy of the future. See that excellent critic, Glinka, in *Pokrovsky*, 910.

[2] *The tramp.* "A contemporary variety of the Superfluous Man," says Bátyushkof; "one who has failed to find his proper place in the world's economy; another 'job-lot,'" (*Pokrovsky*, 67). "He

BARBARA. (*Frightened*) I'm going! I'm going! Oh, mamma, there's nothing for the servants to eat at home, and you've gone and given this man a sovereign.

MADAME RANEVSKY. What's to be done with your stupid old mother? I'll give you up everything I have when I get back. Yermolái Alexéyitch, lend me some more money.

LOPAKHIN. Very good.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Come along, everyone; it's time to go in. We've settled all about your marriage between us, Barbara. I wish you joy.

BARBARA. (*Through her tears*) You mustn't joke about such things, mamma.

LOPAKHIN. Amelia, get thee to a nunnery, go!

GAYEF. My hands are all trembling; it's ages since I had a game of billiards.

LOPAKHIN. Amelia, nymphlet, in thine orisons remember me.[1]

MADAME RANEVSKY. Come along. It's nearly supper-time.

BARBARA. How he frightened me! My heart is simply throbbing.

LOPAKHIN. Allow me to remind you, the cherry orchard is to be sold on the twenty-second of

appears with a tree-branch in his hand," says Eichenwald, "with verses of Nadson and Nekrásof on his drunken lips. A whole drama, a whole life, ruined, sorrowful, pitiful, flashes before you" (*Ibid.* 893). "Brother, my suffering brother" is from a poem of Nadson's that cries hope to the downtrodden, promising a reign of love on earth, when Christ shall come again, not in a crown of thorns, but in power and glory, with the torch of happiness in His hands. The "moan" in the Nekrásof excerpt is the song of the "Burlakí" who drag the barges up the Volga.

[1] There is a wretched pun in the original: Ophelia is called Okhmelia (from *okhmelét*, to get drunk). Lopákhin evidently frequents silly operettas and burlesques and delights in them. Compare his verse about the Germans on p. 146.

August. Bear that in mind; bear that in mind!

[*Exeunt omnes except* TROPHIMOF *and* ANYA

ANYA. (*Laughing*) Many thanks to the Tramp for frightening Barbara; at last we are alone.

TROPHIMOF. Barbara's afraid we shall go and fall in love with each other. Day after day she never leaves us alone. With her narrow mind she cannot understand that we are above love. To avoid everything petty, everything illusory, everything that prevents one from being free and happy, that is the whole meaning and purpose of our life. Forward! We march on irresistibly towards that bright star which burns far, far before us! Forward! Don't tarry, comrades!

ANYA. (*Clasping her hands*) What beautiful things you say! (*A pause*) Isn't it enchanting here to-day!

TROPHIMOF. Yes, it's wonderful weather.

ANYA. What have you done to me, Peter? Why is it that I no longer love the cherry orchard as I did? I used to love it so tenderly; I thought there was no better place on earth than our garden.

TROPHIMOF. All Russia is our garden.[1] The earth is great and beautiful; it is full of wonderful places. (*A pause*) Think, Anya, your grandfather, your great-grandfather and all your ancestors were serf-owners, owners of living souls. Do not human spirits look out at you from every tree in the orchard, from every leaf and every stem? Do you not hear human voices? . . . Oh! it is terrible. Your orchard

[1] See the conversation with Kúprin quoted in the Introduction (p. 30).

frightens me. When I walk through it in the evening or at night, the rugged bark on the trees glows with a dim light, and the cherry-trees seem to see all that happened a hundred and two hundred years ago in painful and oppressive dreams. Well, well, we have fallen at least two hundred years behind the times. We have achieved nothing at all as yet; we have not made up our minds how we stand with the past; we only philosophise, complain of boredom, or drink vodka. It is so plain that, before we can live in the present, we must first redeem the past, and have done with it; and it is only by suffering that we can redeem it, only by strenuous, unremitting toil. Understand that, Anya.

ANYA. The house we live in has long since ceased to be our house; and I shall go away, I give you my word.

TROPHIMOF. If you have the household keys, throw them in the well and go away. Be free, be free as the wind.

ANYA. (*Enthusiastically*) How beautifully you put it!

TROPHIMOF. Believe what I say, Anya; believe what I say. I'm not thirty yet; I am still young, still a student; but what I have been through! I am hungry as the winter; I am sick, anxious, poor as a beggar. Fate has tossed me hither and thither; I have been everywhere, everywhere. But wherever I have been, every minute, day and night, my soul has been full of mysterious anticipations. I feel the approach of happiness, Anya; I see it coming. . . .

ANYA. (*Pensively*) The moon is rising.

(EPHIKHODOF *is heard still playing the same sad tune on his guitar. The moon rises. Somewhere beyond the poplar-trees,* BARBARA *is heard calling for* ANYA: "*Anya, where are you?*")

TROPHIMOF. Yes, the moon is rising. (*A pause*) There it is, there is happiness; it is coming towards us, nearer and nearer; I can hear the sound of its footsteps. . . . And if we do not see it, if we do not know it, what does it matter? Others will see it.

BARBARA. (*Without*) Anya? Where are you?

TROPHIMOF. There's Barbara again! (*Angrily*) It really is too bad!

ANYA. Never mind. Let us go down to the river. It's lovely there.

TROPHIMOF. Come on!

[*Exeunt* ANYA *and* TROPHIMOF

BARBARA. (*Without*) Anya! Anya!

CURTAIN

ACT III

A sitting-room separated by an arch from a big drawing-room behind. Chandelier lighted. The Jewish band mentioned in Act II. is heard playing on the landing. Evening. In the drawing-room they are dancing the grand rond. SIMEONOF-PISHTCHIK *is heard crying: "Promenade à une paire!"*

The dancers come down into the sitting-room. The first pair consists of PISHTCHIK *and* CHARLOTTE; *the second of* TROPHIMOF *and* MADAME RANEVSKY; *the third of* ANYA *and the* POST OFFICE OFFICIAL; *the fourth of* BARBARA *and the* STATIONMASTER, *etc., etc.* BARBARA *is crying softly and wipes away the tears as she dances. In the last pair comes* DUNYASHA. *They cross the sitting-room.*

PISHTCHIK. Grand rond, balancez . . . Les cavaliers à genou et remerciez vos dames.

(FIRS *in evening dress carries seltzer water across on a tray.* PISHTCHIK *and* TROPHIMOF *come down into the sitting-room*)

PISHTCHIK. I am a full-blooded man; I've had two strokes already; it's hard work dancing, but, as the saying goes: "If you run with the pack, bark or no, but anyway wag your tail." I'm as strong as a horse. My old father, who was fond of his joke, rest his soul, used to say, talking of our pedigree, that the ancient stock of the Simeónof-Píshtchiks was descended from that very horse that Caligula made a senator. . . . (*Sitting*) But the worst of it is, I've got no money. A hungry dog believes in nothing but meat. (*Snoring and waking up*

again at once) I'm just the same . . . It's nothing but money, money, with me.

TROPHIMOF. Yes, it's quite true, there is something horselike about your build.

PISHTCHIK. Well, well . . . a horse is a jolly creature . . . you can sell a horse.

(*A sound of billiards being played in the next room.* BARBARA *appears in the drawing-room beyond the arch*)

TROPHIMOF. (*Teasing her*) Madame Lopákhin! Madame Lopákhin!

BARBARA. (*Angrily*) Mouldy gentleman!

TROPHIMOF. Yes, I'm a mouldy gentleman, and I'm proud of it.

BARBARA. (*Bitterly*) We've hired the band, but where's the money to pay for it?

[*Exit* BARBARA

TROPHIMOF. (*To* PISHTCHIK) If the energy which you have spent in the course of your whole life in looking for money to pay the interest on your loans had been diverted to some other purpose, you would have had enough of it, I dare say, to turn the world upside down.

PISHTCHIK. Nietzsche the philosopher, a very remarkable man, very famous, a man of gigantic intellect, says in his works that it's quite right to forge banknotes.

TROPHIMOF. What, have you read Nietzsche?

PISHTCHIK. Well . . . Dáshenka told me. . . . But I'm in such a hole, I'd forge 'em for twopence. I've got to pay thirty-one pounds the day after to-morrow. . . . I've got thirteen pounds already. (*Feeling his pockets; alarmed*) My money's gone! I've lost my money! (*Crying*) Where's my money got to? (*Joyfully*)

Here it is, inside the lining. . . . It's thrown me all in a perspiration.

Enter MADAME RANEVSKY *and* CHARLOTTE

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Humming a lezginka* [1]) Why is Leoníd so long? What can he be doing in the town? (*To* DUNYASHA) Dunyásha, ask the musicians if they'll have some tea.

TROPHIMOF. The sale did not come off, in all probability.

MADAME RANEVSKY. It was a stupid day for the musicians to come; it was a stupid day to have this dance. . . . Well, well, it doesn't matter. . . . (*She sits down and sings softly to herself*)

CHARLOTTE. (*Giving* PISHTCHIK *a pack of cards*) Here is a pack of cards. Think of any card you like.

PISHTCHIK. I've thought of one.

CHARLOTTE. Now shuffle the pack. That's all right. Give them here, oh, most worthy Mr Píshtchik. Ein, zwei, drei! Now look and you'll find it in your side pocket.

PISHTCHIK. (*Taking a card from his side pocket*) The Eight of Spades! You're perfectly right. (*Astonished*) Well, I never!

CHARLOTTE. (*Holding the pack on the palm of her hand, to* TROPHIMOF) Say quickly, what's the top card?

TROPHIMOF. Well, say the Queen of Spades.

CHARLOTTE. Right! (*To* PISHTCHIK) Now then, what's the top card?

PISHTCHIK. Ace of Hearts.

CHARLOTTE. Right! (*She claps her hands; the*

[1] *Lezginka.* A lively Caucasian dance in two-four time, popularised by Glinka, and by Rubinstein in his opera, *Demon.*

pack of cards disappears) What a beautiful day we've been having.

(*A mysterious female* VOICE *answers her as if from under the floor :* " *Yes, indeed, a charming day, mademoiselle*")

CHARLOTTE. You are my beautiful ideal.

THE VOICE. " *I think you also ferry peautiful, mademoiselle.*" [1]

STATIONMASTER. (*Applauding*) Bravo, Miss Ventriloquist !

PISHTCHIK. (*Astonished*) Well, I never ! Bewitching Charlotte Ivánovna, I'm head over ears in love with you.

CHARLOTTE. In love ! (*Shrugging her shoulders*) Are you capable of love ? Gater Mensch, aber schlechter Musikant !

TROPHIMOF. (*Slapping* PISHTCHIK *on the shoulder*) You old horse !

CHARLOTTE. Now attention, please ; one more trick. (*Taking a shawl from a chair*) Now here's a shawl, and a very pretty shawl ; I'm going to sell this very pretty shawl. (*Shaking it*) Who'll buy ? who'll buy ?

PISHTCHIK. (*Astonished*) Well I never !

CHARLOTTE. Ein, zwei, drei ! (*She lifts the shawl quickly ; behind it stands* ANYA, *who drops a*

[1] Charlotte does not herself talk broken Russian ; it is just her fun. This scene was shockingly done at the Stage Society, though Miss Duncan played Charlotte with a clear-cut sense of character. The details of the background, such as the conjuring tricks, ought not to be forced unmercifully on the audience ; there should be no loading of local colour in the dances to distract attention ; no ingenious humour over things like the Stationmaster's recitation. All this must go lightly and quickly. The faults that Meyerhold found with the Moscow production (*Teatr*, p. 44) were exaggerated a hundredfold at the Stage Society ; Madame Ranévsky, left unsupported, ceased to exist upon the stage at all ; what Meyerhold calls the Leitmotiv of the scene was drowned in ornaments and variations.

curtsy, runs to her mother, kisses her, then runs up into the drawing-room amid general applause)

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Applauding*) Bravo! bravo!

CHARLOTTE. Once more. Ein, zwei, drei! (*She lifts up the shawl; behind it stands* BARBARA, *bowing*)

PISHTCHIK. (*Astonished*) Well I never!

CHARLOTTE. That's all. (*She throws the shawl over* PISHTCHIK, *makes a curtsy and runs up into the drawing-room*)

PISHTCHIK. (*Hurrying after her*) You little rascal . . . there's a girl for you, there's a girl. . . .

[*Exit*

MADAME RANEVSKY. And still no sign of Leoníd. What he's doing in the town so long, I can't understand. It must be all over by now; the property's sold; or the auction never came off; why does he keep me in suspense so long?

BARBARA. (*Trying to soothe her*) Uncle has bought it, I am sure of that.

TROPHIMOF. (*Mockingly*) Of course he has!

BARBARA. Grannie sent him a power of attorney to buy it in her name and transfer the mortgage. She's done it for Anya's sake. I'm perfectly sure that Heaven will help us and uncle will buy it.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Your Yaroslav grannie sent fifteen hundred pounds to buy the property in her name—she doesn't trust us—but it wouldn't be enough even to pay the interest. (*Covering her face with her hands*) My fate is being decided to-day, my fate. . . .

TROPHIMOF. (*Teasing* BARBARA) Madame Lopákhin!

BARBARA. (*Angrily*) Perpetual Student! He's been sent down twice from the University.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Why do you get angry, Barbara? He calls you Madame Lopákhin for fun. Why not? You can marry Lopákhin if you like; he's a nice, interesting man; you needn't if you don't; nobody wants to force you, my pet.

BARBARA. I take it very seriously, mamma, I must confess. He's a nice man and I like him.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Then marry him. There's no good putting it off that I can see.

BARBARA. But, mamma, I can't propose to him myself. For two whole years everybody's been talking about him to me, everyone; but he either says nothing or makes a joke of it. I quite understand. He's making money; he's always busy; he can't be bothered with me. If I only had some money, even a little, even ten pounds, I would give everything up and go right away. I would go into a nunnery.

TROPHIMOF. (*Mocking*) What bliss!

BARBARA. (*To* TROPHIMOF) A student ought to be intelligent. (*In a gentler voice, crying*) How ugly you've grown, Peter; how old you've grown! (*She stops crying; to* MADAME RANEVSKY) But I can't live without work, mamma. I must have something to do every minute of the day.

Enter YASHA

YASHA. (*Trying not to laugh*) Ephikhódof has broken a billiard cue.

[*Exit* YASHA

BARBARA. What's Ephikhódof doing here? Who

gave him leave to play billiards? I don't understand these people.

[*Exit* BARBARA

MADAME RANEVSKY. Don't tease her, Peter. Don't you see that she's unhappy enough already?

TROPHIMOF. I wish she wouldn't be so fussy, always meddling in other people's affairs. The whole summer she's given me and Anya no peace; she is afraid we'll work up a romance between us. What business is it of hers? I'm sure I never gave her any grounds; I'm not likely to be so commonplace. We are above love!

MADAME RANEVSKY. Then I suppose I must be beneath love. (*Deeply agitated*) Why doesn't Leoníd come? Oh, if only I knew whether the property's sold or not! It seems such an impossible disaster, that I don't know what to think. . . . I'm bewildered . . . I shall burst out screaming, I shall do something idiotic. Save me, Peter; say something to me, say something. . . .

TROPHIMOF. Whether the property is sold to-day or whether it's not sold, surely it's all one? It's all over with it long ago; there's no turning back; the path is overgrown. Be calm, dear Lyubóf Andréyevna. You mustn't deceive yourself any longer; for once you must look the truth straight in the face.

MADAME RANEVSKY. What truth? You can see what's truth, and what's untruth, but I seem to have lost the power of vision; I see nothing. You settle every important question so boldly; but tell me, Peter, isn't that because you're young, because you have never solved any

question of your own as yet by suffering? You look boldly ahead; isn't it only that you don't see or divine anything terrible in the future; because life is still hidden from your young eyes? You are bolder, honester, deeper than we are, but reflect, show me just a finger's breadth of consideration, take pity on me. Don't you see? I was born here, my father and mother lived here, and my grandfather; I love this house; without the cherry orchard my life has no meaning for me, and if it *must* be sold, then for heaven's sake sell me too! (*Embracing* TROPHIMOF *and kissing him on the forehead*) My little boy was drowned here. (*Crying*) Be gentle with me, dear, kind Peter.

TROPHIMOF. You know I sympathise with all my heart.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Yes, yes, but you ought to say it somehow differently. (*Taking out her handkerchief and dropping a telegram*) I am so wretched to-day, you can't imagine! All this noise jars on me, my heart jumps at every sound. I tremble all over; but I can't shut myself up; I am afraid of the silence when I'm alone. Don't be hard on me, Peter; I love you like a son. I would gladly let Anya marry you, I swear it; but you must work, Peter; you must get your degree. You do nothing; Fate tosses you about from place to place; and that's not right. It's true what I say, isn't it? And you must do something to your beard to make it grow better. (*Laughing*) I can't help laughing at you.

TROPHIMOF. (*Picking up the telegram*) I don't wish to be an Adonis.

MADAME RANEVSKY. It's a telegram from Paris.

I get them every day. One came yesterday, another to-day. That savage is ill again; he's in a bad way. . . . He asks me to forgive him, he begs me to come; and I really ought to go to Paris and be with him. You look at me sternly; but what am I to do, Peter? What am I to do? He's ill, he's lonely, he's unhappy. Who is to look after him? Who is to keep him from doing stupid things? Who is to give him his medicine when it's time? After all, why should I be ashamed to say it? I love him, that's plain. I love him, I love him. . . . My love is like a stone tied round my neck; it's dragging me down to the bottom; but I love my stone. I can't live without it. (*Squeezing* TROPHIMOF'S *hand*) Don't think ill of me, Peter; don't say anything! Don't say anything!

TROPHIMOF. (*Crying*) Forgive my bluntness, for heaven's sake; but the man has simply robbed you.

MADAME RANEVSKY. No, no, no! (*Stopping her ears*) You mustn't say that!

TROPHIMOF. He's a rascal; everybody sees it but yourself; he's a petty rascal, a ne'er-do-weel. . . .

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Angry but restrained*) You're twenty-six or twenty-seven, and you're still a Lower School boy![1]

TROPHIMOF. Who cares?

MADAME RANEVSKY. You ought to be a man by now; at your age you ought to understand people who love. You ought to love someone yourself, you ought to be in love! (*Angrily*) Yes, yes! It's not purity with you; it's simply you're a smug, a figure of fun, a freak. . . .

[1] Literally, a gymnasist of the second form (from the bottom).

TROPHIMOF. (*Horrified*) What does she say?

MADAME RANEVSKY. "I am above love!" You're not above love; you're simply what Firs calls a "job-lot." At your age you ought to be ashamed not to have a mistress!

TROPHIMOF. (*Aghast*) This is awful! What does she say? (*Going quickly up into the drawing-room, clasping his head with his hands*) This is something awful! I can't stand it; I'm off . . . (*Exit, but returns at once*) All is over between us!

[*Exit to landing*

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Calling after him*) Stop, Peter! Don't be ridiculous; I was only joking! Peter!

(TROPHIMOF *is heard on the landing going quickly down the stairs, and suddenly falling down them with a crash.* ANYA *and* BARBARA *scream. A moment later the sound of laughter*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. What has happened?

(ANYA *runs in*)

ANYA. (*Laughing*) Peter's tumbled downstairs. (*She runs out again*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. What a ridiculous fellow he is!

(*The* STATIONMASTER *stands in the middle of the drawing-room beyond the arch and recites Alexey Tolstoy's poem, "The Sinner."*[1] *Everybody stops to listen, but after a few lines the sound of a waltz is heard from the landing and he breaks off. All dance.* TROPHIMOF, ANYA, BARBARA *and* MADAME RANEVSKY *enter from the landing*)

[1] The sinner in question is Mary Magdalene called to repentance at a feast. The Stationmaster is a sort of tactless Evangelical. Tchekhof did not share his taste in poetry; he looked on A. Tolstoy as a mountebank (*Pámyati*, 62).

MADAME RANEVSKY. Come, Peter, come, you pure spirit. . . . I beg your pardon. Let's have a dance. (*She dances with* TROPHIMOF. ANYA *and* BARBARA *dance*)

Enter FIRS, *and stands his walking-stick by the side door. Enter* YASHA *by the drawing-room; he stands looking at the dancers.*

YASHA. Well, grandfather?

FIRS. I'm not feeling well. In the old days it was generals and barons and admirals that danced at our dances, but now we send for the Postmaster and the Stationmaster, and even they make a favour of coming. I'm sort of weak all over. The old master, their grandfather, used to give us all sealing wax, when we had anything the matter. I've taken sealing wax every day for twenty years and more. Perhaps that's why I'm still alive.[1]

YASHA. I'm sick of you, grandfather. (*Yawning*) I wish you'd die and have done with it.

FIRS. Ah! you . . . job-lot! (*He mumbles to himself*)

(TROPHIMOF *and* MADAME RANEVSKY *dance beyond the arch and down into the sitting-room*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. *Merci.* I'll sit down. (*Sitting*) I'm tired.

Enter ANYA

ANYA. (*Agitated*) There was somebody in the kitchen just now saying that the cherry orchard was sold to-day.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Sold? Who to?

[1] *Sealing wax.* If any reader of this book wants to try Firs' treatment, he must soak the sealing wax well in water, and then drink the water.

ANYA. He didn't say who to. He's gone. (*She dances with* TROPHIMOF. *Both dance up into the drawing-room*)

YASHA. It was some old fellow chattering; a stranger.

FIRS. And still Leoníd Andréyitch doesn't come. He's wearing his light overcoat *demi-saison*; he'll catch cold as like as not. Ah, young wood, green wood!

MADAME RANEVSKY. This is killing me. Yásha, go and find out who it was sold to.

YASHA. Why, he's gone long ago, the old man. (*Laughs*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Vexed*) What are you laughing at? What are you glad about?

YASHA. He's a ridiculous fellow is Ephikhódof. Nothing in him. Twenty-two misfortunes!

MADAME RANEVSKY. Firs, if the property is sold, where will you go to?

FIRS. Wherever you tell me, there I'll go.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Why do you look like that? Are you ill? You ought to be in bed.

FIRS. (*Ironically*) Oh yes, I'll go to bed, and who'll hand the things round, who'll give orders? I've the whole house on my hands.

YASHA. Lyubóf Andréyevna! Let me ask a favour of you; be so kind; if you go to Paris again, take me with you, I beseech you. It's absolutely impossible for me to stay here. (*Looking about; sotto voce*) What's the use of talking? You can see for yourself this is a barbarous country; the people have no morals; and the boredom! The food in the kitchen is something shocking, and on the top of it old Firs going about mumbling irrelevant nonsense. Take me back with you; be so kind!

Enter PISHTCHIK

PISHTCHIK. May I have the pleasure . . . a bit of a waltz, charming lady? (MADAME RANEVSKY *takes his arm*) All the same, enchanting lady, you must let me have eighteen pounds. (*Dancing*) Let me have . . . eighteen pounds.

[*Exeunt dancing through the arch*

YASHA. (*Singing to himself*)

"Oh, wilt thou understand
The turmoil of my soul?"

(*Beyond the arch appears a figure in grey tall hat and check trousers, jumping and waving its arms. Cries of "Bravo, Charlotte Ivánovna")*

DUNYASHA. (*Stopping to powder her face*) Mamselle Anya tells me I'm to dance; there are so many gentlemen and so few ladies. But dancing makes me giddy and makes my heart beat, Firs Nikoláyevitch; and just now the gentleman from the post office said something so nice to me, oh, so nice! It quite took my breath away (*The music stops*)

FIRS. What did he say to you?

DUNYASHA. He said, "You are like a flower."

YASHA. (*Yawning*) Cad!

[*Exit* YASHA

DUNYASHA. Like a flower! I am so ladylike and refined, I dote on compliments.

FIRS. You'll come to a bad end.

Enter EPHIKHODOF[1]

EPHIKHODOF. You are not pleased to see me, Avdótya Fyódorovna, no more than if I were

[1] Carrying the cue that he has broken, according to a picture.

some sort of insect. (*Sighing*) Ah! Life! Life!

DUNYASHA. What do you want?

EPHIKHODOF. Undoubtedly perhaps you are right. (*Sighing*) But of course, if one regards it, so to speak, from the point of view, if I may allow myself the expression, and with apologies for my frankness, you have finally reduced me to a state of mind. I quite appreciate my destiny; every day some misfortune happens to me, and I have long since grown accustomed to it, and face my fortune with a smile. You have passed your word to me, and although I . . .

DUNYASHA. Let us talk of this another time, if you please; but now leave me in peace. I am busy meditating. (*Playing with her fan*)

EPHIKHODOF. Every day some misfortune befalls me, and yet, if I may venture to say so, I meet them with smiles and even laughter.

Enter BARBARA *from the drawing-room*

BARBARA. (*To* EPHIKHODOF) Haven't you gone yet, Simeon? You seem to pay no attention to what you're told. (*To* DUNYASHA) You get out of here, Dunyásha. (*To* EPHIKHODOF) First you play billiards and break a cue, and then you march about the drawing-room as if you were a guest!

EPHIKHODOF. Allow me to inform you that it's not your place to call me to account.

BARBARA. I'm not calling you to account; I'm merely talking to you. All you can do is to walk about from one place to another, without ever doing a stroke of work; and why on earth we keep a clerk at all heaven only knows.

EPHIKHODOF. (*Offended*) Whether I work, or whether I walk, or whether I eat, or whether I play billiards is a question to be decided only by my elders and people who understand.

BARBARA. (*Furious*) How dare you talk to me like that! How dare you! I don't understand things, don't I? You clear out of here this minute! Do you hear me? This minute!

EPHIKHODOF. (*Flinching*) I must beg you to express yourself in genteeler language.

BARBARA. (*Beside herself*) You clear out this instant second! Out you go! (*Following him as he retreats towards the door*) Twenty-two misfortunes! Make yourself scarce! Get out of my sight!

[*Exit* EPHIKHODOF

EPHIKHODOF. (*Without*) I shall lodge a complaint against you.

BARBARA. What! You're coming back, are you? (*Seizing the walking-stick left at the door by* FIRS) Come on! Come on! Come on! I'll teach you! Are you coming? Are you coming? Then take that. (*She slashes with the stick*)

Enter LOPAKHIN

LOPAKHIN. Many thanks; much obliged.

BARBARA. (*Still angry, but ironical*) Sorry!

LOPAKHIN. Don't mention it. I'm very grateful for your warm reception.

BARBARA. It's not worth thanking me for. (*She walks away, then looks round and asks in a gentle voice*) I didn't hurt you?

LOPAKHIN. Oh no, nothing to matter. I shall have a bump like a goose's egg, that's all.

(*Voices from the drawing-room: "Lopákhin has arrived! Yermolái Alexéyitch!"*)

PISHTCHIK. Let my eyes see him, let my ears hear him! (*He and* LOPAKHIN *kiss*) You smell of brandy, old man. We're having a high time too.

Enter MADAME RANEVSKY

MADAME RANEVSKY. Is it you, Yermolái Alexéyitch? Why have you been so long? Where is Leoníd?

LOPAKHIN. Leoníd Andréyitch came back with me. He's just coming.

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Agitated*) What happened? Did the sale come off? Tell me, tell me!

LOPAKHIN. (*Embarrassed, afraid of showing his pleasure*) The sale was all over by four o'clock. We missed the train and had to wait till half-past eight. (*Sighing heavily*) Ouf! I'm rather giddy. . . .[1]

Enter GAYEF. *In one hand he carries parcels; with the other he wipes away his tears.*

MADAME RANEVSKY. What happened, Lénya?[2] Come, Lénya! (*Impatiently, crying*) Be quick, be quick, for heaven's sake!

GAYEF. (*Answering her only with an up and down gesture of the hand; to* FIRS, *crying*) Here, take these. . . . Here are some anchovies and Black Sea herrings. I've had nothing to eat all day. Lord, what I've been through! (*Through the open door of the billiard-room comes the click of the billiard balls and* YASHA'S *voice:* "*Seven, eighteen!*" GAYEF'S *expression changes; he*

[1] Lopákhin should not be represented as drunk, on the English stage at any rate. That was another of the mistakes of the Stage Society. He is giddy; he is excited; but it is with the immensity of what he has done at the auction. If anything keeps him sober, it is the brandy.

[2] *Lénya*, a diminutive of Leonid, Leonidas.

stops crying) I'm frightfully tired. Come and help me change, Firs. (*He goes up through the drawing-room,* FIRS *following*)

PISHTCHIK. What about the sale? Come on, tell us all about it.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Was the cherry orchard sold?

LOPAKHIN. Yes.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Who bought it?

LOPAKHIN. I did. (*A pause.* MADAME RANEVSKY *is overwhelmed at the news. She would fall to the ground but for the chair and table by her.* BARBARA *takes the keys from her belt, throws them on the floor in the middle of the sitting-room, and exit*) I bought it. Wait a bit; don't hurry me; my head's in a whirl; I can't speak. . . . (*Laughing*) When we got to the sale, Derigánof was there already. Leoníd Andréyitch had only fifteen hundred pounds, and Derigánof bid three thousand more than the mortgage right away. When I saw how things stood, I went for him and bid four thousand. He said four thousand five hundred. I said five thousand five hundred. He went up by five hundreds, you see, and I went up by thousands. . . . Well, it was soon over. I bid nine thousand more than the mortgage, and got it; and now the cherry orchard is mine! Mine! (*Laughing*) Heavens alive! Just think of it! The cherry orchard is mine! Tell me that I'm drunk; tell me that I'm off my head; tell me that it's all a dream! . . . (*Stamping his feet*) Don't laugh at me! If only my father and my grandfather could rise from their graves and see the whole affair, how their Yermolái, their flogged and ignorant Yermolái, who used to run about bare-

footed in the winter, how this same Yermolái had bought a property that hasn't its equal for beauty anywhere in the whole world! I have bought the property where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren't even allowed into the kitchen. I'm asleep, it's only a vision, it isn't real. . . . 'Tis the fruit of imagination, wrapped in the mists of ignorance.[1] (*Picking up the keys and smiling affectionately*) She's thrown down her keys; she wants to show that she's no longer mistress here. . . . (*Jingling them together*) Well, well, what's the odds? (*The musicians are heard tuning up*) Hey, musicians, play! I want to hear you. Come everyone and see Yermolái Lopákhin lay his axe to the cherry orchard, come and see the trees fall down! We'll fill the place with villas; our grandsons and great-grandsons shall see a new life here. . . . Strike up, music! (*The band plays.* MADAME RANEVSKY *sinks into a chair and weeps bitterly*) (*Reproachfully*) Oh, why, why didn't you listen to me? You can't put the clock back now, poor dear. (*Crying*) Oh, that all this were past and over! Oh, that our unhappy topsy-turvy life were changed!

PISHTCHIK. (*Taking him by the arm, sotto voce*) She's crying. Let's go into the drawing-room and leave her alone to . . . Come on. (*Taking him by the arm, and going up towards the drawing-room*)

LOPAKHIN. What's up? Play your best, musicians! Let everything be as I want. (*Ironically*) Here comes the new squire, the owner of the cherry

[1] *Wrapped in the mists of ignorance*: a cant, jocular phrase; a literary tag. Lopákhin is quoting out of some bad play, as usual when he is lively.

orchard![1] (*Knocking up by accident against a table and nearly throwing down the candelabra*) Never mind, I can pay for everything!

(*Exit with* PISHTCHIK. *Nobody remains in the drawing-room or sitting-room except* MADAME RANEVSKY, *who sits huddled together, weeping bitterly. The band plays softly. Enter* ANYA *and* TROPHIMOF *quickly.* ANYA *goes to her mother and kneels before her.* TROPHIMOF *stands in the entry to the drawing-room*)

ANYA. Mamma! Are you crying, mamma? My dear, good, sweet mamma! Darling, I love you! I bless you! The cherry orchard is sold; it's gone; it's quite true, it's quite true. But don't cry, mamma, you've still got life before you, you've still got your pure and lovely soul. Come with me, darling; come away from here. We'll plant a new garden, still lovelier than this. You will see it and understand, and happiness, deep, tranquil happiness will sink down on your soul, like the sun at eventide, and you'll smile, mamma. Come, darling, come with me!

CURTAIN

[1] This is not boasting, but bitter irony, says Eichenwald (*Pokrovsky*, 888). Lopákhin is not a Lopákhinite; he is ashamed of his own happiness; let the music drown it.

ACT IV

Same scene as Act I. There are no window-curtains, no pictures. The little furniture left is stacked in a corner, as if for sale. A feeling of emptiness. By the door to the hall and at the back of the scene are piled portmanteaux, bundles, etc. The door is open and the voices of BARBARA *and* ANYA *are audible.*

LOPAKHIN *stands waiting.* YASHA *holds a tray with small tumblers full of champagne.* EPHIKHODOF *is tying up a box in the hall. A distant murmur of voices behind the scene; the* PEASANTS *have come to say good-bye.*

GAYEF. (*Without*) Thank you, my lads, thank you.

YASHA. The common people have come to say good-bye. I'll tell you what I think, Yermolái Alexéyitch; they're good fellows but rather stupid.

(*The murmur of voices dies away. Enter* MADAME RANEVSKY *and* GAYEF *from the hall. She is not crying, but she is pale, her face twitches, she cannot speak*)

GAYEF. You gave them your purse, Lyuba. That was wrong, very wrong!

MADAME RANEVSKY. I couldn't help it, I couldn't help it!

[*Exeunt both*

LOPAKHIN. (*Calling after them through the doorway*) Please come here! Won't you come here? Just a glass to say good-bye. I forgot to bring any from the town, and could only raise one bottle at the station. Come along. (*A pause*) What, won't you have any? (*Returning from the door*)

If I'd known, I wouldn't have bought it. I shan't have any either. (YASHA *sets the tray down carefully on a chair*) Drink it yourself, Yásha.

YASHA. Here's to our departure! Good luck to them that stay! (*Drinking*) This isn't real champagne, you take my word for it.

LOPAKHIN. Sixteen shillings a bottle. (*A pause*) It's devilish cold in here.

YASHA. The fires weren't lighted to-day; we're all going away. (*He laughs*)

LOPAKHIN. What are you laughing for?

YASHA. Just pleasure.

LOPAKHIN. Here we are in October but it's as calm and sunny as summer. Good building weather. (*Looking at his watch and speaking off*) Don't forget that there's only forty-seven minutes before the train goes. You must start for the station in twenty minutes. Make haste.

Enter TROPHIMOF *in an overcoat, from out of doors*

TROPHIMOF. I think it's time we were off. The carriages are round. What the deuce has become of my goloshes? I've lost 'em. (*Calling off*) Anya, my goloshes have disappeared. I can't find them anywhere!

LOPAKHIN. I've got to go to Kharkof. I'll start in the same train with you. I'm going to spend the winter at Kharkof. I've been loafing about all this time with you people, eating my head off for want of work. I can't live without work, I don't know what to do with my hands; they dangle about as if they didn't belong to me.

TROPHIMOF. Well, we're going now, and you'll be able to get back to your beneficent labours.

LOPAKHIN. Have a glass.

TROPHIMOF. Not for me.

LOPAKHIN. Well, so you're off to Moscow?

TROPHIMOF. Yes, I'll see them into the town, and go on to Moscow to-morrow.

LOPAKHIN. Well, well. . . . I suppose the professors haven't started their lectures yet; they're waiting till you arrive.

TROPHIMOF. It is no affair of yours.

LOPAKHIN. How many years have you been up at the University?

TROPHIMOF. Try and think of some new joke; this one's getting a bit flat. (*Looking for his goloshes*) Look here, I dare say we shan't meet again, so let me give you a bit of advice as a keepsake: Don't flap your hands about! Get out of the habit of flapping. Building villas, prophesying that villa residents will turn into small freeholders, all that sort of thing is flapping too. Well, when all's said and done, I like you. You have thin, delicate, artist fingers; you have a delicate artist soul.

LOPAKHIN. (*Embracing him*) Good-bye, old chap. Thank you for everything. Take some money off me for the journey if you want it.

TROPHIMOF. What for? I don't want it.

LOPAKHIN. But you haven't got any.

TROPHIMOF. Yes, I have. Many thanks. I got some for a translation. Here it is, in my pocket. (*Anxiously*) I can't find my goloshes anywhere![1]

BARBARA. (*From the next room*) Here, take your garbage away! (*She throws a pair of goloshes on the stage*)

TROPHIMOF. What are you so cross about,

[1] Trophimof is described as seeking for his goloshes "with tragic despair" (*Pokrovsky*, 886).

Barbara? Humph! . . . But those aren't *my* goloshes!

LOPAKHIN. In the spring I sowed three thousand acres of poppy and I have cleared four thousand pounds net profit. When my poppies were in flower, what a picture they made! So you see, I cleared four thousand pounds; and I wanted to lend you a bit because I've got it to spare. What's the good of being stuck up? I'm a peasant. . . . As man to man . . .

TROPHIMOF. Your father was a peasant; mine was a chemist; it doesn't prove anything. (LOPAKHIN *takes out his pocket-book with paper money*) Shut up, shut up. . . . If you offered me twenty thousand pounds I would not take it. I am a free man; nothing that you value so highly, all of you, rich and poor, has the smallest power over me; it's like thistledown floating on the wind. I can do without you; I can go past you; I'm strong and proud. Mankind marches forward to the highest truth, to the highest happiness possible on earth, and I march in the foremost ranks.

LOPAKHIN. Will you get there?

TROPHIMOF. Yes. (*A pause*) I will get there myself or I will show others the way.

(*The sound of axes hewing is heard in the distance*)

LOPAKHIN. Well, good-bye, old chap; it is time to start. Here we stand swaggering to each other, and life goes by all the time without heeding us. When I work for hours without getting tired, I get easy in my mind and I seem to know why I exist. But God alone knows what most of the people in Russia were born for. . . . Well, who cares? It doesn't affect the circulation of work. They say Leoníd

Andréyitch has got a place; he's going to be in a bank and get six hundred pounds a year. . . . He won't sit it out, he's too lazy.

ANYA. (*In the doorway*) Mamma says, will you stop them cutting down the orchard till she has gone.

TROPHIMOF. Really, haven't you got tact enough for that?

[*Exit* TROPHIMOF *by the hall*

LOPAKHIN. Of course, I'll stop them at once. What fools they are!

[*Exit after* TROPHIMOF

ANYA. Has Firs been sent to the hospital?

YASHA. I told 'em this morning. They're sure to have sent him.

ANYA. (*To* EPHIKHODOF, *who crosses*) Simeon Panteléyitch, please find out if Firs has been sent to the hospital.

YASHA. (*Offended*) I told George this morning. What's the good of asking a dozen times?

EPHIKHODOF. Our centenarian friend, in my conclusive opinion, is hardly worth tinkering; it's time he was dispatched to his forefathers. I can only say I envy him. (*Putting down a portmanteau on a bandbox and crushing it flat*) There you are! I knew how it would be!

[*Exit*

YASHA. (*Jeering*) Twenty-two misfortunes!

BARBARA. (*Without*) Has Firs been sent to the hospital?

ANYA. Yes.

BARBARA. Why didn't they take the note to the doctor?

ANYA. We must send it after them.

[*Exit* ANYA

BARBARA. (*From the next room*) Where's Yásha?

Tell him his mother is here. She wants to say good-bye to him.

YASHA. (*With a gesture of impatience*) It's enough to try the patience of a saint!

(DUNYASHA *has been busying herself with the luggage. Seeing* YASHA *alone, she approaches him*)

DUNYASHA. You might just look once at me, Yásha. You are going away, you are leaving me. (*Crying and throwing her arms round his neck*)

YASHA. What's the good of crying? (*Drinking champagne*) In six days I shall be back in Paris. To-morrow we take the express, off we go, and that's the last of us! I can hardly believe it's true. Vive la France! This place don't suit me. I can't bear it . . . it can't be helped. I have had enough barbarism; I'm fed up. (*Drinking champagne*) What's the good of crying? You be a good girl, and you'll have no call to cry.

DUNYASHA. (*Powdering her face and looking into a glass*) Write me a letter from Paris. I've been so fond of you, Yásha, ever so fond! I am a delicate creature, Yásha.

YASHA. Here's somebody coming. (*He busies himself with the luggage, singing under his breath*)

Enter MADAME RANEVSKY, GAYEF, ANYA *and* CHARLOTTE

GAYEF. We'll have to be off; it's nearly time. (*Looking at* YASHA) Who is it smells of red herring?

MADAME RANEVSKY. We must take our seats in ten minutes. (*Looking round the room*) Good-

bye, dear old house, good-bye, grandpapa! When winter is past and spring comes again, you will be here no more; they will have pulled you down. Oh, think of all these walls have seen! (*Kissing* ANYA *passionately*) My treasure, you look radiant, your eyes flash like two diamonds. Are you happy? very happy?

ANYA. Very, very happy. We're beginning a new life, mamma.

GAYEF. (*Gaily*) She's quite right, everything's all right now. Till the cherry orchard was sold we were all agitated and miserable; but once the thing was settled finally and irrevocably, we all calmed down and got jolly again. I'm a bank clerk now; I'm a financier . . . red in the middle! And you, Lyuba, whatever you may say, you're looking ever so much better, not a doubt about it.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Yes, my nerves are better; it's quite true. (*She is helped on with her hat and coat*) I sleep well now. Take my things out, Yásha. We must be off. (*To* ANYA) We shall soon meet again, darling. . . . I'm off to Paris; I shall live on the money your grandmother sent from Yaroslav to buy the property. God bless your grandmother! I'm afraid it won't last long.

ANYA. You'll come back very, very soon, won't you, mamma? I'm going to work and pass the examination at the Gymnase and get a place and help you. We'll read all sorts of books together, won't we, mamma? (*Kissing her mother's hands*) We'll read in the long autumn evenings, we'll read heaps of books, and a new, wonderful world will open up before us. (*Meditating*) . . . Come back, mamma!

MADAME RANEVSKY. I'll come back, my angel. (*Embracing her*) [1]

Enter LOPAKHIN. CHARLOTTE *sings softly.*

GAYEF. Happy Charlotte, she's singing.

CHARLOTTE. (*Taking a bundle of rugs, like a swaddled baby*) Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree top . . . (*The baby answers, "Wah, wah"*) Hush, my little one, hush, my pretty one! ("*Wah, wah*") You'll break your mother's heart. (*She throws the bundle down on the floor again*) Don't forget to find me a new place, please. I can't do without it.

LOPAKHIN. We'll find you a place, Charlotte Ivánovna, don't be afraid.

GAYEF. Everybody's deserting us. Barbara's going. Nobody seems to want us.

CHARLOTTE. There's nowhere for me to live in the town. I'm obliged to go. (*Hums a tune*) What's the odds?

Enter PISHTCHIK

LOPAKHIN. Nature's masterpiece!

PISHTCHIK. (*Panting*) Oy, oy, let me get my breath again! . . . I'm done up! . . . My noble friends! . . . Give me some water.

GAYEF. Wants some money, I suppose. No, thank you; I'll keep out of harm's way.

[*Exit*

PISHTCHIK. It's ages since I have been here, fairest lady. (*To* LOPAKHIN) You here? Glad to see you, you man of gigantic intellect. Take

[1] It is in books that Anya and her mother are to discover the new and wonderful world. The kingdom of heaven will be within them, in thought, not materially about them.

this; it's for you. (*Giving* LOPAKHIN *money*) Forty pounds! I still owe you eighty-four.

LOPAKHIN. (*Amazed, shrugging his shoulders*) It's like a thing in a dream! Where did you get it from?

PISHTCHIK. Wait a bit. . . . I'm hot. . . . A most remarkable thing! Some Englishmen came and found some sort of white clay on my land. (*To* MADAME RANEVSKY) And here's forty pounds for you, lovely, wonderful lady. (*Giving her money*) The rest another time. (*Drinking water*) Only just now a young man in the train was saying that some . . . some great philosopher advises us all to jump off roofs . . . Jump, he says, and there's an end of it. (*With an astonished air*) Just think of that! More water!

LOPAKHIN. Who were the Englishmen?

PISHTCHIK. I leased them the plot with the clay on it for twenty-four years. But I haven't any time now . . . I must be getting on. I must go to Znoikof's, to Kardamónof's. . . . I owe everybody money. (*Drinking*) Good-bye to everyone; I'll look in on Thursday.

MADAME RANEVSKY. We're just moving into town, and to-morrow I go abroad.

PISHTCHIK. What! (*Alarmed*) What are you going into town for? Why, what's happened to the furniture? . . . Trunks? . . . Oh, it's all right. (*Crying*) It's all right. People of powerful intellect . . . those Englishmen. It's all right. Be happy . . . God be with you . . . it's all right. Everything in this world has to come to an end. (*Kissing* MADAME RANEVSKY'S *hand*) If ever the news reaches you that *I* have come to an end, give a thought to the old . . .

horse, and say, "Once there lived a certain Simeónof-Píshtchik, Heaven rest his soul." . . . Remarkable weather we're having. . . . Yes. . . . (*Goes out deeply moved. Returns at once and says from the doorway*) Dáshenka sent her compliments.

[*Exit*

MADAME RANEVSKY. Now we can go. I have only two things on my mind. One is poor old Firs. (*Looking at her watch*) We can still stay five minutes.

ANYA. Firs has been sent to the hospital already, mamma. Yásha sent him off this morning.

MADAME RANEVSKY. My second anxiety is Barbara. She's used to getting up early and working, and now that she has no work to do she's like a fish out of water. She has grown thin and pale and taken to crying, poor dear. . . . (*A pause*) You know very well, Yermolái Alexéyitch, I always hoped . . . to see her married to you, and as far as I can see, you're looking out for a wife. (*She whispers to* ANYA, *who nods to* CHARLOTTE, *and both exeunt*) She loves you; you like her; and I can't make out why you seem to fight shy of each other. I don't understand it.

LOPAKHIN. I don't understand it either, to tell you the truth. It all seems so odd. If there's still time, I'll do it this moment. Let's get it over and have done with it; without you there, I feel as if I should never propose to her.

MADAME RANEVSKY. A capital idea! After all, it doesn't take more than a minute. I'll call her at once.

LOPAKHIN. And here's the champagne all ready. (*Looking at the glasses*) Empty; someone's

drunk it. (YASHA *coughs*) That's what they call lapping it up and no mistake!

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Animated*) Capital! We'll all go away. . . . *Allez*, Yásha. I'll call her. (*At the door*) Barbara, leave all that and come here. Come along!

[*Exeunt* MADAME RANEVSKY *and* YASHA

LOPAKHIN. (*Looking at his watch*) Yes.

(*A pause. A stifled laugh behind the door; whispering; at last enter* BARBARA)

BARBARA. (*Examining the luggage*) Very odd; I can't find it anywhere . . .

LOPAKHIN. What are you looking for?

BARBARA. I packed it myself, and can't remember. (*A pause*)

LOPAKHIN. Where are you going to-day, Varvára Mikháilovna?

BARBARA. Me? I'm going to the Ragulins'. I'm engaged to go and keep house for them, to be housekeeper or whatever it is.

LOPAKHIN. Oh, at Yáshnevo? That's about fifty miles from here. (*A pause*) Well, so life in this house is over now.

BARBARA. (*Looking at the luggage*) Wherever can it be? Perhaps I put it in the trunk. . . . Yes, life here is over now; there won't be any more . . .

LOPAKHIN. And I'm off to Kharkof at once . . . by the same train. A lot of business to do. I'm leaving Ephikhódof to look after this place. I've taken him on.

BARBARA. Have you?

LOPAKHIN. At this time last year snow was falling already, if you remember; but now it's fine and sunny. Still, it's cold for all that. Three degrees of frost.

BARBARA. Were there? I didn't look. (*A pause*) Besides, the thermometer's broken. (*A pause*)

A VOICE. (*At the outer door*) Yermolái Alexéyitch!

LOPAKHIN. (*As if he had only been waiting to be called*) I'm just coming!

[*Exit* LOPAKHIN *quickly*

(BARBARA *sits on the floor, puts her head on a bundle and sobs softly.*[1] *The door opens and* MADAME RANEVSKY *comes in cautiously*)

MADAME RANEVSKY. Well? (*A pause*) We must be off.

BARBARA. (*No longer crying, wiping her eyes*) Yes, it's time, mamma. I shall get to the Ragulins' all right to-day, so long as I don't miss the train.

MADAME RANEVSKY. (*Calling off*) Put on your things, Anya.

Enter ANYA, *then* GAYEF *and* CHARLOTTE. GAYEF *wears a warm overcoat with a hood. The servants and drivers come in.* EPHIKHODOF *busies himself about the luggage.*

MADAME RANEVSKY. Now we can start on our journey.

ANYA. (*Delighted*) We can start on our journey!

GAYEF. My friends, my dear, beloved friends! Now that I am leaving this house for ever, can I keep silence? Can I refrain from expressing

[1] Glinka ascribes the failure of Lopákhin's wooing simply to some Ανάγκη which governs all Tchekhof's characters: "something unseen, something immaterial holds them back; they are hindered by some psychological trammels" (*Pokrovsky*, 904). Bátyushkof attributes it to their both being "job-lots." Both have spent their life on work and left the rest undeveloped. This conversation is like all other conversations they have had together: "When are you carrying your rye? What are you going to do next?" How can they suddenly talk love? (*Ibid.* 69).

those emotions which fill my whole being at such a moment ?

ANYA. (*Pleadingly*) Uncle !

BARBARA. Uncle, what's the good ?

GAYEF. (*Sadly*) Double the red in the middle pocket. I'll hold my tongue.

Enter TROPHIMOF, *then* LOPAKHIN

TROPHIMOF. Come along, it's time to start.

LOPAKHIN. Ephikhódof, my coat.

MADAME RANEVSKY. I must sit here another minute. It's just as if I had never noticed before what the walls and ceilings of the house were like. I look at them hungrily, with such tender love. . . .

GAYEF. I remember, when I was six years old, how I sat in this window on Trinity Sunday, and watched father starting out for church.

MADAME RANEVSKY. Has everything been cleared out ?

LOPAKHIN. Apparently everything. (*To* EPHIKHODOF, *putting on his overcoat*) See that everything's in order, Ephikhódof.

EPHIKHODOF. (*In a hoarse voice*) You trust me, Yermolái Alexéyitch.

LOPAKHIN. What's up with your voice ?

EPHIKHODOF. I was just having a drink of water. I swallowed something.

YASHA. (*Contemptuously*) Cad !

MADAME RANEVSKY. We're going, and not a soul will be left here.

LOPAKHIN. Until the spring.

(BARBARA *pulls an umbrella out of a bundle of rugs, as if she were brandishing it to strike.* LOPAKHIN *pretends to be frightened*)

BARBARA. Don't be so silly! I never thought of such a thing.

TROPHIMOF. Come, we'd better go and get in. It's time to start. The train will be in immediately.

BARBARA. There are your goloshes, Peter, by that portmanteau. (*Crying*) What dirty old things they are!

TROPHIMOF. (*Putting on his goloshes*) Come along.

GAYEF. (*Much moved, afraid of crying*) The train . . . the station . . . double the red in the middle; doublette to pot the white in the corner.[1] . . .

MADAME RANEVSKY. Come on!

LOPAKHIN. Is everyone here? No one left in there? (*Locking the door*) There are things stacked in there; I must lock them up. Come on!

ANYA. Good-bye, house! good-bye, old life!

TROPHIMOF. Welcome, new life!

[*Exit with* ANYA. BARBARA *looks round the room, and exit slowly. Exeunt* YASHA, *and* CHARLOTTE *with her dog*

LOPAKHIN. Till the spring, then. Go on, everybody. So-long!

[*Exit*

(MADAME RANEVSKY *and* GAYEF *remain alone. They seem to have been waiting for this, throw their arms round each other's necks and sob restrainedly and gently, afraid of being overheard*)

GAYEF. (*In despair*) My sister! my sister!

MADAME RANEVSKY. Oh, my dear, sweet, lovely

[1] If I make your ball hit the cushion and run across into a pocket, it is a double; if I hit the cushion myself and pot you on the rebound, it is a doublette.

orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, farewell! Farewell!

ANYA. (*Calling gaily, without*) Mamma!

TROPHIMOF. (*Gay and excited*) Aoo!

MADAME RANEVSKY. One last look at the walls and the windows. . . . Our dear mother used to love to walk up and down this room.

GAYEF. My sister! my sister!

ANYA. (*Without*) Mamma!

TROPHIMOF. (*Without*) Aoo!

MADAME RANEVSKY. We're coming.

[*Exeunt*

(*The stage is empty. One hears all the doors being locked, and the carriages driving away. All is quiet. Amid the silence the thud of the axes on the trees echoes sad and lonely. The sound of footsteps.* FIRS *appears in the doorway* R. *He is dressed, as always, in his long coat and white waistcoat; he wears slippers. He is ill*[1])

FIRS. (*Going to the door* L. *and trying the handle*) Locked. They've gone. (*Sitting on the sofa*) They've forgotten me. Never mind! I'll sit here. Leoníd Andréyitch is sure to have put on his cloth coat instead of his fur. (*He sighs anxiously*) He hadn't me to see. Young wood, green wood! (*He mumbles something incomprehensible*) Life has gone by as if I'd never lived. (*Lying down*) I'll lie down. There's no strength

[1] "In his old livery and tall hat" (*Pokrovsky*, 893). "The impression of this scene as given by the Moscow Artistic Theatre is overwhelming," says Glinka. "Life has passed on, gone by, forgotten him. . . . The old life has cast him aside; the new life will have nothing to do with him. It goes hurrying on somewhere, knocking and jostling, hastening to reach the future happiness of mankind. And yet Firs is a man too" (*Ibid.* 906). "They are sure to find out soon and send back for him," says Bátyushkof; "but the author wanted to show to what a pitch of thoughtlessness people can go who, from their childhood up, have never once faced the realities of life" (*Ibid.* 71).

left in you; there's nothing, nothing. Ah, you . . . job-lot!

(*He lies motionless. A distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, the sound of a string breaking, dying away, melancholy. Silence ensues, broken only by the stroke of the axe on the trees far away in the cherry orchard*)

CURTAIN

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PERDICAN AND CAMILLA

(On ne badine pas avec l'amour)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE BARON
PERDICAN, *his son*
BLAZIUS, *Perdican's tutor*
BRIDAINE, *parish priest*
CAMILLA, *the Baron's niece*
DAME PLUSH, *her duenna*
ROSETTE, *her foster-sister*

Peasants, Servants, etc.

PERDICAN AND CAMILLA

ACT I

SCENE 1

A village green; the old Château behind, of grey stone turning brown and adorned with ivy; big door at the top of two or three steps. Peasants returning from the vintage with grapes. A wine-shop and men and women drinking. Old men grouped under a big tree. The peasants perform the function of a Greek chorus; they do not sing, but speak in prose, declaiming rhythmically. When one speaks the rest take part in his words by their attention and by suitable action. They are divided into two halves, the old men, with 1ST *and* 2ND PEASANTS *for their spokesmen, and the young with* 3RD *and* 4TH PEASANTS *for theirs.*

1ST PEASANT. (*A dignified old man*) Gently rocking on his mettlesome mule, behold! Master Blazius makes his way among the cornflowers, newly clad, his ink-horn at his side. Plump and jovial, he sways on his rotund paunch like a baby on its pillow, and with eyes half closed mumbles a paternoster in his double chin.

Enter BLAZIUS *on his mule.* BLAZIUS *is short and fat, sly, roguish, gentle and submissive; a Bacchus with the figure of a Silenus. With black cassock, long shovel hat and fat umbrella.*

2ND PEASANT. (*A jovial old man*) Hail, Master

Blazius! you come like an ancient wine-jar in the season of the vintage.

BLAZIUS. If you would hear important tidings, go bring me first a cup of new-made wine.

2ND PEASANT. Here is our biggest bowl. Drink, Master Blazius, for the wine is good, and you shall speak afterwards.

BLAZIUS. Know then, my children, that young Perdican, his lordship's son, has just come of age and taken the degree of Doctor in Arts at Paris. This very day he is returning to the Château, his mouth so full of fine flowery phrases that nine times out of ten one cannot tell what answer to make him. He is like some wonderful learned book in a gracious golden cover. There's never a blade of grass that grows but he will tell you its name in Latin; and when the wind blows or the rain falls he will expound you the reason why. You would open your eyes as wide as yonder door to see him unroll one of the parchment scrolls that he has coloured in inks of every hue with his own two hands, and never a word to anyone. In short, he's a diamond of the first water, from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, and that is the news that I am come to bring the Baron. You will understand that all this does me some credit, who have been his tutor since he was but four years old. And now, good friends, bring me a chair that I may dismount without breaking my neck; for my mule is a trifle restive . . . and I see no harm in another mouthful of wine before I enter the Château.

1ST PEASANT. Drink, Master Blazius, and refresh yourself. We were here when the little Perdican was born, and seeing that he will so

soon be with us again, there was no need to discourse of his virtues at such length.

2ND PEASANT. God grant we may find the heart of the child again in the bosom of the man.

BLAZIUS. Zounds! but the cup is empty; I did not think I had drunk it all. Farewell. While I trotted on the road I turned me a few neat simple phrases to please my lord. I will go in and . . . (*significantly*) pull the bell.

[*Exit* BLAZIUS *into the Château*

(*The young men's chorus now steps forward in the same way as the old men's chorus did and looks off in the opposite direction*)

3RD PEASANT. Roughly jolting on her panting ass, behold! Dame Plush comes climbing the stony hill; her weary squire cudgels her steed with all his might, and the poor beast wags his lamentable head and munches a thistle between his teeth. Her long and skinny legs are quaking with fury and her bony fingers clawing the beads of her rosary.

Enter DAME PLUSH, *mule and boy*

4TH PEASANT. All hail, Dame Plush; you come like the fever in autumn on the wings of the wind that withers the leaves of the forest.

PLUSH. Bring me a glass of water, you rascally knaves!—a glass of water, flavoured with vinegar.

4TH PEASANT. Whence come you, sweet Plush? Your false hair is covered with dust, and your chaste petticoats are tucked up as high as your venerable garters.

PLUSH. Know, varlets, that the fair Camilla, your master's niece, comes this day to the

Château. She has left her convent, at my lord the Baron's behest, to receive at the time and place appointed the goodly heritage bequeathed her by her mother. Her education is ended, the saints be praised; and those who behold her will savour the perfume of a perfect flower of virtue and devoutness. Never was anything more pure and holy, more angel lamb and dove together than this sweet nun. May the Lord of Heaven guide her in all her ways. So be it! Make way, you knaves; my legs are all inflamed with pain.

3RD PEASANT. Smooth out your creases, honest Plush, and when you pray, ask for rain; our cornfields are as lean as your shin-bones.

PLUSH. You have brought me water in a bowl that smells of the kitchen. Give me your hand to dismount; you are a gang of ignorant, ill-mannered curs.

[*Exit* PLUSH

4TH PEASANT. Let us go and put on our Sunday clothes and await a summons from the Baron. There will be some jolly junketing this day, or I am much mistaken.

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

A room in the Château. A simple scene representing a wall with a window in it: the wall is hung with one or two portraits; entry by the wings at either end. Table and chairs, stands with pots of flowers. The BARON *and* MASTER BRIDAINE, *the parish priest, discovered. The* BARON *picturesque and dignified, simple-minded, with an endless talent*

for being astonished. BRIDAINE *as fat as* BLAZIUS, *but majestic and masterful. The* BARON *is saluting* BLAZIUS *as the curtain rises;* BLAZIUS *is smiling and bowing.* BRIDAINE *remains seated haughtily at first; he looks coldly at* BLAZIUS; BLAZIUS *looks back ingratiatingly, rubbing his hands together.*

BARON. Master Bridaine, my friend, let me present Master Blazius to you, my son's tutor. (BRIDAINE *rises*) Yesterday, at eight minutes after noon, my son completed his twenty-first year. He has been made a Doctor of Arts, with honours in four subjects. Master Blazius, let me present Master Bridaine, our parish priest, to you; he is my friend.

BLAZIUS. (*Saluting him*) Honours in four subjects, sir: literature, botany, Roman law and Canon law.

BARON. Go to your room, dear Blazius; my son will soon be here; put your clothes in order and come back when the big bell rings.

[*Exit* BLAZIUS, *still smiling.* (*He bows and* BRIDAINE *scowls after him*)

BRIDAINE. Shall I tell you what I think, my lord? Your son's tutor smells horribly of wine.

BARON. It is impossible.

BRIDAINE. I am as sure as that I live; he was very near to me when he spoke; the smell was terrible.

BARON. Enough! I tell you again it is impossible.

Enter DAME PLUSH, *who curtsies deeply to the* BARON. *She has by now put on her parlour manners and, from the sour harridan of the first scene, has become the pattern of everything prim and proper.*

BARON. Welcome, good Dame Plush! My niece is doubtless with you?

PLUSH. She will come anon; I am but a little before her.

BARON. Master Bridaine, my friend, let me present Dame Plush to you, my niece's duenna. (BRIDAINE *welcomes her with smiles and affability, in complete contrast to the reception that he gave to* BLAZIUS) My niece completed her eighteenth year yesterday, at seven o'clock in the evening; she has been brought up at the best convent in all France. Dame Plush, let me present Master Bridaine, our parish priest, to you; he is my friend.

PLUSH. (*Saluting him*) At the best convent in all France, sir priest; and I may say of her, the best Christian in all the convent.

BARON. Go, Dame Plush, repair the disorder of your apparel; my niece will soon be here, I hope; be ready by the dinner-hour.

[*Exit* DAME PLUSH. *She curtsies, and* BRIDAINE *smiles politely after her and bows*

BRIDAINE. This ancient damsel seems full of unction.

BARON. Aye, full of unction and compunction, Master Bridaine; her virtue is unassailable.

BRIDAINE. (*Suddenly severe again*) But the tutor smells of wine; I'm sure of it.

BARON. Master Bridaine, there are moments when I doubt of your friendship. Do you take pleasure in contradicting me? Not a word more on that subject, I beg of you. It is my desire to unite my son and my niece in marriage; they are a well-assorted pair; their education has cost me five hundred pounds a year.

BRIDAINE. You will need a papal dispensation for the match.

BARON. I have got it already, Bridaine. What joy to be able at last to break the solitude to which my duties as a feudal seigneur have so long condemned me. Look from this window. See, my household goes flocking to the gates. My two children arrive at one and the same moment; the happiest possible conjunction of events. I have thought of everything. My niece will be ushered in by the door on the left, my son by the door on the right. What think you of that? I promise myself the greatest delight in seeing their first greeting, in hearing the first words they exchange. Five hundred pounds is no trifle; and, mark you, these two children have loved each other tenderly from the cradle up. Bridaine, an idea occurs to me.

BRIDAINE. What is it?

BARON. During dinner, as it were in the chance of conversation—you understand me, my friend—between two jovial cups of wine——. You know Latin, Bridaine?

BRIDAINE. *Ita aedepol!* I should think so indeed!

BARON. I should be glad to see you put the lad through his paces—discreetly, of course—before his cousin. It must needs produce a good effect; make him talk a little Latin; not exactly during dinner—that's too serious a time; and as for me, I understand not a word of it—but over the nuts and wine. You take me?

BRIDAINE. If you understand no Latin, sire, it is many odds but your niece is in the same case.

BARON. All the more reason why! Would you have a woman admire what she understands?

Where do you come from, Bridaine? Your reasoning is pitiful.

BRIDAINE. I know little about women; but it seems a strange thing to me to admire what one does not understand.

BARON. I know them well, Bridaine; charming elusive creatures! Believe me, they love to have dust thrown in their eyes; and the more one throws the wider they open them, to catch it all.

Enter PERDICAN *on one side,* CAMILLA *on the other.* PERDICAN, *brilliant and lackadaisical, an ultra-dandy in his dress and manner; a poet and artist by temperament; selfish and charming; Byronic, loving, vain, a spoilt child grown up, accustomed to easy conquest. His Paris education has given him an affectation in his language and mode of declamation which is altogether exquisite, giving an air of deep meaning to the most trifling things he says. He wears a gold chain in his cap.* CAMILLA *is in every way a contrast. Her hair is drawn smoothly back, her dress of white or grey, or a mixture of the two, is as near that of a nun as it can be without actually being a nun's dress; she has no adornments either of clothing or manner or speech. Her convent life has made her despise every kind of earthly love. She is pale and expressionless, straight-backed and firm-willed; she stands apart and looks coldly at her uncle, at* PERDICAN *and at the Priest, hardly acknowledging their salutations.*

BARON. Welcome, my children! Welcome, my dear Camilla! my dear Perdican! Kiss me, and kiss each other.

PERDICAN. Welcome, father. Welcome, beloved

sister! What joy to see you both! How happy I am!

CAMILLA. (*Coldly*) Father, cousin, accept my salutations.

PERDICAN. (*Fixing his attention on* CAMILLA *and leaving none for his father*) How big you have grown, Camilla! and you are beautiful as the day.

BARON. When did you leave Paris, Perdican?

PERDICAN. (*Absently*) Tuesday, I think, or Wednesday. (*Delightedly to* CAMILLA) From a girl you have become a woman. Then I must be a man. It seems but yesterday that I knew you no higher than that.

BARON. You must be tired, both of you. The journey was long, and it is hot.

PERDICAN. (*Absently*) Tired? No! (*Eagerly*) Look, father, how pretty Camilla has grown.

BARON. Come, Camilla, kiss your cousin.

CAMILLA. Excuse me, pray.

BARON. A compliment deserves a kiss. Kiss her.

PERDICAN. (*His affectation now taking the first place; eloquently*) If my cousin draws back when I offer her my hand, I must needs say in my turn: "Excuse me, pray." Love may steal a kiss, but friendship never.

CAMILLA. Neither friendship nor love must accept more than they can repay.

BARON. (*To* BRIDAINE) This is an ill-omen beginning, my friend!

BRIDAINE. (*To the* BARON) Too much modesty is no doubt a fault; but marriage banishes many a scruple.

BARON. (*To* BRIDAINE) I am shocked and wounded. Her answer distresses me. "Excuse me, pray." Did you see, she seemed to sign

the cross as she spoke? (*Taking him aside*) Come here, that I may speak to you. This pains me very much. This moment on which I had counted for such pleasure is quite spoilt for me. I am vexed and chagrined. The devil take it! things could not have gone worse.

BRIDAINE. Speak to them, sire. See how they turn their backs on each other.

BARON. Come, my children, what are you doing? Why do you stand there, Camilla, gazing at the wall?

CAMILLA. (*Indicating a picture*) That is a fine portrait, uncle. Is it not a great-aunt of ours?

BARON. Yes, my child, it is your great-grandmother . . . at least your great-grandmother's sister; for the worthy lady contributed nothing —excepting by her prayers—to the increase of the family. She was a holy woman, I trow.

CAMILLA. Yes, yes, a holy woman. It is my great-aunt Isabel. How well that nun's dress becomes her.

BARON. And you, Perdican, what are you doing, gazing at that flower-pot?

PERDICAN. It is a charming plant, father; it is a heliotrope.

BARON. Are you jesting? It is no bigger than a fly.

PERDICAN. This little flower no bigger than a fly has still its value.

BRIDAINE. (*Carrying out his instructions to show* PERDICAN *off before* CAMILLA) Doubtless! The Doctor is right. Ask him its sex, the class it belongs to, the elements that compose it, the origin of its sap and of its colour; he will delight your ears with telling you all the

qualities of this tiny herb, root and flower and all.

PERDICAN. (*Unwilling to be shown off; going to the opposite affectation of simplicity*) I am not so learned as all that, your Reverence. I think it smells good, that is all.

SCENE 3

The village green. Before the Château. The group of younger peasants assembled.

3RD PEASANT. There are many things doing that amuse me and excite my curiosity. Come, my friends, let us sit beneath this walnut-tree. Two formidable trenchermen are met face to face at this moment in the Château—Master Bridaine and Master Blazius. Have you not noted that when two men almost alike, equally fat, equally foolish, endowed both with the same vices and the same passions, chance to meet, they must needs either adore or detest each other? Ah! I foresee a fierce and secret struggle between the tutor and the parish priest. Both are armed with equal impudence; each has a barrel instead of a belly; both are not only gluttons, but dainty, lickerish feeders too; they will be rivals at dinner not only for the greatest quantity, but also for the finest quality. If the fish be a small one, what shall be done? And in any case there's no dividing a carp's tongue, and a carp cannot have two tongues.

4TH PEASANT. Item, both are chatterers; though, if the worst come to the worst, both

can talk at once without listening to each other. Already has Master Bridaine brought frowns to the tutor's brow by putting pedantic questions to young Sir Perdican.

3RD PEASANT. Master Blazius cannot bear that another should seem to put his pupil to the proof.

4TH PEASANT. Item, the one is as ignorant as the other.

3RD PEASANT. Item, both of them are priests; the one will boast of his parish, the other will brag of his tutorship.

4TH PEASANT. Master Blazius is confessor to the son, and Master Bridaine to the father.

3RD PEASANT. Already do I see them with their elbows on the table, their cheeks inflamed, their eyes bulging from their heads, wagging their double chins in a fury of dislike. They scan each other from head to foot, light-armed skirmishing heralds the coming fray! War will soon be declared between them; pedantries of every sort go hurtling through the air, and, to make all worse, between the two drunken foes sits Dame Plush, stabbing on this side and on that with her sharp-pointed elbows.

4TH PEASANT. Behold! dinner is ended and the gates of the Château are thrown open. The company comes forth to take the air.

3RD PEASANT. Let us withdraw ourselves apart.

[*Exeunt* PEASANTS

Enter DAME PLUSH *and the* BARON

BARON. Venerable Plush, I am deeply grieved.

PLUSH. Is it possible, my lord?

BARON. Yes, Plush, it is possible. I had long hoped, nay expected, noted it even in my pocket

tablets, that this day was to be the happiest of my life; aye, good lady, the happiest of my life. You are aware that I designed to unite my son and niece in marriage. All was fixed and settled; I had spoken of it to Bridaine; and lo! I see, or fancy that I see, a certain coldness in their conversation: they have not exchanged a word!

PLUSH. See where they come, my lord. Are they aware of your design?

BARON. I have touched a word to each of them in private. I think it were well, since they are met, to seat ourselves in this propitious shade and leave them together awhile.

[DAME PLUSH *and the* BARON *retire*

Enter CAMILLA *and* PERDICAN

PERDICAN. It was ungraceful in you, Camilla, to refuse me a kiss.

CAMILLA. I am like that; it is my way.

PERDICAN. Will you take my arm for a turn in the village?

CAMILLA. No, I am tired.

PERDICAN. Would it give you no pleasure to see the meadows once again? Do you remember our journeys in the boat? Come, let us go down to the mill; I will take the oars and you the tiller.

CAMILLA. I have no fancy for it.

PERDICAN. (*Wounded and plaintive*) You break my heart. What! have you no memory for the past, Camilla? not a heart's-throb for our childhood, for all the poor beloved time gone by, so sweet, so dear, so full of charming foolishness? Will you not come with me to see the path by which we went in the old days to the farm?

CAMILLA. No, not to-night.

PERDICAN. "No, not to-night!" Then when! All our life lies there.

CAMILLA. I am not young enough to play with dolls, nor old enough to dote upon the past.

PERDICAN. (*Piqued*) What mean you by that?

CAMILLA. I say that the memories of childhood are not to my taste.

PERDICAN. They weary you?

CAMILLA. Yes, they weary me.

PERDICAN. (*Exquisitely ironical*) Poor child! I pity you sincerely.

[*Exeunt on opposite sides*

Re-enter the BARON *and* DAME PLUSH

BARON. You see and you hear, most excellent Plush. I hoped for the suavest harmony, and I seem to be listening to a duet where the fiddle plays *I sigh my Soul*, while the flute pipes *Long live Henri Quatre!* Imagine the fearful discord produced by such a combination. Yet that is what is passing in my heart.

PLUSH. I must confess I cannot blame Camilla, and there is nothing in worse taste, to my mind, than going out in boats.

BARON. Are you speaking seriously?

PLUSH. My lord, a self-respecting young lady does not hazard herself on ornamental waters.

BARON. But take note, Dame Plush, that her cousin is going to marry her, and in that case . . .

PLUSH. The proprieties do not permit young ladies to handle tillers, and it is improper to quit terra firma in company with young men.

BARON. But I repeat . . . I tell you . . .

PLUSH. You wished for my opinion.

BARON. Are you mad? Oh, you will drive me to

say . . . There are certain expressions which I have no wish . . . Which I should desire . . . You make me long . . . Oh, if I did not restrain myself . . . (*Bursting out with it at last*) You are a blockhead, Plush ! There is no other word for it.

[*Exit* BARON. PLUSH *remains gasping*

SCENE 4

Before ROSETTE'S *cottage. Evening. A river runs to one side and a bridge goes over it. On this side of the bridge the river widens into a pool where there are boards for washing linen ; one or two women are busy there, singing as they wash. At the back of the scene beyond the road is* ROSETTE'S *cottage, with trees in front of it.* ROSETTE'S *window is above, on the first floor. There are seats on a fallen tree trunk on which old men sit. The group of elder peasants is discovered. Enter* PERDICAN *in his most elegant and eloquent mood. The old men are poetical in answer through sheer simplicity.*

PERDICAN. Good-day, my friends. Do you remember me ?

1ST PEASANT. Sire, you are like a child that we once loved.

PERDICAN. Is it not you that used to carry me on your backs across the brooks that thread your meadows ? Is it not you who used to dance me on your knees and take me on the crupper of your sturdy mares, who crowded closer on the settle to make place for me at the farm-house supper ?

1ST PEASANT. Sire, we remember it well. You were the naughtiest, worst, wickedest, dearest little rascal in the world.

PERDICAN. Then why do you not kiss me instead of saluting me from afar like strangers ?

1ST PEASANT. May God send you His blessing, child of our own loins. Each of us is longing to take you in his arms ; but we are old, sire, and you, you are a man.

PERDICAN. Yes, it is ten years since we met ; and everything under the sun changes in a single day. I have grown higher some feet towards the sky, and you have bent lower some inches towards the tomb. Your heads are white with age, your footsteps are grown faltering and slow ; you can no longer lift me in your arms as you lifted the child of yore. It is my turn to be your father now, as once I was your son.

1ST PEASANT. The day of your return is more joyful to us than the day of your birth.

2ND PEASANT. It is sweeter to find one that we love again than to welcome the coming of a new-born child.

PERDICAN. Behold once more my beloved valley, my walnut-trees, my grassy paths, my bubbling spring ! There are the days of my youth still full of life ; there is the mysterious dream-world of my childhood. Oh, home ! home ! sweet, mysterious word ! Is man born, then, only for one corner of the world, just to build his nest there and live for a day ?

CHORUS. We have been told that you are learned, sire.

PERDICAN. Aye, I have been told so too. Learning is a noble thing, my children ; but these

trees and meadows cry aloud the noblest learning of all—to forget what one has learnt.

CHORUS. There is many a change since you departed. There are maidens married and young men gone to the wars.

PERDICAN. All this you must tell me anon. I look to hear all the news from you; but, in truth, I will not hear it yet. How small is this pool; how vast it once appeared! I carried away in my head an ocean surrounded with forests, and lo! I find a puddle bordered by a few blades of grass. Who is the maiden that sings yonder at her casement behind the trees?

CHORUS. It is Rosette, your cousin Camilla's foster-sister.

PERDICAN. (*Advancing*) Come, Rosette, and join me here.

Enter ROSETTE, *an entirely charming and simple village girl*

ROSETTE. Yes, my lord.

PERDICAN. You saw me from your window and did not come to greet me, naughty child? Give me that hand quickly and those cheeks of yours that I may kiss you.

ROSETTE. Yes, my lord.

PERDICAN. Are you married, little one? I have been told so.

ROSETTE. Oh no!

PERDICAN. Why not? There is no prettier girl in all the village. We must find you a husband, child.

CHORUS. Sire, she wishes to die unwed.

PERDICAN. Is it true, Rosette?

ROSETTE. Oh no!

PERDICAN. Your sister Camilla has arrived. Have you seen her ?

ROSETTE. She has not yet come this way.

PERDICAN. Go quickly and put on your new frock ; you must come and sup at the Château.

SCENE 5

A room in the Château. (*The same as Scene* 2.)

BLAZIUS. Sire, I have a word to say to you : the priest of this parish is a drunkard.

BARON. Oh, hush ! It is impossible.

BLAZIUS. I am sure of it : he drank three bottles of wine at dinner.

BARON. Three bottles is too much.

BLAZIUS. And when he left the table he walked on the flower-beds.

BARON. On the flower-beds ? I am dumbfounded ! You amaze me ! Drank three bottles of wine at dinner ! Walked on the flower-beds ! It is incomprehensible. Why did he not walk on the path ?

BLAZIUS. Because he walked crooked.

BARON. (*Sniffing, aside*) I begin to think Bridaine was right this morning. This Blazius smells most horribly of wine.

BLAZIUS. Moreover, he ate voraciously ; his speech grew thick.

BARON. Indeed I observed it too.

BLAZIUS. When he let fly his Latin every word was a mistake. Sire, he is a depraved and evil man.

BARON. (*Aside*) Pouah ! this Blazius has a most intolerable odour. . . . Understand, Master

Tutor, that I have other gear to think of, and that I take no heed what people eat or drink. I am not a butler.

BLAZIUS. Heaven preserve me from offending you, sire. Your wine is good.

BARON. Aye, there's good stuff in my cellar.

Enter BRIDAINE

BRIDAINE. Sire, your son is on the village green, followed by all the ragamuffins of the village.

BARON. It is impossible.

BRIDAINE. I have seen him with my own eyes. He was picking up pebbles to play at ducks and drakes.

BARON. Ducks and drakes? My head swims; my brain is getting confused. What you tell me is sheer madness, Bridaine. Whoever heard of a Doctor of Arts playing ducks and drakes?

BRIDAINE. Go to the window, sire, and see him for yourself. (*Leading the way*)

BARON. (*Aside. Looking after him*) Oh, heavens! Blazius is right; Bridaine is walking crooked.

BRIDAINE. See, sire, there he stands by the brink of the washing-pool. He has his arm about the waist of a peasant girl.

BARON. A peasant girl? Has my son come home to debauch my vassals? His arm round the waist of a peasant girl! And all the ragamuffins of the village at his heels! I cannot contain myself!

BRIDAINE. (*To the* BARON, *nodding darkly at* BLAZIUS) This cries aloud for vengeance.

BARON. All is lost, lost beyond recall! I am a ruined man. Bridaine walks crooked, Blazius

smells of wine a league away, and my son seduces all the girls of the village and plays at ducks and drakes!

[*Exit* BARON

(*The two priests remain, gazing defiantly at each other*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE 1

The garden of the Château. The morning of the next day. BLAZIUS *and* PERDICAN *discovered.*

BLAZIUS. Sir, your father is in despair.
PERDICAN. And why ?
BLAZIUS. You are aware that he designed you for your cousin Camilla.
PERDICAN. Well ? I ask for nothing better.
BLAZIUS. But the Baron thinks that your characters do not suit each other.
PERDICAN. It is a pity, but I cannot alter mine.
BLAZIUS. Do you mean, then, to make the marriage impossible ?
PERDICAN. I tell you again that I ask for nothing better than to marry Camilla. Seek out my father and tell him so.
BLAZIUS. Sir, I will withdraw. I see your cousin coming this way.

[*Exit* BLAZIUS

Enter CAMILLA *with a fan*

PERDICAN. Up already, cousin ? I shall always hold by what I said yesterday : you are as beautiful as the day.
CAMILLA. Let us speak seriously, Perdican. Your father wishes us to marry. I do not know what you think of it, but I feel in duty bound to tell you that my own mind is made up.
PERDICAN. Alas for me if you dislike me !
CAMILLA. I dislike you no more than another. I do not wish to marry. There is nothing in that to wound your pride.

PERDICAN. Pride concerns me not. I care neither for its joys nor for its pains.

CAMILLA. I have come to receive my mother's heritage; to-morrow I go back to my convent.

PERDICAN. I like the frankness of your dealing. Let us clasp hands and be friends.

CAMILLA. I do not care for clasping hands.

PERDICAN. Give me your hand, Camilla, I beg of you. (*Taking it against her will*) What have you to fear from me? You do not wish to marry me? So be it; do not marry me. But that is no reason for hating each other. Are we not brother and sister? When your mother appointed this marriage in her will she wished our friendship to endure for ever; that is all. Why should we marry? Here is your hand and here is mine; to keep them joined till our last breath, what need have we of a priest? We need no help but Heaven's.

CAMILLA. I am glad that my refusal is so small a matter to you.

PERDICAN. It is not a small matter to me, Camilla. Your love would have given me new life, but your friendship will console me for the loss of it. Do not leave the Château to-morrow. Yesterday you refused to walk in the garden with me because you saw in me an unwelcome suitor for your hand, but now stay here a few days; let me hope that our past life is not dead for ever in your heart.

CAMILLA. I am obliged to go.

PERDICAN. Why?

CAMILLA. That is a secret.

PERDICAN. Do you love some other man?

CAMILLA. No; but I am resolved to go.

PERDICAN. Irrevocably?

CAMILLA. Irrevocably.

PERDICAN. (*Pained and submissive*) So be it! Farewell. I could have wished to sit with you under the chestnut-trees in the little wood and talk in all good fellowship an hour or two. But if you will not, let us say no more. Farewell, my friend.

[*Exit* PERDICAN *dejected*

(CAMILLA, *who has been cold and severe with him during the whole interview, melts suddenly as he goes away; she is half for calling him back, but refrains, and begins to write a note*)

Enter DAME PLUSH, *starched and dignified, in a long sweeping dress*

CAMILLA. Dame Plush, is all prepared? Do we depart to-morrow? Has my guardian ended his accounts?

PLUSH. Yes, dear, stainless dove. Last night the Baron called me a blockhead, and I no longer wish to stay.

CAMILLA. Stop; here is a line that you must take, before dinner, to my cousin Perdican.

PLUSH. The saints preserve us! Is it possible? You write a letter to a man?

CAMILLA. (*Defiantly*) Am I not to be his wife? I may surely write to my affianced husband!

PLUSH. Sir Perdican has but this moment gone from you. What can you have to write? Your affianced husband? Mercy on us! Have you forgotten your promise to be the bride of Heaven?

CAMILLA. (*Angrily*) Do as I bid you, and make all ready for our departure.

SCENE 2

A shallow scene with a canvas representing the dining-hall of the Château. It is towards noon. Serving-men pass with plates, knives, forks, etc. Dinner is being laid.

Enter BRIDAINE *gloomily*

BRIDAINE. (*Solus*) It is not to be doubted, once more to-day they will give him the place of honour. Once more will this chair where I have so long sate at the Baron's right hand fall to the tutor's share. Unhappy wretch that I am! What! banished to the bottom of the table by an ignorant, shameless, drunken pedant! For him will the butler pour the first glass of the malmsey, and when the dishes reach me they will he half cold and all the best morsels gone; there will be no cabbage or carrot left about the partridges. O holy Catholic Church! that they should give him this place yesterday, that I can understand; he had but just arrived. It was the first time for many years that he had sat at this table. Heavens, how he ate! . . . No, nothing will be left for me but mutton bones and chicken claws. I will not put up with this affront. . . . Farewell, thou venerable chair where I have flung myself back so often, gorged with succulent comestibles! Farewell, ye dusty seal-tipped bottles and matchless savour of well-browned venison! Farewell, thou sumptuous board, thou noble dining-hall where I shall say the Benedicite no more! I will go back to my parish; I will not be seen confounded in the common herd of guests. Like

Caesar, I would rather be the first man in the village than the second in Rome. (*He stalks out with a resolute and tragic air*)

SCENE 3

Before ROSETTE'S *cottage.* (*The same as Act I., Scene* 4.) PERDICAN *leads* ROSETTE *down from the cottage door with his arm round her waist, stopping to kiss her from time to time. He is very sad, full of self-pity for* CAMILLA'S *cruelty; he is seeking consolation.*

PERDICAN. Since your mother is from home, come and take a little walk with me.

ROSETTE. Do you think that all these kisses that you give me will do me any good?

PERDICAN. They can do no harm. I would kiss you before your mother's face. Are you not Camilla's sister? Then am I not your brother as I am hers?

ROSETTE. Aye, words are words; but kisses are kisses for all that. I have no wit, and I perceive the want of it whenever I have anything to say. Fine ladies know what to think according as a man kisses their right hand or their left; their fathers kiss them on the forehead, their lovers on the lips. But everybody kisses me on both my cheeks and that vexes me.

PERDICAN. (*Sadly and tenderly, thinking of his sorrows*) How pretty you are, my child!

ROSETTE. Pretty? And why should you be angry with me for that? How sad you look this morning. Has your marriage gone awry?

PERDICAN. The peasants in the village remember that they loved me once; the dogs in the

kitchen-yard remember it, and the trees in the forest too; (*despairingly*) but Camilla, Camilla has forgotten. . . . (*Rousing himself*) And your marriage, Rosette, when is that to be?

ROSETTE. (*Timidly*) Let us not talk of it, if you please. (*Smiling*) Let us talk of the fine weather, of the flowers that blow, of your horses and of my bonnets.

PERDICAN. Of what you will, Rosette; (*gallantly but absently*) of everything that can pass your lips without robbing them of this heavenly smile that I respect more than my own life. (*Kissing her*)

ROSETTE. (*Pouting*) You respect my smile, but you respect my lips very little, it would seem. (*A pause.* PERDICAN *weeps*) Look, a drop of rain has fallen on my hand, and yet the sky is blue.

PERDICAN. Forgive me.

ROSETTE. What have I done to you that you should weep?

(*He sits weeping; she looks down at him in distress, not understanding*)

SCENE 4

A room in the Château. (*The same as Act I., Scene 2.*) *The* BARON *busy reading or writing.*

Enter BLAZIUS *with an air of something important to communicate: the fact that he has lately drunk a bottle or two of wine appears only in a certain vagueness of his speech.*

BLAZIUS. Sire, I have a strange thing to tell you of. A moment since I chanced to be in the buttery—in the library, I mean—what business

could have taken me to the buttery ?—I was in the library, I say, and had chanced on a bottle of wi . . . a jug of water, I mean—how should I find a bottle of wine in the library ? I was engaged then in drinking a cup of wine—a glass of water, I should say—to pass the time, and was gazing out of window between two flower-vases which seemed to be of modern design, though imitated no doubt from the Etruscan . . .

BARON. What a vile manner of speaking you have adopted of late, Blazius! Your speeches are incomprehensible.

BLAZIUS. Listen to me, sire, and lend me your attention but a little while. I was looking out of window, I say . . . Do not lose patience, for the love of Heaven! This concerns the honour of your family.

BARON. Of my family! This passes understanding. The honour of my family, Blazius ? Do you know that we reckon thirty-seven males in our family and nearly as many females, both in Paris and the provinces ?

BLAZIUS. Allow me to continue. While I was drinking a cup of wine—a glass of water, I mean—in order to assist a rather slow digestion, to my surprise I saw Dame Plush pass beneath the window all out of breath.

BARON. Why out of breath, Blazius ? This is extraordinary.

BLAZIUS. And red with anger, at her side your niece Camilla.

BARON. Who was red with anger, my niece or Dame Plush ?

BLAZIUS. Your niece, sire.

BARON. My niece red with anger ? This is unheard of! And how do you know that it was

with anger? She might have been red for a thousand reasons; she had perhaps been chasing butterflies round the flower-beds.

BLAZIUS. I can say nothing as to that; it is quite possible; but she was crying out with all her might: "Go where I tell you! Seek him out! Do as I bid you! You are a fool! I insist on it!" And she was rapping Dame Plush on the elbow with her fan, and Dame Plush cut capers in the clover at every exclamation.

BARON. Dame Plush cut capers in the clover! . . . And what answer did Dame Plush make to my niece's extraordinary behaviour?—I know no other word for it.

BLAZIUS. Dame Plush replied: "I will not go! I will not go! He is making love to the girls of the village, making love to goose-herds. I am too old to learn to carry lovers' messages. Thanks be to Heaven I have kept my hands pure till now"; and as she spoke she crumpled in her fingers a little paper folded into four.

BARON. I do not understand a word of it; my brain is altogether confounded. What reason could Dame Plush have for crumpling a paper folded into four and cutting capers in the clover? I cannot credit such a monstrous tale.

BLAZIUS. Do you not perceive, sire, the meaning of these things?

BARON. Truly, no, my friend, I do not understand the smallest word of it. It only seems to me a most abandoned sort of conduct, equally without motive or excuse.

BLAZIUS. It means that your niece is carrying on a secret correspondence.

BARON. What do you say? Do you remember

of whom you are speaking? Weigh your words well, Sir Priest.

BLAZIUS. If I weighed them in the heavenly scales that shall weigh my soul in the Day of Judgment I should not find a word of what I say that . . . smelt . . . false coinage. Your niece is carrying on a secret correspondence.

BARON. Reflect, my friend; it is impossible.

BLAZIUS. Why should she charge her companion with a letter? Why should she cry, "Seek him out," and why should Dame Plush resist so peevishly?

BARON. To whom was the letter addressed?

BLAZIUS. Aha! that is just where the *hic* comes in, sire: *hic jacet lepus*, here lies the hare. To whom was the letter addressed? To a man who makes love to a goose-herd. Now a man who pays his addresses in public to a goose-herd may well be suspected of having been born to herd geese himself. It is impossible, however, that your niece, after the education that she has had, should be in love with such a man. That is what I say, sire, and that is why I understand no more of the matter than yourself, saving your reverence.

BARON. Heavens! my niece declared to me this very morning that she would not wed her cousin Perdican. Can she be in love with a goose-herd? Let us go into my private chamber; I have had so many violent shocks since yesterday that I cannot collect my thoughts.

[*Exeunt*

SCENE 5

In the wood by a spring; the grassy ground slopes down towards the front; on the higher ground at the back last year's yellow leaves catch the rays of the midday sun. The spring trickles out of a rock and forms a pool.

Enter PERDICAN, *reading a letter.*

PERDICAN. (*Reading*) "Be at midday by the little spring." What is the meaning of this? Such coldness, so cruel and positive a refusal, such unfeeling pride, and on the top of all a rendezvous! If it be to talk business, why choose such a spot? Is it a piece of coquetry? This morning as I walked with Rosette I heard something stirring in the undergrowth, and thought it was a passing doe. Is there some plot in this?

Enter CAMILLA, *kind and smiling; she wears her nunnery dress coquettishly.*

CAMILLA. Good-day, cousin. Rightly or wrongly, I thought that you were sad when you left me this morning. I would not yield you my hand unforced, and now I come to ask you to give me yours. I refused you a kiss, and now I give it freely. (*Kissing him*) And now . . . you said that you would be glad to converse like friends. Sit by me here and let us talk. (*She sits by the spring*)

PERDICAN. Was I dreaming before, or am I dreaming now?

CAMILLA. You thought it strange, no doubt, to receive a letter from me? Well, I am of a changing humour. But you said a true word

this morning: "Since we must part, let us part good friends." You do not know why I am going, and I have come to tell you. I am going to take the veil.

PERDICAN. (*Paying little attention to her words*) Can this be real? Is it you, Camilla, whose image I see in this spring, sitting among the daisies, as in the days of old?

CAMILLA. Yes, Perdican, it is I. I have come to live the old life once again for a quarter of an hour. You thought me harsh and proud; it is a simple matter; I have renounced the world. But before leaving it I wish to hear your advice. Do you think I do right to become a nun?

(CAMILLA *is all tranquil reason.* PERDICAN *lies and looks romantically up at her, hoping for the best*)

PERDICAN. Do not ask me that, for I am sure that I shall never turn monk.

CAMILLA. During the ten years that we have been apart you have begun to have experience of life. I know what manner of man you are, and you must have learnt much in a little time with such a heart and mind as yours. Tell me, have you had mistresses?

PERDICAN. Why do you ask me?

CAMILLA. Answer me, I beg, without modesty or vanity.

PERDICAN. Yes. I have had mistresses.

CAMILLA. And did you love them?

PERDICAN. With all my heart.

CAMILLA. Where are they now? Do you know?

PERDICAN. These are indeed strange questions to ask. What should I say? I am not their husband or their brother; they have gone where they listed.

CAMILLA. There must have been some one among them that you loved better than the rest. How long did you love the one that you loved best ?

PERDICAN. You are a strange girl. Would you be my father-confessor ?

CAMILLA. I ask it of you as a favour to answer me sincerely. You are not a libertine, and I think you have an honest heart. You must have inspired love in others, for you are worthy of it, and you would not have yielded to a mere caprice. Answer me, I beg.

PERDICAN. In good faith, I do not remember.

CAMILLA. Do you know any man who has never loved but once ?

PERDICAN. There certainly are such men.

CAMILLA. Do you number one among your friends ? Tell me his name.

PERDICAN. I can tell you no name ; but I think there are men capable of loving but once.

CAMILLA. How many times can a man of honour love ?

PERDICAN. Do you wish me to recite a litany, or are you yourself repeating a catechism ?

CAMILLA. I wish to learn ; I wish to know if I am right or wrong in becoming a nun. If I married you, ought you not to answer all my questions candidly and lay your heart bare before me ? I have a great esteem for you and I hold you by nature and education better than other men. I am sorry that you have forgotten the answer to my questions : perhaps if I knew you better I should be bolder.

PERDICAN. What would you have of me ? Speak and I will answer.

CAMILLA. Then answer my first question. Am I right to stay at the convent ?

PERDICAN. No.

CAMILLA. Should I do more wisely to marry you ?

PERDICAN. Yes.

CAMILLA. If the parish priest breathed on a glass of water and told you that it was a glass of wine, would you drink it and believe that it was so ?

PERDICAN. No.

CAMILLA. If the parish priest breathed on you and told me you would love me all your life, should I be right in believing him ?

PERDICAN. Yes and no.

CAMILLA. What would you counsel me to do the day when I saw that you loved me no more ?

PERDICAN. To take a lover.

CAMILLA. What shall I do the day my lover ceases to love me ?

PERDICAN. Take another.

CAMILLA. How long will that last ?

PERDICAN. Till your hair is grey ; and then mine will be white.

CAMILLA. Do you know what nunneries are, Perdican ?

PERDICAN. Yes, I know them.

CAMILLA. I have a friend in our cloister, a sister who is but thirty years old, and has had twenty thousand pounds a year since she was fifteen. She is the loveliest and noblest creature that ever walked the earth. She was a peeress of Parliament, wedded to one of the most distinguished men in France. Not one of her noble faculties had been neglected, and, like the scion of a noble stock, all her buds had put forth shoots. Never will love and happiness lay their blooming garland on a fairer brow. Her

husband deceived her. She loved another, and she is dying of despair.

PERDICAN. It is possible.

CAMILLA. We share a cell together, and we have passed whole nights talking of her misfortunes; they have almost become my own. That is strange, is it not? I do not know how it has come about. When she talked to me about her marriage, when she painted me the ecstasy of the early days, the tranquil happiness of those that followed, and then the final loss of everything—how she sate of an evening by the fireside, while he gazed out of window and neither spoke a word; how their love languished and decayed, and all their efforts to draw closer led only to fresh quarrels; how little by little the face of another came between them and grew to be a part of their suffering—it was myself, not her, that I saw living through it as she spoke. If she said, "Then I was happy," my heart leaped with joy; if she said, "Then I wept," the tears flowed from my eyes. In the end I created an imaginary life for myself. It has lasted for four years. No need to tell you what meditations and heart-searchings have gone to the making of it. The strangest thing of all—and this is what I wished to tell you—in all Louise's tales, in all the fiction of my dreams, the figure over against me bore your semblance.

PERDICAN. My semblance? Mine?

CAMILLA. Yes. It was but natural. You were the only man I knew. Yes, Perdican, I loved you once.

PERDICAN. How old are you, Camilla?

CAMILLA. I am eighteen.

PERDICAN. Go on, go on; I am listening.

CAMILLA. There are two hundred women in our convent. Some of them will never know life; the rest are but awaiting death. More than one has come forth into the world as I came yesterday, in the virginity of youth and hope. They have soon returned to the cloister walls, aged and desolate. Every day there are some that die in our dormitories; every day there come fresh ones to take the place of the dead on the horsehair mattresses. Strangers who visit our house admire the peace and order that reign there; they mark the pure whiteness of our veils; they wonder why we draw them over our eyes. What think you of these women, Perdican? Are they right or are they wrong?

PERDICAN. I cannot say.

CAMILLA. Some among them have advised me to remain unwed. I am glad I can take counsel with you. Do you think they would have done better to take lovers and advise me to do the same?

PERDICAN. I cannot say.

CAMILLA. You promised to answer me.

PERDICAN. I hold myself absolved from such a promise. I do not think it is you who speak.

CAMILLA. It may be so. In all my thoughts there is doubtless much folly. It may be that I have been told what I should say, and that I repeat it like an ill-taught parrot. There is a little picture in the gallery showing a monk bowed over his missal; a feeble ray of sunshine pierces the barred and dingy window of his cell, and beyond one sees an Italian tavern, with a goatherd dancing at the door. Which of those two men do you esteem the more?

PERDICAN. Neither and both. They are two men

of flesh and blood; one reads and the other dances; I see no more in it than that. You are right to become a nun.

CAMILLA. You said no but a little while since.

PERDICAN. Did I say no? It may be so.

CAMILLA. You advise me to do so, then?

PERDICAN. You believe in nothing, then?

CAMILLA. Lift up your head, Perdican. What man is there that believes in nothing?

PERDICAN. (*Rising*) Here is one. I do not believe in eternal life. . . . Dearest sister, the nuns have told you their experience; but, believe me, it will not be yours. You will not die without knowing what it is to love.

CAMILLA. I wish to love; but I do not wish to suffer. I wish to love with an eternal love, and make vows that shall never be broken. My love is fixed in heaven. (*Showing her crucifix*)

PERDICAN. It is a love that does not exclude others.

CAMILLA. For me at least it shall. Do not smile, Perdican! It is ten years since last I saw you, and to-morrow I depart. In ten years more, if we meet again, we will talk of this once more. I did not wish to remain cold as a marble statue in your memory; I did not wish you to think that want of feeling had made me what I am. Hearken to me: go back to your own life, and while you are happy, while you love as men can love with an earthly love, forget your sister Camilla; but if ever you live to be unloving or unloved, if ever the angel of hope abandon you, when you are left alone with desolation in your heart, then think of me, for I shall pray for you.

PERDICAN. You are a proud girl. Beware of yourself!

CAMILLA. Why ?

PERDICAN. You are eighteen and you do not believe in love.

CAMILLA. Do you believe in it yourself ? (*She grows angry and jealous at the thought of the love that she was capable of giving to a man if a man could have been found capable of returning it worthily*) These knees of yours are worn with kneeling at the feet of your mistresses, and yet you have forgotten their names already. You have wept tears of joy and tears of despair, but you know that the water in the wayside spring was more constant than your tears, and that you could always wash your swollen eyelids in it and be well again. You do as other young men do ; you smile when you hear of women's broken hearts ; you do not believe that people die of love, for you have loved and live. What a strange place is this world in which you dwell ! How sincerely you must despise the women who take you as you are, and banish their latest lover to draw you to their bosoms with the kisses of another still fresh upon their lips. I asked you but now if you had ever loved ; you answered me as a traveller might answer if one asked, Have you been in Italy ? Have you been in Germany ? and who should say, " Yes, I have been there," and thinks of going on to Switzerland or some other country. Is your love money to pass from hand to hand until your death ? No, I will not compare it to money ; for the tiniest coin is truer than you : into whosesoever hands it pass, it still preserves the image stamped on it.

PERDICAN. How beautiful you are, Camilla, when your eyes light up !

CAMILLA. Yes, I am beautiful, and I know it. Flatterers have nothing to teach me. The passionless nun who shears my locks will blench at such a mutilation. But they shall never be turned into curls and ringlets to flaunt in drawing-rooms. There will not be any missing when the shears go through them; and when the priest who consecrates me puts the gold ring of my celestial marriage on my finger the tress of hair that I shall give him will be big enough to serve him for a cope.

PERDICAN. You are angry, in very truth.

CAMILLA. I have done wrong to speak. My whole life has come to my lips for utterance. Oh, Perdican! do not mock, for all this is sad as death.

PERDICAN. Poor child, I have let you speak unhindered, and now I have a word to say in answer. You tell me of a certain nun, one who has had a fatal influence, it seems, on you. You say that she has been deceived, has been herself unfaithful, and that she is in despair. Are you sure that if her husband or her lover came back and stretched her out his hand through the parlour wicket she would not stretch out her own to take it?

CAMILLA. What did you say? I did not understand.

PERDICAN. Are you sure that if her husband or her lover came back and bade her suffer once more she would say no?

CAMILLA. I think she would.

PERDICAN. There are two hundred women in your nunnery, and most of them have deep wounds at the bottom of their hearts. They have laid your finger on their wounds; they

have stained your virgin thoughts with the drops of their flowing blood. They have lived, see you, and they have shown you the road where their life has passed with horror-stricken hands; you have crossed yourself before their wounds as you would before the wounds of Christ. They have made room for you in their doleful processions, and you press close to their withered and fleshless bodies, trembling with holy fear, when you see a man go by. Are you sure that if the man who passes were he that had deceived them, he for whom they weep and suffer, he whom they curse in their prayers to Heaven, are you sure that when they saw him they would not break their chains and fly once more to their former sorrows and press their bleeding bosoms against the knife that pierced them in the past? My child! my child! Do you know the dreams these women dream who bid you not to dream? Do you know the name they murmur when their sobs shake the wafer presented to their lips? Those who sit at your side with palsied heads to pour the poison of their jaded age into your ear, who sound the curfew of their despair amid the ruins of your youth, and who chill your crimson blood with the cold breath of the tomb, do you know what they are?

CAMILLA. You frighten me, Perdican; you too are angry.

PERDICAN. Do you know what these nuns are, unhappy girl? They who would make you believe that the love of men is only a lie, do they know that there is a worse lie than that, the lie that betrays the love of God? Do they know that they are guilty of a crime when they

come whispering women's secrets in a maiden's ear? Ah! how well they have taught you your lesson! Did I not divine all this when you stood and gazed at our great-aunt's portrait on the wall? You wished to go without shaking me by the hand; you did not wish to see this wood again, or this poor little fountain that looks upon us bathed in tears; you disowned your childhood's days, and the plaster mask that the nuns have laid upon your face refused me a brotherly kiss. But your heart began to beat at last; it forgot the lesson learnt before it was old enough to read; and you came back to sit once more with me upon this grass. (*Seeing the stubborn look on her face, by which her pride still denies that she loves him, he is too proud to end logically by bidding her leave the convent. Preferring to lose her rather than humble himself, he adds with swift insincerity*) Camilla, those women did well to speak; they have put you on the right road; it may cost me the happiness of my life; but tell them this from me: Heaven is not for them.

CAMILLA. Nor for me either, you would say?

PERDICAN. Farewell, Camilla; go back to your nunnery; and when the sisters come to poison your mind with their hateful tales, answer them in this wise: All men are liars, tattlers, hypocrites, false, inconstant, proud or cowardly, sensual and contemptible; all women are treacherous, inquisitive, vain, affected and depraved; the world is nothing but a bottomless sewer where beasts of monstrous shape crawl and writhe on mountains of abominations; but there is one sublime and holy thing in this world, and that is the union of two of these

vile and hateful beings. One is often deceived in love, often wounded, often wretched; and yet one loves; and on the brink of the grave one turns and casts a look behind one, and one says: I have suffered often, I have made mistakes, but still . . . I have loved; it is I that have lived and not some artificial being created by my pride and my disdain.

[*Exit* PERDICAN, *more in love than ever* (CAMILLA *remains, firmly resolved to take the veil, but more than ever conscious of the value of what she is renouncing*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 1

The village green. Before the Château. (*Same as Act I., Scene* 1.) *The* BARON *stands in the Château doorway:* BLAZIUS *is on the steps in process of being turned out.*

BARON. Apart from your drunkenness, you are a rogue, Master Blazius. My servants have seen you entering the buttery by stealth, and when you are convicted of having robbed my cellar in the vilest way, you seek to justify yourself by accusing my niece of carrying on a secret correspondence.

BLAZIUS. But, sire, I beg you to recall . . .

BARON. Go, Sir Priest, and let me never see your face again. Your conduct is altogether . . . illogical, and my dignity forbids that I should ever pardon it. (*The* BARON *closes the Château door and* BLAZIUS *goes slowly and disconsolately away*)

Enter PERDICAN

PERDICAN. (*Hesitating between opposite opinions*) Would that I knew if I love her or not. Why, to question me so sharply ill beseems a girl of eighteen; and then, how shall the ideas with which these nuns have filled her head ever be dispelled? . . . Heavens! she leaves the Château to-day. I love her, I love her! there can be no manner of doubt. Perhaps she was but repeating a lesson she had learnt by rote; still . . . it is clear that she cares not a jot for me. Why, however beautiful she be, her manners are far too decided and her mode of

speech too rough for me. Plague on her! I have but to think of her no more; it is plain that I do not love her. It is true that she is pretty; but why does yesterday's conversation run so in my head? I passed the night in a strange turmoil of thought. . . . (*Hesitating between the Château and the village*) Which way shall I go, then? This way? That way? . . . Bah! I'll go to the village.

[*Exit*

SCENE 2

Before ROSETTE'S *cottage.* (*Same as Act I., Scene* 4.)

Enter BRIDAINE

BRIDAINE. (*Solus*) What are they doing now? Alas! the clock strikes noon . . . They are at table. What are they eating? What are they not eating? I saw the cook pass through the village with a huge turkey. The kitchen-maid followed her bearing truffles and a big basketful of grapes.

Enter BLAZIUS. *The two priests do not see each other, but speak to themselves.*

BLAZIUS. Oh, unforeseen misfortune! here am I driven forth from the Château, and consequently from the dining-hall. No more shall I fetch wine from the Baron's buttery.

BRIDAINE. I shall see the dishes smoke no more; no more shall I warm my rotund belly at the fire of that noble hearth.

BLAZIUS. Oh, why was I ever led by a fatal

curiosity to listen to the colloquy between Dame Plush and the Baron's niece? Why did I ever report to the Baron what I had seen?

BRIDAINE. Oh, why has my empty pride banished me from the noble board where I was wont to be received so graciously? What mattered whether I sate to right or left?

BLAZIUS. Alas! I was drunk, I must confess, when I did this act of madness.

BRIDAINE. Alas! the fumes of the wine had mounted to my brain when I committed this act of folly.

BLAZIUS. Ha! this is surely the parish priest.

BRIDAINE. Who can this be but the tutor?

BLAZIUS. Why, good Sir Priest, what make you here?

BRIDAINE. I, sir? I am on my way to dinner. Are you not coming too?

BLAZIUS. Not to-day. Ah, good Master Bridaine, I beseech you, intercede for me. For alas! the Baron has turned me out. I have accused Mistress Camilla falsely of carrying on a secret correspondence; and yet Heaven is my witness that I saw, or thought I saw, Dame Plush among the clover. I am a ruined man, your Reverence.

BRIDAINE. What is this you tell me?

BLAZIUS. Alackaday! the truth, sir. I am in deep disgrace for purloining a bottle of wine.

BRIDAINE. What is all this of purloined bottles and clover and secret correspondence?

BLAZIUS. I entreat you to plead my cause. I am an honest man, reverend Master Bridaine. Oh, noble and worthy Master Bridaine, I am your humble servant.

BRIDAINE. (*Aside*) Dame Fortune, is it a dream?

Shall I sit between thine arms, O blessed chair, once more?

BLAZIUS. Deign to hearken to my tale and to protect me, most noble and reverend master.

BRIDAINE. Sir, it is impossible. It is past noon and I must go to dinner. If the Baron is displeased with you, it is no affair of mine. I cannot plead for a drunkard. (*Aside*) Quick, let me fly to the castle gate, and thou, dear paunch, round thyself out about a goodly meal.

[*Exit, running*

BLAZIUS. (*Alone*) O miserable Plush! it is you shall smart for all of them. Yes, you are the cause of my ruin, shameless female, vile go-between; it is to you that I owe this misfortune. O holy University of Paris! that I should have lived to be called a drunkard! I am a lost man if I cannot intercept a letter and prove to the Baron that his niece carries on a secret correspondence. I saw her this morning writing at her desk. Patience! What have we here? (*Enter* DAME PLUSH *carrying a letter*) Plush, give me that letter.

PLUSH. What is the meaning of this? It is a letter from my mistress, which I am carrying to the village post.

BLAZIUS. Give it to me or you are a dead woman.

PLUSH. Me a dead woman? Me? The saints preserve us!

BLAZIUS. A dead woman, Plush! Give me the letter. (*They fight*)

Enter PERDICAN

PERDICAN. What is this? What are you doing, Blazius? Why do you assail this woman?

PLUSH. Give me that letter. He has taken it from me, sire. Justice!

BLAZIUS. Sire, she is a go-between. This letter is a love letter.

PLUSH. It is a letter from Camilla, sire, your affianced bride.

BLAZIUS. It is a love letter to a goose-herd.

PLUSH. You are a liar, priest. Learn that from me.

PERDICAN. Give me the letter. I do not understand your quarrel, but as Camilla's affianced husband I claim the right to see to whom it is addressed. (*Reading*) "To Sister Louise, at the Convent of Saint Ursula." (*Aside*) What accursed curiosity seizes me in spite of myself? My heart beats tumultuously and I feel the strangest emotion. (*Aloud*) Go your way, Dame Plush; you are a worthy woman and Master Blazius is an ass. Go and dine; I will bear this letter to the post myself.

[*Exeunt* BLAZIUS *and* DAME PLUSH

PERDICAN. (*Alone*) That it is a crime to open a letter I know too well to be guilty of it. What can Camilla have to say to this nun? Am I in love after all? What power has this strange girl got over me that just these few words written here should set my hand trembling? Ha! this is strange: Master Blazius, in fighting with Dame Plush, has broken the seal. Can it be a crime to unfold the paper? Why, I shall alter nothing of it. (*Opening and reading the letter*) "I depart to-day, dear friend, and everything has come about as I foresaw. It is too terrible; this poor young man has a dagger in his heart; nothing will ever console him for the loss of me. Yet I have done everything possible to make

him hate me. Heaven will forgive me for having reduced him to despair by my refusal. Alas! dear friend, what could I do? Pray for me; we shall meet to-morrow and be no more parted. Yours, with the best half of my soul, Camilla." Is it possible? Camilla has written this! Is it of me she speaks? I in despair at her refusal? Why, if that were so I should not conceal it; there is no shame in loving. She has done all in her power to make me hate her, and I have a dagger in my heart! To what end has she invented this romance? . . . Ha! I see it. O woman, woman! This poor Camilla vows herself right piously to Heaven; but she has decreed that she will leave me a victim of despair. This was agreed between the two gentle creatures before she left the cloister walls. It was resolved that she should see her cousin once more, that marriage should be proposed between us, that she should refuse and that the poor cousin should be broken-hearted. A truly touching picture, a girl who sacrifices her cousin's happiness to Heaven! No, no, Camilla, I do not love you, I am not broken-hearted, I have no dagger in my heart, and I will prove it. Yes, you shall see that I love another before you leave this place. Ho there! my friend. (*Enter* 2ND PEASANT) Go to the Château. (*Writing*) Tell them in the kitchen to send a lackey to bear this letter to Mistress Camilla.

2ND PEASANT. Yes, my lord.

[*Exit* PEASANT

PERDICAN. Now for the other. Ah! I am broken-hearted, am I? Ho there! Rosette, Rosette! (*Knocking at the cottage door*)

ROSETTE. (*Opening*) Is it you, my lord? Enter; my mother is within.

PERDICAN. Put on your best bonnet, Rosette, and come with me.

ROSETTE. Whither shall I come?

PERDICAN. I will tell you. Ask your mother's leave and be quick.

ROSETTE. Yes, my lord. (*She re-enters the house*)

PERDICAN. I have asked Camilla for another interview; she will not fail to come; but, by my faith, she will not find what she looks for. I will woo Rosette before her very face.

SCENE 3

In the wood by the spring. (*Same as Act II., Scene 5.*)

Enter CAMILLA *and* 2ND PEASANT *from opposite sides.* CAMILLA *has a shawl, which she draws over her head later, in the semblance of a nun's hood, while she watches* PERDICAN *and* ROSETTE.

2ND PEASANT. I am on my way to the Château, mistress, with a letter for you. Shall I give it to you, or shall I bear it to the kitchen as Sir Perdican bade me?

CAMILLA. Give it to me.

2ND PEASANT. If you would rather I carried it to the Château you had better not delay me.

CAMILLA. Give it to me, I say.

2ND PEASANT. What you will, mistress. (*Handing her the letter*)

CAMILLA. There is for your pains.

2ND PEASANT. My best thanks. And now do I go away again?

CAMILLA. As it please you.

2ND PEASANT. I'll go, I'll go.

[*Exit* 2ND PEASANT

CAMILLA. (*Reading*) Perdican begs me to say farewell to him before I go, by the little spring where I met him yesterday. What can he have to say to me? Here is the very place; ought I to grant him a second interview? Ah! (*Hiding behind a tree*) There comes Perdican himself, with Rosette, my foster-sister, on his arm. I will wait till he has sent her away. I would not seem to have arrived the first.

Enter PERDICAN *and* ROSETTE; *they sit.* PERDICAN *has decided to make love before* CAMILLA, *not in order to break her resolution, which he believes to be irrevocable, but out of sheer pride, in order to show her that he is not in despair at her refusal. He intends to marry* ROSETTE, *and persuades himself that she has all the qualities to make him happy.*

CAMILLA. (*Hidden aside*) What is the meaning of this? He seats her at his side. Did he invite me hither to hear him talk to another? What can he have to say to her?

PERDICAN. (*In a loud voice, so that* CAMILLA, *whom he has seen, may hear him*) I love you, Rosette. You alone in all the world have forgotten nothing of the happy past; you alone remember the days that are no more. Will you share my future with me too? Give me your heart, dear child; let this be the pledge of our love. (*Taking the gold chain from his cap and putting it on her neck*)

ROSETTE. (*Overwhelmed*) Do you give me your chain of gold?

PERDICAN. Look now on this ring. Rise and let us draw near to the fountain. (*Pressing her to his side*) Do you see us side by side, reflected in the pool? Do you see your lovely eyes beside my eyes, your hand in mine? Now mark how all this vanishes. (*Throwing the ring into the water*) See, our image is clean gone. Now it comes back by little and little. The troubled water regains its equilibrium; it trembles still; black circles run over its surafce. Patience; we are reappearing; I can distinguish your arms afresh entwined in mine; another minute and there will be not a wrinkle left upon your pretty face. See! It was a ring that Camilla gave me.

CAMILLA. (*Aside*) He has thrown my ring into the water!

PERDICAN. Do you know what love is, Rosette? Listen! the wind is hushed; the raindrops that fell at dawn lie like pearls upon the yellow leaves, to which the sunshine lends new life. By the light of heaven, by yonder sun, I love you! And you, you will not refuse me, child? They have not withered the bloom of youth in you? They have not tainted your crimson blood with the dregs of their withered veins? You have no wish to be a nun, you so young, so lovely, clasped in a young man's arms? Rosette! Rosette! Do you know what love is?

ROSETTE. (*Deeply in love*) Alas! Sir Doctor, I will love you as best I can.

PERDICAN. Ah, yes, as best you can. And all-doctor though I be, and all-peasant though you be, you will love me better than one of those pale statues moulded by the nuns, with a head

in place of a heart, that come forth from their cloisters to infect the breath of life with the dank air of their cells. You know nothing; you could not read from a book the prayer your mother taught you, as she was taught it by her mother; you do not even know the meaning of the words you say as you kneel at your bedside; but you know that you are praying, and God requires no more.

ROSETTE. What strange words you speak, my lord!

PERDICAN. You cannot read, and yet you know the language of these woods and meadows, of these purling brooks, these fair fields nodding with yellow corn, of Nature in the splendour of her eternal youth. All these things are brother and sister to you, and I among the rest. Stand up, Rosette, for you shall be my wife, and we will strike root together in the mighty bosom of this living world.

[*Exeunt* PERDICAN *and* ROSETTE

(CAMILLA *remains, determined to punish him for this revenge of his; determined that he* shall *be in despair with a dagger in his heart before she returns to her convent*)

SCENE 4

The village green. PEASANTS *discovered.*

2ND PEASANT. Strange things are doing, surely, at the Château. Camilla has refused to marry Perdican; she goes back to-day to the nunnery whence she came. Methinks her cousin, Sir Perdican, finds consolation for his sorrow with Rosette.

1ST PEASANT. Alas! the poor child little knows what perils she runs in lending ear to the fine speeches of a young and gallant lord.

Enter DAME PLUSH

PLUSH. Quick, quick! saddle my ass!

3RD PEASANT. Will you pass from us like a fleeting dream, O venerable dame?

4TH PEASANT. Must you so speedily bestride the poor beast's aching back that bears you so unwillingly?

PLUSH. Heaven be praised, varlets, it is not here that I shall die.

3RD PEASANT. Die, we pray thee, in a distant land, sweet Plush.

4TH PEASANT. Die unheeded in some pestilential vault, and we will offer prayers for your most honourable resurrection.

PLUSH. Here comes my mistress.

Enter CAMILLA

PLUSH. Dear Camilla, everything is prepared for our departure; the Baron has ended his accounts and my ass is saddled for the road.

CAMILLA. Go to the devil, you and your ass! I will not start to-day.

[*Exit* CAMILLA

3RD PEASANT. What is the meaning of this? Dame Plush is pale with horror.

4TH PEASANT. Her fingers twitch, the breath comes hissing from her bosom.

3RD PEASANT. And her false hair strives in vain to stand on end.

PLUSH. Ye saints in heaven! Camilla swore.

[*Exit* PLUSH

SCENE 5

A room in the Château. (*Same as Act I., Scene* 2.)
The BARON *and* BRIDAINE.

BRIDAINE. Sire, I must have a word with you in private. Your son is courting a peasant girl from the village.

BARON. That is absurd, my friend.

BRIDAINE. With my own eyes I saw her walking with him through the heather and leaning on his arm; he bent over her and promised he would wed her.

BARON. It is a monstrous invention.

BRIDAINE. Believe me, it is true. He made her a handsome gift which she has shown her mother.

BARON. A handsome gift, Bridaine?

BRIDAINE. Weighty and precious. It was the chain of gold that he wore in his cap.

BARON. Come to my private chamber; I cannot tell what to believe.

[*Exeunt*

SCENE 6

CAMILLA'S *sitting-room with hanging tapestries.* CAMILLA *and* DAME PLUSH. CAMILLA *has undergone a complete transformation. Radiantly beautiful. Her hair is waved and curled; she has put aside her simple nunnery dress and is arrayed in splendour. She and her duenna have been reconciled.*

CAMILLA. He took my letter, say you?

PLUSH. Yes, my child; he promised to carry it to the post.

CAMILLA. Go down into the hall, Dame Plush, and tell Perdican that I await him here.

[*Exit* DAME PLUSH

CAMILLA. He read my letter, of that I am sure; his love for Rosette and the scene in the wood, these are his revenge. He sought to show me that he loved another, to prove his indifference in spite of the anger that he felt at my refusal. Does he love me after all? (*Raising the tapestry*) Are you there, Rosette?

Enter ROSETTE

ROSETTE. I am here; shall I come in?

CAMILLA. Listen, my child: is not Sir Perdican making love to you?

ROSETTE. Alas! he is.

CAMILLA. What think you of what he said this morning?

ROSETTE. This morning? Where?

CAMILLA. Do not play the hypocrite. This morning by the fountain in the wood.

ROSETTE. You saw us there?

CAMILLA. Poor innocent! No, I did not see you. He gave you fine words, I doubt not? I'll warrant he promised to marry you.

ROSETTE. How did you know that?

CAMILLA. What matter how I know? Do you trust in his promises, Rosette?

ROSETTE. Why should I not trust in them? Would he deceive me? Why?

CAMILLA. Perdican will not marry you, child.

ROSETTE. Alas! I cannot answer for that.

CAMILLA. You love him, poor girl; but he will not marry you, and I will give you proof of that. Go behind this curtain; you

have but to lend an ear and to come when I call you.

[*Exit* ROSETTE

CAMILLA. I thought to execute a vengeance; who knows but I shall do a kindness too? The poor girl has given him her heart.

Enter PERDICAN

CAMILLA. Good-day, cousin; be seated.

PERDICAN. (*Astonished at her appearance*) What is the meaning of this, Camilla? Have you put on your armour for a battle?

CAMILLA. (*Smiling graciously*) A battle with you, perhaps. I am sorry that I could not come to the interview for which you asked me; you had something you wished to say?

PERDICAN. (*Smiling to himself. Aside*) On my life, a fine little falsehood for a spotless lamb; I saw her behind a tree listening to our conversation. (*Aloud*) I have nothing to say to you, Camilla, but farewell; I thought you were departing, but your horse is still in the stall and this robe of yours has not the air of a travelling dress.

CAMILLA. I dearly love an argument; I am not sure that I did not wish to quarrel with you again.

PERDICAN. Of what use to quarrel now? The pleasure of quarrelling is to make peace again.

CAMILLA. Are you sure I do not wish to make it?

PERDICAN. Do not mock at me; I have not the wit for rallying.

CAMILLA. I am in the mood for love-making. Perhaps it is my dress. I long for gaiety. You offered me your arm to the village; I will take it with pleasure. (*She slips her arm through his*)

Let us go rowing in the boat. I wish to take my dinner on the grass and walk with you in the woods. (*Playing with his hand*) Will the moon shine to-night? It is strange, the ring that I gave you is no longer on your finger.

PERDICAN. I have lost it.

CAMILLA. Then that is how I came to find it. (*Producing a ring*) See, Perdican, it is here.

PERDICAN. Can it be true? Where did you find it?

CAMILLA. You look to see if my hands are wet? Indeed, I spoilt my convent robe in fishing this gewgaw from the spring. That is why I put on another dress; and the dress, I tell you, has changed my humour. Put it on your finger.

PERDICAN. Did you get this ring from out the water, Camilla, at the risk of falling in yourself? Is this a dream? There is my ring again, and it is you who put it on my finger. Ah, Camilla, why do you give me back this melancholy pledge of a happiness that I have lost? Speak, you rash, capricious girl. Why do you go? Why do you stay? Why do you change from hour to hour in hue and aspect as the stone in this ring changes in every ray of sun?

CAMILLA. Do you understand a woman's heart, Perdican? Are you sure that women are inconstant, and do you know if they always change their thoughts when they change their language? There are those who say that they do not. Doubtless we must often play a part, and often speak falsely? Have you considered well this feeble yet violent creature's nature?—the severity with which she is judged, the laws imposed upon her? Who knows if, forced to be deceitful by the world, this brainless being's

heart may not take pleasure in deceit and sometimes lie for pastime, for a whim, as well as by constraint ?

PERDICAN. I understand nothing of all this. I never lie. I love you, Camilla, that is all I know.

CAMILLA. You say that you love me, and you never lie ?

PERDICAN. Never.

CAMILLA. Yet here is one who says that she has known it come to pass. (*She raises the tapestry ;* ROSETTE *is seen beyond fainting in a chair*) What answer will you make to this child, Perdican, when she calls you to account for your words ? (*Calm and judicial*) If you never lie, why does she swoon at hearing you tell me that you love me ? I leave you with her ; you must bring her to herself. (*Going*)

PERDICAN. (*Abashed and agitated*) One moment, Camilla, let me speak . . .

CAMILLA. What would you say to me ? It is to Rosette that you must speak. I do not love you, no. (*Witheringly*) It is not I who brought this hapless maiden from her humble cottage to make a plaything and a bait of her ; it is not I who wooed her with ardent words of love intended for other ears ; it is not I who feigned for her sake to cast to the winds the memory of a tender friendship ; it is not I who flung my chain about her neck ; it is not I who said that I would marry her.

PERDICAN. Listen to me, Camilla, listen . . .

CAMILLA. Did you not smile to yourself but now when I said that I could not meet you by the spring ? Yes, I confess it ; I was there and I heard all ; but, Heaven be my witness, I would not for all the world have uttered the words you

uttered then. What will you do with this poor girl now when she comes weeping to you, with your passionate kisses still hot upon her lips, to show you the wound you have made in her heart? You wished to be avenged on me, I know; to punish me for a letter written to a sister of my convent. You wished at any cost to strike a blow that would go home on me, and recked nothing if your poisoned shaft must pierce through this poor girl's innocent bosom to reach me on the other side. (*The more angry and excited* CAMILLA *grows the more calmly does* PERDICAN *listen to her; his pride has recovered itself under the lash of her invective*) I had boasted in my letter of having inspired you with some love for me, of leaving in you some regrets; and that wounded your noble pride! So be it. Yet let me tell you this: you love me! —do you understand?—but you will marry this peasant girl or else you are a villain.

PERDICAN. Yes, I will marry her.

CAMILLA. You will do well.

PERDICAN. I shall do well; better far than if I married you yourself. Why so hot, Camilla? Rosette has fainted; we will soon bring her to herself; we need no more for that than a flask of vinegar. You wished to show me that I had lied once in my life; it may be true; but I think you are over-bold to decide which time I lied. Come, let us go and help Rosette. (*He goes calmly and proudly behind the tapestry to* ROSETTE. CAMILLA *follows him slowly. Having failed to overcome him with the great and prepared effort of this scene, she has come to the end of her resources and can find no more satisfaction in renunciation. The return to the worldly life in-*

volved in her change of clothes has put the nunnery life quite out of sight. She is conquered, and desires only reconciliation with PERDICAN *without damage to her pride*)

SCENE 7

A room in the Château. (*The same as Act I., Scene* 2.) *The* BARON *and* CAMILLA.

BARON. If this marriage takes place I shall go mad.

CAMILLA. Use your authority.

BARON. I shall go mad and refuse my blessing; be assured of that.

CAMILLA. You must speak with him; bring him to reason.

BARON. This will throw me into despair for the whole of Carnival, and I shall not go once to Court to make my bow. It is a marriage out of all proportion. Who ever heard of a man marrying his cousin's foster-sister? It passes all bounds.

CAMILLA. Send for him and tell him roundly that you disapprove of the marriage. Believe me, it is only a whim, and he will not withstand you.

BARON. I shall wear black this winter, mark my words.

CAMILLA. Speak to him in Heaven's name. He is acting on an impulse. Hesitate and you will be too late; what he has said he will do.

BARON. I am going to shut myself up and abandon myself to my grief. If he asks for me tell him that I have shut myself up to abandon

myself to my grief at seeing him marry a girl of low degree.

[*Exit* BARON

CAMILLA. Is there no *man* about the place? Alas! when one seeks for such a thing one is appalled by the sense of solitude.

Enter PERDICAN

CAMILLA. (*Bantering*) Well, cousin, when is the wedding?

PERDICAN. (*Serious*) As soon as possible. I have told the priest, the notary and all the villagers.

CAMILLA. Do you really mean to marry Rosette?

PERDICAN. Beyond all doubt.

CAMILLA. What will your father say?

PERDICAN. What he pleases. I choose to marry this girl; you gave me the idea and I stand by it. Need I repeat to you the worn commonplaces on the difference of our birth? She is young and fair and loves me; there is more than stuff enough in that to be happy three times over. Even though she have no great wit, I might have fared worse. Those may laugh at me who care; I wash my hands of them.

CAMILLA. There is nothing to laugh at. You do well to marry her. Only one thing vexes me: people will say that you did it out of spite.

PERDICAN. Do you say that vexes you? Surely not!

CAMILLA. Yes, I am sincerely vexed on your account. A young man loses in general esteem who gives way to the impulses of spite.

PERDICAN. Be vexed, then, if you will; as for me, I care not what folk think.

CAMILLA. You are not serious in the matter? She is not worth a pin.

PERDICAN. She will be worth one when she is my wife.

CAMILLA. You will be tired of her before the notary has had time to put on his best coat and shoes to come to the wedding; your gorge will rise against her at the wedding feast, and when the night comes you will have her hands and feet chopped off, as in the Arabian tales, for smelling of onions.

PERDICAN. You will see that you are wrong. You do not know me. When a woman is sweet and gentle, fresh and kind and fair, I can content myself with that, I do assure you, without inquiring whether she talk Latin or no.

CAMILLA. It is a pity that so much money was spent on teaching it you; hundreds of pounds thrown away.

PERDICAN. Yes; it would have been better to give it to the poor.

CAMILLA. You will now be able to disburse it to them yourself; to the poor in spirit at any rate.

PERDICAN. And in return they will give me the kingdom of heaven, for it is theirs.

CAMILLA. (*Emboldened by the feeling that the argument has led them into a less serious atmosphere; abandoning raillery for a moment*) How long is this jest to go on?

PERDICAN. What jest?

CAMILLA. Your marriage with Rosette.

PERDICAN. Not for long. God made man of perishable stuff. Thirty or forty years at most.

CAMILLA. (*Mocking again*) What sport it will be to dance at your wedding!

PERDICAN. Believe me, Camilla, this mocking tone is out of place.

CAMILLA. I like it too well to abandon it.

PERDICAN. Then it is I who must abandon you, for I can endure no more of it.

CAMILLA. Are you going to visit your bride?

PERDICAN. Yes, and this very moment.

CAMILLA. Then give me your arm, for I am coming too.

Enter ROSETTE

PERDICAN. Is it you, Rosette? Come, that I may present you to my father.

ROSETTE. (*Kneeling*) My lord, I come to ask a boon of you. All the folk of the village with whom I have had word to-day tell me that you love your cousin and that you have wooed me only to make sport for her; they laugh at me as I go by, and I shall never find a husband in all the country-side after being made a laughing-stock. Take back the chain that you gave me and let me live in peace with my mother.

CAMILLA. You are a good girl, Rosette; keep the chain, it is a present from me, and my cousin shall have mine in its place. As for a husband, set your mind at ease; I will engage to find you one.

PERDICAN. You need not look far, indeed. Come, Rosette, and I will lead you to my father.

CAMILLA. Why? It is useless.

PERDICAN. True, my father would receive us ill; we must leave him to recover from the first shock of his surprise. Let us go down to the village green. What! they say I do not love you when I am going to marry you?

We will stop their mouths or I am much mistaken.

[*Exeunt* PERDICAN *and* ROSETTE

CAMILLA. What means this turmoil in my breast? He leads her away with such a tranquil air. This is strange; my head goes round. Can he truly intend to marry her? Ho there! Dame Plush! Dame Plush! Is no one here? (*Enter a lackey*) Run after Sir Perdican; quick, bid him return; I must speak with him. (*Exit lackey*) What can be the meaning of this? My strength fails me, my feet refuse to carry me.

Enter PERDICAN, *agitated at this sudden recall.*

PERDICAN. You sent for me, Camilla?

CAMILLA. No, no!

PERDICAN. How pale you are! What had you to say to me? You called me back to speak to me?

CAMILLA. No, no! Oh, Heaven help me!

[*Exit* CAMILLA, *groping.* PERDICAN *looks after her, certain at last that he and she love each other*

SCENE 8

A chapel attached to the Château; an altar and a big crucifix with the figure of Christ looking down. The passage from the Château opens behind the altar.

Enter CAMILLA, *tottering, and flings herself down, sobbing and weeping, on a* prie-Dieu, *with her hair in disorder; then kneels on the ground at the foot of the altar steps.*

CAMILLA. Hast Thou forsaken me, O Lord? Thou knowest that when I left the cloister I

swore fidelity to Thee; when I refused to become the bride of another I thought to speak honestly before Thee and my own conscience; Thou knowest it, O Father, and wilt Thou turn Thy face away from me? Why hast Thou made truth itself a lie? Why am I so weak? Ah, woe is me, I can no longer pray! (*She bows right down, with her head on the pavement*)

Enter PERDICAN

PERDICAN. O Pride, most dangerous of man's counsellors, why hast thou come between this woman and me? See where she lies, pale and frightened, pressing her heart and cheek against the passionless stones! She might have loved me; we were born for each other; why didst thou lay thy poisoned finger on our lips, O Pride, just as our hands were hastening to be joined?

CAMILLA. Who has followed me here? Who speaks beneath this vault? Is it you, Perdican?

PERDICAN. Fools and mad that we are! We love each other. What dream have we been dreaming, Camilla? What empty words, what pitiful caprices have passed between us like a withering wind? Which of us sought to deceive the other? Alas! life itself is such a melancholy dream! Why must we add our own to it? Father in heaven, happiness is so rare a pearl in this ocean here below! And Thou hadst given us this priceless jewel! Celestial fisher, Thou hadst drawn it for us from the depths of the abyss, and we, like two spoiled children, made a plaything of it. The grassy path that led us one towards the other had so sweet a slope, it was bordered by such thickets of fragrant flowers and lost itself in such happy, tranquil

vistas! Then came vanity and anger and cast their hideous rocks across this pleasant way that led towards heaven by the portal of a kiss! Then did we turn from the good to do ourselves a harm. We are but human. Fools that we have been! We love each other. (*Taking her in his arms*)

CAMILLA. Yes, we love each other, Perdican. Let me feel it on your heart. God Who looks down on us (*pointing to the crucifix*) will not be angered; it is His will that I should love you; He has known it for fifteen years.

PERDICAN. Sweet Camilla, you are mine! (*He kisses her. A piercing cry is heard from behind the altar*)

CAMILLA. It is my foster-sister's voice!

PERDICAN. How came she here? I left her on the staircase when you sent for me to return. She must have followed me unobserved.

CAMILLA. Come into this corridor; it was from here that the cry came.

PERDICAN. What is this? My hands seem to be covered with blood.

CAMILLA. Poor girl, she must have watched us. She has swooned again. Come, we must help her. Alas! this is all so cruel.

PERDICAN. No, no! I dare not enter there. A deadly coldness numbs my limbs. Go, Camilla, and bring her back to life.

[*Exit* CAMILLA

PERDICAN. (*Kneeling and praying, with despair in his face*) I beseech Thee, O Lord, make me not a murderer! Thou readest in our hearts. We are two foolish children who have played with life and death; but our hearts are pure. Do not slay Rosette, O merciful Father! I will

find a husband for her; I will repair my fault; she is young, she shall be rich, she shall be happy. Spare her, O Lord! Still mayst Thou send a blessing on four of Thy children.

Enter CAMILLA. *At the sound of her returning footsteps he cowers, terror-stricken, against the wall.*

PERDICAN. Camilla, what has happened?

CAMILLA. She is dead. . . . Farewell, Perdican. (*She looks down at him and moves slowly away, to return to her nunnery and take the veil*)

CURTAIN