

PR

4821

Ic P4

1897



1

25
20

PETER THE GREAT

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

BY
5 years 12 months ✓
LAURENCE IRVING
A. I.

[Printed for private use only.]

[1891]
W



TWO COPIES RECEIVED

PR 4821
I 6 P 4
1897

Copyright, 1897,
By LAURENCE IRVING.

THE DEVINZ PRESS, NEW YORK, U. S. A.

PERSONS IN THE PLAY.

- PETER THE GREAT, EMPEROR OF RUSSIA
- ALEXIS (*his son*)
- PRINCE MENSHIKOFF
- PETER TOLSTOI, afterwards "COUNT" } (*Peter's fellow-workers*)
- ADMIRAL APRAXIN }
- PRINCE DOLGOROUKI }
- COLONEL ROUMIANTZOFF }
- PRINCE ABRAHAM LAPOUKHINE (*Eudoxia's brother*)
- PRINCE ZABOUROFF } (*hostile to Peter*)
- MANSOUROFF }
- ALEXANDER KIKINE
- JACOB IGNATIEFF (*Alexis' Confessor*)
- FIELD-MARSHAL COUNT DAUN (*Viceroy of Naples*)
- GENERAL BAUER (*a German*)
- MAJOR STEINMITZ
- TWO NEAPOLITAN CAPTAINS
- CARLO
- CATHERINE (*Empress of Russia, Peter's second wife*)
- EUDOXIA (*divorced by Peter and mother to Alexis*)
- EUPHROSINE (*Alexis' mistress*)
- MASHA

Boyers, Ecclesiastics, Officers, Officials, Soldiers, Citizens, etc.
 Period — 1717-18.

-
- ACT I. . . . MOSCOW.
 - ACT II. . . . ST. PETERSBURG.
 - ACT III. . . . NAPLES.
 - ACT IV. . . . ST. PETERSBURG.
 - ACT V. . . . ST. PETERSBURG.

ACT I.

SCENE.— *Moscow, the Kremlin. Summer time. A gloomy, vaulted, circular apartment, leading out through large window at back on to a raised way, faced by a parapet and led up to by a flight of steps (out of sight). Door right, ajar. Two doors left. A large table with food and drink on it, in middle of room; a smaller table, covered with papers and writing materials, down L. A bureau, style Louis XIV., against right wall; on bureau, two dirty books, several maps, some mathematical instruments, and a mariner's compass, all mixed up anyhow; this bureau is the one piece of furniture in the room that is not in the old Russian style. A couch at right of window. Ikons with a light in front of them.*

[*Discovered, seated at large table, PRINCE LAPOUKHINE, PRINCE DOLGOROUKI, PRINCE ZABOUROFF, KIKINE and MANSOUROFF. The meal is over, the drink is circulating freely. LAPOUKHINE, ZABOUROFF and MANSOUROFF are dressed in the old Russian costume, and bearded. KIKINE and DOLGOROUKI are dressed like Europeans, and clean-shaven. At table, left, two Acolytes discovered writing at FATHER JACOB IGNATIEFF'S dictation.*]

MANSOUR. [*Very drunk.*] Supposing ——
Dolgor. Pigs?
Mansour. Peter ——

Dolgor. Fly?

Mansour. Defeated!

Zab. and Lapouk. Oh! oh!

Mansour. Suppose, I say —

Dolgor. Silence for Mansouff!

Mansour. Suppose, I say —

Dolgor. Peter —

Mansour. Suppose, I say, Peter —

Dolgor. Flying?

Mansour. Suppose Peter flying —

Dolgor. A pig?

Zab. } Prince! Prince!
Lapouk. }

Mansour. By your leave! Suppose Peter flying a pig.

Dolgor. Suppose Peter flying a pig!

Mansour. But these are details. Suppose —

Kikine. } Enough! Enough!
Lapouk. }
Zab. }

Mansour. By your leave! Suppose Peter defeated!

Dolgor. Ah! Suppose Peter defeated! What then?

Mansour. Then —

Dolgor. What?

Mansour. What?

Dolgor. Then!

Kikine. Then — why, down with Peter and up with Alexis! Down with the father, up with the son!

[*General assent.*]

Zab. Down with Germans! Down with heretics! Down with them in there!

Dolgor. Yes, down with Russia!

Zab. No, down with Peter!

Kikine. Peter's not Russia!

Lapouk. Peter 's not Russia !

Zab. Peter 's not Russia !

Dolgor. If Peter 's to be defeated, it follows the Turk, the infidel——

Kikine. No worser infidel than Peter !

Lapouk. No worser infidel than Peter !

Mansour. These are details.

Kikine. [*Starting to his feet, in a loud voice.*] Destruction to——

[*DOLGOROUKI lays hand on KIKINE'S wrist, designates door R., standing open ; KIKINE looks blank and goes to shut it.*]

Mansour. But these are details.

[*As KIKINE is about to shut door, enter MENSHIKOFF, several unopened despatches under his arm ; stands for a moment looking over a plan. IGNATIEFF steals up behind him and looks over his shoulder. At that moment enter TOLSTOI, who catches IGNATIEFF in the act.*]

Tolstoi. Er— Prince !

[*MENSHIKOFF looks up. IGNATIEFF draws back.*]

Menshik. Who here knows ? Where is the Regent ? [*Silence.*] Come, someone here must know. [*To IGNATIEFF.*] You're his confessor. Don't you know ?

Ignat. [*Very slowly.*] Know what ?

Menshik. You heard me ! Know where Alexis is ?

Ignat. [*In same tone.*] Do you mean Alexis the baker's boy, or Alexis the tin-smith ?

Menshik. Take care ! You know very well whom I mean — the Regent ! the Regent ! the Regent !

Ignat. You mean His Imperial Highness Alexis Petrovitch?

Tolstoi. [To MENSHIKOFF.] They grow so bold: they've heard something.

Menshik. [Suddenly, catching KIKINE by the throat.] Where's the Tsarevitch? You're his bosom friend. Out with it, you —

Kikine. Your Excellence, I left him at —

Enter a Courier. MENSHIKOFF signs to him; he hands despatch to MENSHIKOFF.

Menshik. [With a shrug.] For the Regent.

Ignat. [Aside to KIKINE.] You dare tell him!

Tolstoi. We had better open them ourselves.

Menshik. Let's first try everything. [To First Officer.] Go to the Treasury, enquire for the Regent. [Exit First Officer. To Second Officer.] Go to — er — and they know every one of them — Go anywhere, only find him.

Ignat. [Aside to Acolyte.] Make him come, and at once!

[Exit Second Officer, Acolyte after him.]

Menshik. As for you — when the Tsar returns —

[Exeunt MENSHIKOFF and TOLSTOI. MENSHIKOFF closes door.]

Ignat. If, worthy Prince, if!

Zab. Do you really think? —

[Door is burst open, and a half-fainting Courier crosses stage.]

Ignat. Are these the couriers of victory? I saw their map! [Demonstrating with glasses, etc.] Peter! Turks! Turks! Turks!

Kikine. If only they'd take Peter prisoner!

Ignat. [*Looking up.*] Strange-sounding words from your lips, son!

Kikine. Why strange from my lips?

Tolstoi. [*Putting his head through door, R., leaving it open.*] Rather warm, isn't it?

Mansour. Shut that door!

[*The following scene played in a low voice.*]

Kikine. Why strange from my lips?

Ignat. He asks — and he stands there in Peter's livery!

Mansour. Details.

Zab. With his smooth girl's face.

Ignat. And that perruque stuck on his head!

Kikine. And Prince Dolgorouki? Why all go at me?

Dolgor. That follows not.

Mansour. Shut that door!

Dolgor. I serve Peter; I love Peter; I adopt his clothes, his periwig, and his shave. I profess the new, and I practise the new! You profess one thing and practise quite another. [*General assent.*]

Kikine. It's all very well —

Lapouk. I sadly fear you are a coward, young sir!

Ignat. Worse; a traitor!

Kikine. I! Traitor?

Dolgor. To Peter, certainly.

Ignat. And to Russia. Just now you would have told them where to find Alexis.

Kikine. When I don't know.

Ignat. Oh, don't you!

Kikine. And if I had, what difference would it have made?

Ignat. The difference between Peter Tsar and Alexis Tsar.

Mansour. But these are details.

Ignat. Traitor to Peter! traitor to Russia! and traitor to your Church.

Mansour. [*Solemnly.*] But these are details.

[*Rises with difficulty, steadies himself, moves towards door R.*]

Lapouk. Traitor! Traitor!

Kikine. Ay! ay! it's easy enough for all of you to turn and round and run in at me! When Peter's here — where are you all? Nowhere near him, that's certain — yes, and you too, Father Ignatieff! But me? — at his heels; under his fist, so to say! What would you do in my place, if you were me? — Come now!

Ignat. [*To Acolyte.*] By the small door. Let no one see her! [*Exit Acolyte.*] They would do as they do now — pay Peter's iniquitous tax, but keep their reverent beards, their reverent clothes.

[*MANSOUROFF staggers to door R., and closes it. In making his way back to table, he falls on to divan and goes to sleep.*]

Kikine. Much use that were! You don't know, you see! Tax or no tax, if you're about his person, one day, when he's feeling a bit jovial, just for fun you know — whit! — out comes half your beard! Only he takes the skin as well. Gentlemen, I prefer to shave. You don't know, you see! He struck my two brothers' heads off with his own hands! [*Pulls up his sleeve.*] I had this of his sword.

Zab. He kills you, if you won't do as he wants; if you will, the doing it kills you.

Lapouk. Have not our families all suffered in the good cause?

Ignat. Whose worse than yours? Think of your sister's wrongs.

Lapouk. Ay, think of them!

Ignat. She, your lawful empress — whilst this lewd German Catherine usurps her place — for twelve long years shut in a nunnery, bereft of state and son. Why? Because she dared speak what you men are afraid to whisper; because she dared do what you men dare scarcely speak! Ye men! ye cowards!

Kikine. Shame on us. [*Tears off wig and stamps on it.*] Under my feet. [*Tearing off coat.*] Off, badge! Off, stigma! Come off, I say!

Lapouk. and Zab. Well done! Well done!

Kikine. [*Crossing to bureau and picking up mathematical instruments.*] See — Peter's trash!

Zab. What things are those?

Lapouk. His instruments of torture.

Dolgor. [*To himself.*] Compasses.

Kikine. [*Picking up maps.*] Here again!

Lapouk. Do not touch them!

Ignat. They are spells and magic.

Dolgor. [*As before.*] Maps.

Kikine. [*Having picked up compass.*] Ah, see!

Zab. It moves.

Lapouk. There's a live devil in it.

Dolgor. A mariner's compass!

Kikine. Whichever way you turn it — it still only points —

Ignat. [*Dashing compass out of his hand.*] The way to hell!

Enter MENSHIKOFF, TOLSTOI, APRAXIN, etc.

KIKINE hurriedly resumes wig and coat.

Menshik. What's all this noise, you drunkards?

Enter GENERAL BAUER, in wild excitement.

Bauer. Prince, not a gun, not a man has left the city!

Menshik. You've had your orders!

Bauer. I haven't!

Menshik. Good heavens! Apraxin!

Apraxin. [*Firing up.*] Nothing to do with me!

Menshik. Nothing to ——

Tolstoi. Not before them.

Enter Two Officers together.

Menshik. Have you found the Regent?

1st O. No, and we've been everywhere.

[MENSHIKOFF *looks to* TOLSTOI, *who nods to* MENSHIKOFF. MENSHIKOFF *begins opening despatches.*

Lapouk. Open them at your peril! [*Turning to others.*] Princes, am I not right?

Dolgor. [*Joining himself to MENSHIKOFF'S party.*] You are not right! [*Pause.*]

Tolstoi. Go on!

[MENSHIKOFF *tears open despatches.*

Lapouk. An act of treason! Witness, gentlemen!

[MENSHIKOFF *opens despatch, hands it to* TOLSTOI, *who hands it to* APRAXIN. *Silence.*

Menshik. [*To himself.*] Defeat!

Tolstoi. [*Aside to MENSHIKOFF.*] Let us provide for our own safety! [*Aloud.*] The best of news. Come, gentlemen, let us prepare to receive the victors!

[*Exeunt* MENSHIKOFF, TOLSTOI, DOLGOROUKI, *etc.*

Ignat. [*Who pounces upon despatch APRAXIN has let fall.*] The Tsar is prisoner! [*Tears up despatch.*] The time has come.

Lapouk. Father Jacob, you are wise; advise us what to do.

Ignat. The Tsarevitch is ours.

Zab. When we can find him!

Ignat. I have sent for him; he will soon be here. But it is not the son we need; it is the mother.

Lapouk. } We listen.
Zab. }

Ignat. Our cause's chief must be our cause's martyr, Eudoxia!

Lapouk. } Eudoxia, the martyr of our cause!
Zab. }
Kikine. }

Kikine. Let us release her!

Ignat. Stop! She is free! She is in Moscow.

Lapouk. } Free, and in Moscow!
Zab. }
Kikine. }

Ignat. Go through the city, proclaim the tidings, gather the people in the square below; and in half-an-hour we'll have Alexis Tsar of Russia.

[*Exeunt LAPOUK. and ZAB., crying "ALEXIS Tsar of Russia! PETER'S a prisoner!"*]

Kikine. Is Peter a prisoner?

Ignat. Why don't you follow the others?

Kikine. No, thank you; I have a bone to pick with you. You handled me very roughly just now. I know why; because you're envious of my influence over Alexis. What I want to know is why we shouldn't work him together?

Ignat. I don't understand you. Is that all you have to say?

Kikine. That is all. Oh, Father Jacob, you're very deep!

Ignat. What are you waiting for?

Kikine. For the Tsarevitch.

Ignat. He will have left Euphrosine all alone.

Kikine. I thank you for the hint. Yes, that would certainly be pleasanter, for, between ourselves, Alexis is a devilishly dull companion.

[*Exit KIKINE.*]

Ignat. Now, if I can only persuade Alexis to sign this order for his mother's release, the whole responsibility will be shifted to his shoulders in case the Tsar return. But Alexis, though he dearly loves his mother, he mightily fears his father. Still, I fancy I—here he comes!

[*Enter ALEXIS reading; stops short, glances round room, evinces repulsion; stoops, picks up and replaces compass on bureau; moves towards window; makes a spasmodic movement of rapture; stands looking out of window; appears uneasy under IGNA-TIEFF'S steady gaze.*]

Alexis. Well, Father, you sent for me; I have come.

Ignat. At the third summons, son.

Alexis. I know. I could not come before.

Ignat. Or would not—which?

Alexis. Which you like.

Ignat. Which I like! Ah, son, time was——

[*Coolly takes book out of ALEXIS' hand and throws it on to floor——*]

Alexis. [*Jumping up.*] Yes, and that time is over! Pick up that book and hand it back to me! Pick up that book!

Ignat. [*Handing back book.*] Nowadays our old and long outstanding sins have become to us so easy and familiar that we run—yes! nay, even with unburdened consciences—to the commission of fresh evils.

Alexis. What do you mean? If you mean—No, my love is pure and high; it is no sin. Ah! until to-day I never really knew——

Ignat. What did you never know until to-day?

Alexis. I never knew before Euphrosine——

Ignat. What did you never know until to-day—before Euphrosine?

Alexis. What it was to love and to be loved! What life and summer were, and bliss and joy! What heaven was in a woman's love on earth! To-day I have stood, crowned, upon the summits!

Ignat. [*Scornfully.*] “Until to-day—before Euphrosine!” What of your mother's years on years of changeless love?

Alexis. My poor unhappy mother!

Ignat. Unhappy—ay, in having such a son!

Alexis. Why? What have I done? Tell me what have I done?

Ignat. Your sin consists in what you have failed to do. Are not you the Regent?

Alexis. My father's Regent.

Ignat. Does not your mother lie immured?

Alexis. Is that *my* sin?

Ignat. That, having the power, you do not set her free.

Alexis. What do you mean? You know I must not—dare not! Are you mad? Would you destroy me? You know my father's——

Ignat. Your father——

Alexis. No, no, no! No, no!

Ignat. Is a prisoner.

Alexis. A prisoner — father! [*A huge sigh of relief.*] But are you sure?

Ignat. Your father is a prisoner with the Turks.

Alexis. Then, mother, be thou free!

Ignat. Sign this — her release!

Alexis. I will, I will! [*Preparing to sign.*] Be thou free, mother! Mother, be thou — Will he not return?

Ignat. Do right, and fear no consequence.

[*EUDOXIA is introduced at back.*

Alexis. Why must I sign? I do not want to sign. Can it not be done as though without my knowledge?

Ignat. Do you delay?

Alexis. [*About to sign.*] But how will she treat Euphrosine?

Ignat. Shame on you! Sign!

Alexis. Mother was proud, Euphrosine is humble. [*Gets up.*] Is it so well? In ten years things are so changed.

Ignat. A mother's love never changes; it would seem a son's does. Sign, or never more come to me for absolution!

[*ALEXIS, turning round, sees EUDOXIA.*

Alexis. Oh! Mother!

Eudoxia. [*In a half-choked voice.*] My son! my son!

[*EUDOXIA opens her arms; ALEXIS rushes into them.*

Eudoxia. [*Crying for joy.*] I never thought — my

son! my son! — after twelve years! Oh, my darling boy! Changed? No, not at all! My Alexis — oh, my son!

Alexis. [*Kneeling.*] Mother, forgive me!

Eudoxia. Why, for what?

Alexis. For what I said just now. I — I — my darling mother; my dear, devoted mother!

Eudoxia. He loves me still! He does! — he loves me still!

Ignat. [*To ALEXIS.*] Come, your signature!

Eudoxia. [*Crossing herself.*] Thank Heavens! [*Advances to IGNATIEFF.*] To what? [*IGNATIEFF, taken aback.*] I ask you, Father Jacob, to what?

Ignat. To this edict, madam, for your reinstatement.

Eudoxia. And for yourself, Father Jacob? What for yourself?

Ignat. The happy knowledge —

Eudoxia. Of having vilely abused the holiest of trusts — the trust a mother charged upon you to watch over her motherless son. How have you used that trust?

Ignat. To set you free, to set you on the throne.

Eudoxia. I refuse them both!

Ignat. Then you mean to use your liberty —

Eudoxia. To warn my son. Yes, clever Father, this time it is you who have been my dupe. You should have remembered that, if I was once an Empress, I was always a mother.

Ignat. Well said, madam! We now understand one another clearly. We entertain opposite views as to the nature of your son's true interests. I shall continue to labour for them as I understand them!

[*Exit.*]

Alexis. Mother, what does this mean?

Eudoxia. That in the future your father's enemies must be also yours.

Alexis. There is nothing to fear. Father is prisoner.

Eudoxia. They say so, but I do not believe it.

Alexis. Is not? And you here! He will come back! He will find you here. You will destroy me.

Eudoxia. No, son, I will save you. Listen to me well!—I am looking on you perhaps for the last time on earth—I charge you, my poor, distracted son—I charge you, love your father and do his work.

Alexis. Mother, between my father and myself there is, and there can be, no love.

Eudoxia. In all these twelve years have you and he not drawn together—not at all?

Alexis. No, not an inch! Just as you left us, there we stand now.

Eudoxia. Listen to me. You are his only son; you are his successor. He may be careless towards you; he is still strong. But the time is near at hand when he will turn to lean on you, the destined successor to his great work. If he then find you wilful or unwilling, remember my fate. He has not spared himself, he will not spare you.

Alexis. Mother, would you see me slaughtering—
butchering?

Eudoxia. I want to see you live.

Alexis. How do you mean?

Eudoxia. I say love him, love, love—yes, even love Catherine. Ah! It has cost me something to say that. Love his work!

Alexis. His work! his work! Go down into the street and you shall see a row of festering heads on spikes. That is my father's work, would you have

me do that? [*Distant sound of murmurs.*] You'll see a batch of wretches, chained neck to neck, leg to leg, mercilessly beaten, branded — these are his recruits. See these men later, when my father has reformed them — every foul crime written on their faces, schooled to blood and rapine, brutes and worse than brutes — these are my father's soldiers; these are his workers, the men after his own heart! And the fruit of all his work? — Universal degradation, and for himself, the title of the Great. [*Confused sound of people in the distance.*] Great in the tearing of flesh and the shedding of blood. [*Murmurs nearer.*] Listen!

Eudoxia. What is it, son?

Alexis. Do you hear nothing?

Eudoxia. I hear a confused noise of people.

Alexis. There is some commotion. Listen! We shall know now.

Enter IGNATIEFF.

What has happened?

Ignat. Do you not hear the people — [*opening doors*] — a mighty people crying aloud, as with one voice, for their Tsar!

[*Throws open window. Cries of "Long live the Tsar Alexis!" Silence.*

Eudoxia. [*To* IGNATIEFF.] You villain!

Alexis. [*Looking straight in front of him.*] Tsar . . . Tsar Alexis . . . Tsar!

Eudoxia. Son, do not heed them!

Ignat. [*To* PEOPLE.] Here is your Tsar Alexis!
[*A shout.*

Alexis. Tsar . . . Tsar Alexis! . . . Tsar!

Eudoxia. There is no Tsar but Peter.

[*She tries to close window. IGNATIEFF prevents her.*

Ignat. [*Holding EUDOXIA.*] Choose, Alexis, choose!

Eudoxia. No Tsar but Peter! There is no Tsar but Peter.

Ignat. Children, your Tsar hears you!

[*A loud shout.*

Alexis. [*Suddenly coming out of his reverie.*] The suffering of the people has found voice. [*Moves up stage.*] Their cries run through my blood like fire!

Eudoxia. [*Detaining him.*] Don't let them see you! Don't let them see you!

Alexis. They stretch out their lacerated hands!

Eudoxia. All is lost!

Ignat. The Tsar will show himself!

[*A loud shout. In rush a crowd of Nobles, with LAPOUKHINE, ZABOUROFF and KIKINE at their head.*

Lapouk., } My liege—our Tsar—our Tsar!
Zab., etc. }

[*All throw themselves on their knees. Bells heard ringing.*

Alexis. Oh, God! Oh, God! I am the Tsar!
[*Giving KIKINE a ring.*] To Euphrosine, quick!
Let her know!

Lapouk. [*To another Boyar.*] Who is Euphrosine?

Alexis. Euphrosine is your Empress.

[*Exit KIKINE.*

Ignat. The people hunger for a sight of you!

Lapouk. On to the balcony! I on one side—you, sister, on the other!

Eudoxia. No, no! No Tsar but Peter!

Lapouk. Sister!

Ignat. Stand aside!

Eudoxia. Wretches! Wretches!

Lapouk. The Tsar will show himself!

[ALEXIS moves towards window; suddenly steps back.]

Alexis. The city is on fire!

Zab. [Gleefully.] The German suburb!

Alexis. Lives will be lost!

Zab. German lives!

Alexis. Put out the flames! [A terrific explosion.]

Zab. Your father's magazines.

Ignat. The reign of Antichrist is ended.

Enter a throng of distracted foreigners, shouting:

"Save us, save us our husbands' lives! — our children's lives!" Shots are heard in the streets.

Alexis. By St. Vladimir, I will! There must be no bloodshed.

Zab. Can you prevent it? [Other fugitives arrive.]

Alexis. There must be no bloodshed. Second me, gentlemen. Go out and put a stop to it. [Fugitives continue to clamour; Russians don't budge.] Do you not hear me? I am your Tsar! See these poor people? By Heaven, they shall not harm you! Are your hearts of stone? Does no one stir? Am I your Tsar? Then to my people — they will hear their Tsar. [The bells stop ringing. A confused noise arises from below.] The people are dispersing.

[All rush up round ALEXIS. Distant martial music. The hubbub ceases. All fall apart so as to disclose ALEXIS.]

What is it? What sound is that?

[Music nearer and nearer.]

Eudoxia. My wretched son, read it on every face ;
it is your father.

Alexis. My father ?

[MENSHIKOFF, TOLSTOI, DOLGOROUKI, and
a party of Soldiers rush in.

Menshik. Sentries at all the doors. Let no one
pass but the Regent. [*Draws his sword.*] We, faith-
ful servants, go to join our master. Peter the Great,
the father of his country !

[*The cry is taken up. Exeunt MENSHIKOFF,
TOLSTOI, etc. Music grows louder and
louder.*

Lapouk. For us the scaffold !

Eudoxia. [*To ALEXIS.*] Son, go before his anger !
turn aside his wrath !

Alexis. [*Frenziedly.*] Ye all have ruined me !—
ruined me ! [*Rushes out wildly.*] Curses on ye all !

Eudoxia. [*Following.*] Alexis !

Soldiers. [*Crossing bayonets.*] None but the Re-
gent !

[*Several wild-looking Soldiers form in line
along parapet.*

Eudoxia. My poor, poor boy !

Lapouk. Boyars ! shall we not hide this most un-
happy lady amongst ourselves ? [*Nobles fall apart.*]
Come, sister !

Eudoxia. No, I will face him.

Lapouk. You will only increase his fury ! [*EU-
DOXIA shakes head.*] This way shall you better serve
Alexis.

Eudoxia. Ay, so I do ! [*Goes in amongst Boyars.*

Lapouk. Close up, gentlemen ! be stout of heart.

[*Soldiers present arms.*

Enter PETER THE GREAT, followed by MENSNIKOFF, TOLSTOI, DOLGOROUKI, APRA XIN, ROUMIANTZOFF, etc. PETER stands still, livid and shaking with suppressed passion. Dead silence.

Menshik. [*Dropping down to beside PETER.*] My lord —

Peter. [*Springing upon MENSNIKOFF and forcing him on to his knees. He is so beside himself with fury that he transposes the sounds of his words.*] My reinforcements — where were they? Where was my ammunition? Dog!

[*PETER threatens MENSNIKOFF with his sword.*

Dolgor. [*Staying PETER'S arm.*] What will your history say of this? Kill me!

Peter. [*Who was on the point of turning his sword against DOLGOROUKI, thinks better of it and breaks sword over knee.*] Defeat! I am defeated! Defeat — never till now! Disaster — never till now! I am defeated! Chuckle over it — laugh at it in your beards! I'll lop you and I'll mangle you! You've wrenched me, I'll make you writhe! Yet what shall that make up to me? Oh, my work — my work! Would you see me weep? Oh, God! oh, God! had it pleased you to tear away my limbs — only my work — my work — my work! [*Sinks into chair.*] And this! [*Banging hand on table so as to make plates and goblets jump.*] Where were *my* provisions? Come, my good children, sit down, eat and drink. [*Soldiers seem half afraid to obey.*] Sit down! — Obey me! [*Soldiers fall to.*] Where is Alexis, my son, my Regent — my *Regent* — eh? Why's he not here? Where is he? Well? Well?

Tolstoi. He was here a moment ago, but — does anyone know?

Peter. [Walking up and down striking his forehead.] Azoff! — Azoff! — Lost, lost Azoff!

Tolstoi. [After having inquired of bystanders.] They say that, at the news of your unexpected return, he fled out of the room in a state of some alarm.

Peter. [To himself.] Shame! Shame! Of some alarm! There's mighty much to be alarmed at, I can tell you; and for all — yes, all of you, all of you — though less for him, for he's still young and green, than for you well-seasoned, elderly rascals! Ah, Tolstoi! fetch me the Regent! — Tolstoi, we fought there side by side!

Tolstoi. Where, my lord?

Peter. Tolstoi, at Azoff!

Tolstoi. Ah, glorious Azoff! Yes, we stood there in the breach, ready for all comers!

Peter. Don't, Tolstoi, don't!

Tolstoi. We plied the bayonet all day—for you remember our ammunition had run out—and the spade all night!

Peter. Tolstoi, for God's sake wait! wait while I tell you! You'll grieve for it, Tolstoi. Tolstoi, Azoff is to be dismantled!

Tolstoi. Oh?

[Catches hold of PETER almost roughly.]

Peter. Ay, strike me!—and ceded to the Turks! [TOLSTOI strikes PETER in the chest.] Thank God! he struck me for it! Did you all see him strike me? My brother, my brother! [Falls on TOLSTOI'S neck, uttering inarticulate cries.] Azoff! Azoff! Azoff!

Tolstoi. Bear up, my lord.

Peter. I am trying! [Quite calm.] For Azoff was my first conquest! All those fine things we built with our own hands: the redoubts, the mole,

half a verst in length, there's not a finer anywhere; the pier, just nearly finished—all to be pulled to pieces by the very hands that built them! It takes the soul out of me! I've no heart to go on! When I was at Portsmouth, in England, I have seen children digging with wooden spades, throwing up mounds and parapets of sand, and with their souls in their work, too, I can tell you; up comes the tide, and sweeps it all flat, flat—like Azoff. Then say I've lost a toy; let's look at it that way: they've smashed my toy and I'm blubbing! Here's the rough draft; draw out a formal treaty! Take it away and phraseologise it.

[*Exit* TOLSTOI, R. PETER buries his head in his hands. An Officer has entered meanwhile and spoken to MENSHIKOFF.

Menshik. Riga—taken! [DOLGOROUKI, APRAXIN, etc., gather round.] Shall I tell him?

Dolgor. Tell him! Yes, tell him at once!

Menshik. My lord— [PETER looks up]— I felicitate you on the addition to your empire of the town of Riga.

Peter. Riga is ours! [To Soldiers.] Children, Riga is ours! A seaport, too! Riga for Azoff! [Soldiers get up from table cheering.] Who took it?

Menshik. Sheremetieff.

Peter. God bless him. Here, take him this! [Takes handfuls of money out of his pocket, which he puts into MENSHIKOFF'S hands.] And this for yourself. [Embraces MENSHIKOFF.] Off to Livonia. I'll follow at your heels!

Menshik. What shall I do when I——

Peter. What do? Why, God, man! press, push, drive home our advantage! Tell Sheremetieff from me, of we two he's the better general. He has

won Riga — I have lost Azoff! [*Exit* MENSHIKOFF. MANSOUROFF *gives a loud snort.* PETER *turns round.* PETER *sees* MANSOUROFF *lying on divan, drags him up from it, holds him out at arm's length and contemplates him scornfully.*] Image! Image of old Russia! Russia — till me! [*All laugh.*

Mansour. [*Blinking.*] Peter . . . details, sir, details!

Peter. Slothful! sluggish! sottish! and seditious! [*Throws* MANSOUROFF *off, who falls on the floor.*] Where's my son?

Dolgor. They've gone back to look for him!

Peter. Yes, of course they've gone to look for him! [*Walking up and down in front of terrified Boyars.*] Meantime let's take an inventory of incompetence and rank sedition! Ay! ay! [*Pulling one by the beard.*] Beards and gowns outside, and, as sure as kernel is nut, hostility to me underneath! Prince Lapoukhine, my good ex-brother-in-law, still at it, eh, old boy? Damn all you Lapoukhines! [*Tapping his head.*] It'll have to come off this time, indeed it will! Have you been tampering with my son? But it's your last chance, for in future my hand is on him! devoted to me, vowed to my work! Why do you huddle so? [*Dragging them apart.*] Let's know you all, and once for all! Apart, I say!

[*EUDOXIA advances through Boyars.*

Eudoxia. Seek, my lord, no further!

Peter. [*For some time unable to speak.*] If I had been taken prisoner! Oh, my God! if I had been taken prisoner,—what a conspir—God!—I can feel my hair turning grey on my head!

Enter APRAXIN.

Well?

Apraxin. The Tsarevitch is coming!

Peter. In good time. Now we shall — Madam! No, we'll wait. [*Walks up and down. Silence. To himself.*] A giant plot—a giant plot! [*Aloud.*] Where is he? Why isn't he with you?

Apraxin. We found him, my lord, in bed.

Peter. In bed? But they said just now he was here.

Apraxin. His attack had come upon him suddenly, for when we had assured him of our good intentions — [*Smiles.*]

Peter. Well? Well?

Apraxin. He got out of bed with all his clothes on.

Peter. Did he?

Apraxin. Yes, and —

Peter. That's enough! You're trying to set me against him!

Apraxin. My lord —

Peter. Stand back! [*A cough heard off.*]

Apraxin. That's the Tsarevitch!

Peter. What, the man with the cough? Is that what you know him by? What does he cough for? Sickly, is he — or what?

[*The Soldiers present arms.*]

[*Enter ALEXIS. He stands rooted to the spot.*]

Aha! [*Points at EUDOXIA, then at ALEXIS, then at himself.*] Did you do this?

Eudoxia. No!

Peter. Be silent, madam! [*ALEXIS kneels and takes his father's hand to kiss.*] Get up! None of that! I know the worth of that knee-scraping, hand-kissing business! [*Clicks fingers.*] And I know what that conceals. Forms, customs, old

observances — what I've warred against these twenty years! Father and son! Good God! that's close enough. Let's come to the root of the matter. Mind you, I'm not angry with you; but do you still persist in loving your mother?

Eudoxia. Were that so wonderful?

Peter. Wonderful! It were stupendous.

Eudoxia. What, for a son to love his mother?

Peter. No, for a Tsarevitch to love the Tsar, his father's, declared, stigmatized enemy.

Eudoxia. I came only to tell our son to be a good son to you.

Peter. That I believe you, madam. A likely story. [*Cries without of "Long live the Empress!"*] PETER makes a movement of joy.] Ha! Do you hear that?

Eudoxia. Indeed, against my will.

Peter. I think it is, indeed, "against her will." She thinks it's her. You think it's you. You an Empress; you'd make a wife for a knock-knee'd sacristan.

Alexis. I can't bear it.

Peter. [*At window.*] Come on, Kate, come along.

Cath. [*Without.*] I'm coming, I'm coming — if there's anything left of me. [*Enter CATHERINE in a travel-stained, half-military get-up.*] I'm positively dripping. Give me something to drink, or——

[*Starts at seeing EUDOXIA.*]

Peter. There's your Empress for you! Look at her. Isn't she splendid? Isn't she just the thing for an Emperor's wife? Peter's rough-and-tumble maid-of-all-work. [*CATHERINE whispers to PETER.*] Eh? Consider her? [*Looking towards EUDOXIA.*] Let her learn; and you, Alexis, too; and all of you. Do you know what? — She saved me from imprison-

ment—ay! [CATHERINE puts her hand over PETER'S mouth.] You get up here! [Makes CATHERINE stand on a chair.] And all you on your knees before her! When everything had failed—stop there!—she thought of a way to save us all. She went through the army—ashamed of it, are you?—collected all the gold and jewels in the camp—stop up there!—bribed the——

Enter TOLSTOI, touches PETER'S arm. PETER turns.

Tolstoi. The treaty! [CATHERINE gets off chair.

Peter. [Looking over treaty.] Ah, shame! It's all smudged and wet. What——?

Tolstoi. My lord, I—I couldn't—I couldn't!

Peter. He wept over it! Ah! this great honourable man—he couldn't draw out this treaty without—Look at these marks! They came out of his eyes, out of his heart! This never goes to the Turks! Tolstoi, make another copy! Yes. [Feels in pockets for money, finds none.] No! But I'll not forget. Great soul! [TOLSTOI moves up stage.] He did; he wept over it!

Tolstoi. [In answer to a question from DOLGOROUKI.] They didn't come out of my eyes!

[Exit TOLSTOI.]

Peter. [Looking round him.] H'm! Dolgorouki, you will convey Sister Eudoxia to her convent. Apraxin, put them [pointing to crowd of Nobles] to the question.

[A groan goes up from Nobles; some fall on their knees in mute appeal.]

Cath. [To APRAXIN.] Wait! [APRAXIN demurs.] Wait, I say! [To Nobles.] Take courage!

[EUDOXIA stretches her arms out to ALEXIS; he seems afraid for a moment, then rushes into them.]

Alexis. My mother!

[PETER crosses, separates ALEXIS and EUDOXIA.]

Peter. She ceased to be your mother when she ceased to be my wife!

Cath. Peter, don't be a brute!

Eudoxia. Husband, be patient with our son.

Cath. Say something kind to her. What a pig you are!

[EUDOXIA totters, but recovers herself to check ALEXIS, who has made a movement towards her. She goes towards door; she turns round, makes the sign of the cross several times and silently prays for ALEXIS.]

Cath. [Very timidly.] Madam, if I — [EUDOXIA draws herself up] — I know, if you choose, you have the right to scorn me.

Eudoxia. [Relenting, half speaking to herself.] Catherine — Catherine!

Cath. But I respect you, and I honour you, and I feel for you.

Eudoxia. Will you — you have influence over my husband — over Peter — you seem kind — will you watch over my son?

Cath. [Taking hand, much overcome.] Madam! madam! I promise you, I swear to you!

Eudoxia. Even though you should have children of your own?

Cath. Even before them!

Eudoxia. Swear it to me! [CATHERINE crosses herself before images.] You have sworn, remember!

Cath. I shan't forget!

Eudoxia. Ah! you're a good woman!

Cath. I'm a woman!

Eudoxia. Heaven bless you! Remember!

[Exit EUDOXIA.]

[CATHERINE gets over to ALEXIS, shakes his right hand with her left. PETER is looking over a map, muttering and chuckling to himself. He looks round suddenly.]

Peter. [To APRAXIN.] Well?

Apraxin. Her Majesty told me to wait.

Peter. Wait! What for?

Cath. For your pardon.

Peter. [About to break out.] How — you — well, I'm —

[CATHERINE holds her finger up at PETER.]

Boyards. Mercy, Father Tsar, mercy!

Cath. Of course he'll be merciful! Can't you see it in his sunny countenance?

[PETER smiles against his will.]

Peter. It's no good my giving orders! I'd better abdicate.

Cath. Come, you've been defeated once!

Peter. And, by making sure of them, I'll make sure of not being defeated a second time.

Cath. There! He pardons you.

Peter. I say, Kate, come now.

Cath. You said you'd make sure you weren't defeated again!

Peter. Believe me, you'd better stop it.

Cath. No, I won't, just because I don't want to see you defeated again. I want to see the white angel of mercy, civilized and European, overcome the black devil of Russian barbarity in you. Try for once and behave like a civilized being.

[PETER bursts out laughing.]

I declare you're the Russianest of the lot!

Peter. You're right, Kate. I've reformed others, but I can't reform myself.

Cath. Then they're forgiven?

Peter. No!

Cath. You confess yourself I saved you, and you refuse my very first request!

Peter. Ah, sorceress! Well! [*Waves hand.*] No, —I have it! —Yes! Now listen to me, all of you! —Catherine, be silent! [*To Boyars.*] You, with terror! [*To Officers.*] You, I hope, with joy. No, I'll not lop away amongst the branches any longer —I'll strike at the very root of all this matter. Not you will I punish this time, but thou, Holy Mother Moscow —Holy step-mother Moscow! —white-walled, many-domed mother of ignorance! ay, and wet-nurse of sedition! Thou Eudoxia amongst my cities. She was against me, and I divorced her! Thou art against me, and I divorce you. Russia, I decapitate you. Come here! [*They gather round.*] My new capital must be a Catherine —one after my own heart. Where shall I find such a one? Where did I find her? In conquered territory. So my capital. What was she when I found her? —

Cath. Oh, Peter! Peter!

Peter. Well, never mind about that. What was my capital before I found it? A swamp! — [APRAXIN

gives a groan.] Thank you! — It is to be called Petersburg, and it is to be situated here! It shall be your punishment to have to build and deck out your Holy Mother Moscow's supercessor. [*To APRAXIN, who, with others, is examining map in PETER'S hand.*] Well?

[*APRAXIN is fogging about on map.*

There! Can't you see? — No, not there! — There!

Apraxin. There?

Peter. Yes, yes, there!

Apraxin. Oh?

Peter. Well?

Apraxin. Isn't it in the sea?

Peter. [*Mimicking.*] No, it's not in the sea; it's under water, if you mean that. [*APRAXIN looks at PETER in blank astonishment.*] Have you ever heard of a city being built on piles?

Apraxin. Oh, I see! An excellent idea! You first build the site, and then build the city on top of the site, and —

Peter. [*Taking him by the ear.*] Yes, my friend, you have just caught the hang of it! We will all start for Petersburg to-night! Roumiantzoff, stop out there! I shall want you! [*ROUMIANTZOFF goes out on to balcony. Raising hat to Officers.*] Gentlemen! [*Putting it on and addressing Boyars.*] Traitors! [*Exeunt all except PETER, CATHERINE and ALEXIS. PETER walks up and down, stops and contemplates ALEXIS from time to time.*] I've found my wife, and I've found my capital, now I've to find — or rather to fashion, for he's ready found for me — my son-successor.

[*Hand on ALEXIS'S shoulder. CATHERINE plucks PETER by the sleeve.*

Cath. Be gentle with Alexis.

Peter. I know how to deal with him!

[*Exit* CATHERINE.]

TOLSTOI *has entered.*

Tolstoi. [*Handing it to* PETER.] The treaty!
[PETER *gives a groan.*] I thought, in case of refer-
ence — these are the ukases promulgated during your
absence. [ALEXIS *makes a movement of anxiety.*

Peter. [*To* ALEXIS.] Never fear! [*To* TOLSTOI.]
I will judge my son [*tears ukases*] not by what he has
put his hand to, but by what is in his head.

Tolstoi. [*Giving a second bundle.*] Which is here.
These were only wanting the Regent's signature.

Peter. [*Tearing them.*] I will judge my son, not by
what is in his head, but by what he has put his
hand to.

Tolstoi. Might I call your Majesty's attention —?

Peter. Stand back! [*To* ALEXIS.] I will not
judge you at all. My son! [*Takes* ALEXIS *in his*
arms and kisses him.] I have no right to judge you!
I have neglected you shamefully! [*To* TOLSTOI.]
Go! [*Exit* TOLSTOI.] I have neglected you
shamefully, but from to-day I mean to take you in
hand. Your age?

Alexis. What?

Peter. What is your age?

Alexis. Twenty-six — seven.

Peter. Which is it? Surely you ——

Alexis. Twenty-seven.

Peter. Good. Nothing is inveterate at twenty-
seven. And — er — throw it away — the bit of paper.
Don't fiddle about with things when you've done
with them — throw them away. [*Scratches his fore-*
head.] What do you feel an inclination for?

Alexis. Oh! — er — I ——

Peter. Take your time. [*Turns to table.*] Take your time! [*Writes on slip.*] Roumiantzoff! [ROUMIANTZOFF *enters from balcony.*] Fetch me these — do you see? “Grisard on Fortification” and “Müller’s Ship-building” — from the library. [*Exit ROUMIANTZOFF.*] Deliberation’s no bad quality. Well — er — what was it I asked you? What was it I asked you? I say, don’t make me ——

Alexis. I — I don’t remember what.

Peter. [*Getting angry, but restrains himself.*] Never mind — never mind. Yes, don’t look so obliquely. That’s better. Yes. Sprechen sie deutsch?

Alexis. Ein wenig.

Peter. Good. Et français?

Alexis. Aussi, mon père.

Peter. Yes, I remember. What do you like best, military matters or naval, or administrative, or what?

Alexis. Oh, I — I — I think ——

Peter. No, no; one doesn’t think about those sort of things. They drive one along. Are you eager, curious, energetic?

Alexis. Yes.

Peter. You don’t look it; you look just — er — er — anxious. I wish he’d speak! I do wish he’d speak! You may, if you like — I must be patient. I mean I’m not your schoolmaster, I’m your father. Open your heart to me — no, not a word! I have been through a terrible time these last few days. Oh, God, what I suffered that night, and all on account of you! I’ll tell you. There’s the plan. Oh, how I bungled! Do you see? — Turks, Turks, Turks! [ALEXIS *heaves a deep sigh.*] What’s the matter with the boy? Eh? Well, we were reduced to a

handful; we had been fighting for three days on half-rations, mark you; we had left, two rounds of ammunition apiece. With daylight, either annihilation or surrender. There I sat in my tent, like this, trying, trying to think, with the infernal Turkish music dinning in my ears—for they were right close up to us—the whole night through; and at last their music seemed to form itself into a sort of jargon nothing would drive out of my head—beaten, beaten back! Where's the great man now? Beaten, beaten back! Where's the great man now? Oh, why the devil don't you——? No, I don't mean that, only—aren't you stirred?

Alexis. Yes, father, yes. [PETER moves about a bit.]

Peter. Where was I? Ah, yes—like this. Trying to think, trying to think! And at last I did think, I thought of the future, I thought of you—you are my future. I thought how little I really knew of you, how little I had done to fit you to succeed me, and at the thought of all you meant to me, and of the danger threatening Russia,—well, have you ever felt your heart sink, your lungs jump into your throat, and your stomach disappear altogether? That's how I felt. Are you listening to me? What were my last words? [ALEXIS does not know.] But you must listen to me. This is serious—deadly earnest. But what am I——? Now, be patient—patient. Do you admire me? Do I interest you? Do you sympathise with me?

Alexis. You're my father!

Peter. No reason! No reason at all! You mustn't think I'm going to love you because you're my son! That's all very well for common people, but that is no law for emperors! Emperors don't

have sons; they have successors! Don't think I'm rough! My dear boy. [PETER puts hand on ALEXIS' shoulder. ALEXIS appears afraid.] You're afraid of me! Ha, ha, ha! You thought I was going to strike you! Damn them! they have made me out a sort of ogre! — who'd eat up my own children, eh? But I'm not; I'm not! I'm a splendid chap in reality, if you'll only ——

Enter TOLSTOI.

What do you want!

Tolstoi. There's a strange young woman outside.

Alexis. [*Aside.*] Euphrosine!

Tolstoi. Insists on wanting to see someone she calls "Tsar Alexis."

Alexis. [*Aside.*] Euphrosine! Oh!

Peter. Tell her my father's dead! Why do you trouble me with ——

Tolstoi. Only I fancied, and, by his looks — er — that she meant the Tsarevitch; and he, perhaps ——

Peter. Do you know anything of this?

Alexis. No.

Peter. You don't?

Alexis. No.

Peter. Show the lady up.

Alexis. Oh, Heaven! [*Exit* TOLSTOI.]

Peter. That's the cleverest diplomatist, the cunningest liar in my service. Wily as a fox, with the scent of a bloodhound and a fidelity ——! Never lies to me, never deceives me. Over forty, he was, when I took him in hand — thirteen years' difference — and as prejudiced as the worst of them.

Alexis. [*Aside.*] She'll be here! She'll be here!

Peter. But I soon made him slough — as I'll make you slough. And once you shed your old skin,

hide it away in some thicket or other, and forget, as I will, that you ever went counter — against is too strong — to me.

Alexis. I know, father — forgive me! I have done wrong; I was badly advised.

Peter. Why the — what the! — Oh, God, won't he let it drop? Didn't I tear it all up? I hate all excusers and exculpatisers! As if there wasn't an excuse, a reason, for everything in earth, air, sea, sky, fire, water, heaven, hell and hedgerow. I care only about results. Oh! [*Controlling himself with difficulty and looking out of window.*] Trying! trying! very trying!

Alexis. Here she comes! Ah, Euphrosine! Ah!

[EUPHROSINE *pops head in at door and says:* "Peep-bo!" ALEXIS *signs to her to be quiet.* PETER *turns round.* EUPHROSINE *collapses against door.* TOLSTOI *enters, pushing door and EUPHROSINE leaning against it.*

Peter. Peep-bo! [EUPHROSINE *looks scared; then blubbers, then rushes across to ALEXIS.*] Oh, oh! so that's the little mystery? Aren't we all Tsars for the women who love us? [*To TOLSTOI.*] Even you, I daresay. But you shouldn't have told me a lie about her. Don't, don't be a liar. I've nothing against you amusing yourself, that's only natural; and, at your age, I shouldn't like to see it otherwise. But now we've more important matters in hand, so bid her good-bye. [*Taking her by the chin. She smiles at him coquettishly.*] Hum! hum! Give him a good kiss and a squeeze whilst we look the other way. [*Goes up with TOLSTOI.*

Euph. But what was it about his being taken prisoner, and you made Tsar?

Alexis. 'Sh! All false — all false — my love.

Euph. I suppose you'll be wanting your ring back?

[*Taking off ring.*]

Alexis. Would you like to keep it?

Euph. Well, it's a very pretty one.

Alexis. Keep it, darling; keep it.

Euph. Have you asked him to let me marry you?

Alexis. Why; can you be more to me than you are?

Peter. [*Turning.*] That's not the way, man.
[*Rumbling of cannon and shouts of teamsters in street.*]
I shall have to show you. [TOLSTOI *speaks to* PETER.]
Ah! These are my sweethearts — my splendid cannon.

[*Goes on to balcony with* TOLSTOI.

Alexis. You'll wait for me outside?

Peter. The thirty-pounder. There's a mouth to kiss, for you.

Alexis. Good-bye, my darling!

Euph. I'll wait outside.

Peter. Leave the girl, lad, and come and see your father's harem! Aren't they splendid?

Alexis. [*Following her up.*] My love! — my lovely one!

Euph. Mind you ask — about the marriage.

[*Exit* EUPHROSINE.

Peter. Quick, or you'll miss them! Alexis, quick! Here's old grandmother Poltava! [*Claps his hands for excitement.*] Little fool! Get out — [*A shriek from outside.* ALEXIS *recoils from window, covers face with hands.* To TOLSTOI.] Cast her with my own hands! [*To men outside.*] Drive on! Drive on! Alexis! — [*Turns to* ALEXIS.] What are you flinching at? What is the matter? What is it?

Alexis. The child — the child! Is it killed?

Peter. Bless you, no! Only a bit smashed. [*Coming back into room.*] Why, you're as white — here, take some of this! [*Pours brandy out.*]

Alexis. But the child — I can hear him groaning — what are you going to do for him?

Peter. He's maimed for life, I should say; and I have no use for cripples.

Alexis. But you're not going to leave him there?

Peter. He'll drag himself off — he's trying to now. Brave little chap! He's not a squealer!

Alexis. But this is hideous! You wouldn't treat a dog so, father!

Peter. Go and see to him yourself, if you're so —

Alexis. No, no! I couldn't!

Enter ROUMIANTZOFF, gives two books to PETER and goes out on to balcony again.

Peter. Then be silent! Now I want you —

Alexis. It's no use — it's horrible! I can't think of anything! Something must be done.

Peter. He's coming out at last!

Alexis. [*Calling.*] Someone! Anyone!

[*ROUMIANTZOFF appears.*]

Peter. All in the wrong direction.

Alexis. [*To ROUMIANTZOFF.*] Take that boy to the hospital.

Roum. What boy?

Alexis. That was run over.

Roum. He's dead.

Alexis. I can hear him groaning.

Peter. [*To TOLSTOI.*] All wrong! All wrong!

Roum. I tell you he's dead!

Peter. Dead! Oh, take him then to the dissecting school! Expect me there in half-an-hour.

Found some use for him at last! [ROUMIANTZOFF is going.] Give the order, but don't go yourself, for I want you.

[Exit ROUMIANTZOFF. ALEXIS is sunk in a chair.

Alexis. I can hear him groaning, I can hear him groaning!

[TOLSTOI and PETER stand contemplating ALEXIS.

Peter. Tolstoi, don't shrug and smile like that — or I'll ——. Get my anatomical instruments — they're in the next room. [Exit TOLSTOI.] Alexis, you are all you ought not to be. But a few battle-fields will soon knock this sort of nonsense out of you; stale bread and dirty water; a roof of canvas and a bed of planks; bullets humming round your frost-bitten ears, and newly-spilled smoking blood up to your ankles; and you'll soon become a great man! In six months I shall myself examine you in these two books. So work at them, especially the diagrams! Colonel! [Enter ROUMIANTZOFF.] Seen to that?

Roum. Yes.

Peter. Alexis, you're a lieutenant in the Preobrajenski Regiment. [Pointing to ROUMIANTZOFF.] This is your Colonel! Stand up! [ALEXIS rises.] Well up! [PETER takes ALEXIS by the shoulders.] That's what he wants — eh?

Roum. Yes, that's what he wants.

Peter. Good height, though! [ROUMIANTZOFF feels ALEXIS' muscle; PETER does same.] We'll soon give him that! Mind, Colonel, I've chosen you because of your stringency; you must treat him just like all the others — harsher, if anything! It's a hard task we've got before us. [TOLSTOI has returned

with instruments.] The material is very raw. Let us not deceive ourselves. But I hope my boy has plenty of good-will; so, Alexis, my son, good-bye!

[Going.

Alexis. Father!

Peter. *[Stopping.]* I attend!

Alexis. Father, can't I stay by you?

Peter. No. I'm a colonel, you're a lieutenant. You must work your way up to *me*, as I worked my way up to *him*.

Alexis. But, father, I—I want to get to know you.

Peter. To get to know me! I'm just what you see me now; neither more nor less.

Alexis. Yes, but to—to love you.

Peter. Here I am, love me!

Alexis. But you don't seem to understand, father.

Peter. I'm trying—I'm trying!

Alexis. If we're always apart, how can I get to know you and to love you?

Peter. But let's have this out! "To know me and to love me!" You know me—you've heard me. Don't you love me?

Alexis. Father, I hardly know you! *[Pause.*

Peter. But there's not such a devil of a lot to know about me, after all. Love Russia and you love me! That's simple! *[Silence.*

Alexis. But we aren't like father and son!

Peter. But we will be. Look here, do you mean by loving, pottering around one another and making one another birthday presents, and that sort of thing? Because, if so, I've no time for that.

Alexis. No, no; don't you see, father—

Peter. Oh, don't give me up!

Alexis. If only we were together, we should gradually get to—

Peter. I've no time for gradual processes.

Alexis. But to love one another — for ourselves —
as we are.

Peter. I don't love you as you are; I don't love
you as you are. If I'm to love you, or anybody or
anything, I must love them, not as they are, but as
I have made them to be. I think that's clear.

[*Going off.*

Quick Curtain.

ACT II.

[*Three months are supposed to have elapsed.*]

SCENE.—*Petersburg. Autumn. Dusk. Rain and wind. A large, low-ceilinged log-built room in Alexis' (so-called) Palace. Doors centre, right and left. In middle of room a large table. A smaller table at back, with two books of Act I., and a roll of dress material on it. Candles lighted and unlighted. A couch. Much litter. The rain comes through the roof.*

[*TOLSTOI and DOLGOROUKI in uniform, MANSOUROFF and ZABOUROFF in tatters, discovered at large table, writing. In front of TOLSTOI and DOLGOROUKI lie their swords and pistols. Scratching of pens. Distant firing. A drop of rain falls on to TOLSTOI'S paper; utters an ejaculation, shifts paper; goes on writing. MANSOUROFF'S head falls on to arm. Firing continued. TOLSTOI and DOLGOROUKI exchange glances. TOLSTOI points at MANSOUROFF with pen. DOLGOROUKI jogs MANSOUROFF, who picks up pen and goes on writing. ZABOUROFF comes to a standstill from sheer exhaustion. Another drop falls on to TOLSTOI'S paper.*

Enter APRAXIN, holding his wrist; sees piece of dress material on table back; tears a strip off and bandages arm with it.

Apraxin. Petersburg is a mistake.

Tolstoi. Hallo! Have you driven the Swedes off?

Apraxin. For the present.

Dolgor. You're wounded?

Apraxin. Scratched. It's the weather we've got to fear now. And I know no way of putting down a west wind; powder and shot won't do it. I tell you we're literally taken between the devil and the deep sea.

Tolstoi. Who stands for the devil? Peter?

Apraxin. No, the Swedes stand for the devil.

Dolgor. Though Peter's a devil too—a devil to work.

Tolstoi. [*Shaking MANSOUROFF.*] Here, details! [*To DOLGOROUKI.*] Look at your man! [*DOLGOROUKI shakes ZABOUROFF.*] Fine clerks, certainly.

Mansour. [*Trying to write.*] I can't I can't my fingers

[*TOLSTOI takes paper on which MANSOUROFF had been writing.*]

Apraxin. The wind is rising. Petersburg is a mistake.

Tolstoi. [*Passing paper on to DOLGOROUKI.*] Look at that. [*DOLGOROUKI runs eye over paper and laughs.*] Higher up!

Dolgor. [*Reading.*] To transfer two hundred only sons, crushed up and down, to Peter's—what's this?

Tolstoi. Peter's hell.

Dolgor. Oh, I'd like him to see that.

Tolstoi. [*Putting paper on a pile of such.*] He shall.

Dolgor. No, poor wretch, pity him.

Apraxin. [*At window.*] A damnable mistake.

[*DOLGOROUKI has just finished writing a document, which he hands to TOLSTOI, who places it on pile as before.*]

Dolgor. That, too?

Tolstoi. That, too.

Dolgor. You'll destroy the poor fellow.

Tolstoi. Do you think I shall?

Dolgor. Tolstoi, you're hard on Alexis.

Tolstoi. Am I?

[*Pause.*]

Apraxin. A terrible mistake.

[MANSOUROFF and ZABOUROFF'S heads have
sunk again.]

Tolstoi. Let them be. [*Alluding to papers.*] Have you forgotten one summer's afternoon, some three months back, when we all thought Peter a prisoner? You remember our predicament then? I am storing up fuel, my friend, against the kindling of his father's ire.

Enter ROUMIANTZOFF, without a hat.

Roum. The master has overshot himself.

Apraxin. You agree with me, Petersburg is a mistake.

Dolgor. Colonel, what have you done with your hat?

Roum. What have I done with it? Tried to hold it on. What has the wind done with it? Tried to haul it off—and succeeded. Where is it? Where we shall all be—Peter's self, Peter's burg, Peter's son, you—his Chancellor, me—his Colonel—where we shall all be, if this wind keep up for two hours longer. Where's that? "In the Neva, in the Neva, in the blue Neva waters." It's not every sovereign, at two hours' notice, can turn his capital city into a school of swimming. [*Imitates swimming.*]

Tolstoi. Damme if I think it funny at all.

Roum. I say, haven't you something to offer me to —

Enter Masha from L., with a glass of tea on a tray.

Tea. The very thing! [Goes to table.

Masha. You can't have that.

Roum. Oh, can't I?

Masha. It's for the Empress.

[ROUMIANTZOFF deposits glass, and exit
Masha.

Roum. Is she here?

Tolstoi. In there, with Euphrosine and that young
sprawler, Kikine.

Roum. You don't mean to say Euphrosine and
she ——

Tolstoi. Oh, they're most charming to one another;
they'd like to tear one another's eyes out, but they
are most charming.

Enter EUPHROSINE first, eating nuts; then CATHERINE and KIKINE. All rise on CATHERINE'S entrance. EUPHROSINE tosses her head.

Cath. [To KIKINE.] But she mustn't precede me.
Tell her so. [KIKINE crosses to and expostulates with
EUPHROSINE.] How are you all?

[A burst of firing.

Apraxin. Be ready; they're recommencing.

Euph. [To KIKINE.] Oh, nonsense,—rubbish!

Tolstoi. [To CATHERINE.] How does your Majesty
like my Chancellorie?

Euph. [Impudently.] Yes. How does your
Majesty like my drawing-room? I do think your
husband might ——

Cath. This is hardly the time, dear.

Euph. [More impudently still, offering a handful of
nuts.] Have some?

Cath. [*On her dignity.*] No, thank you, dear.

Euph. Afraid of spoiling your teeth?

Cath. I am not afraid of spoiling my teeth.

Euph. [*To herself.*] Because they're spoilt already.

Cath. I don't care about nuts.

[*Emphasis on "nuts."*]

Voice. [*Off.*] All to the redoubts!

[*All leap up, seize weapons. TOLSTOI takes hold of MANSOUROFF and DOLGOROUKI of ZABOUROFF.*]

Tolstoi. Though you won't write for your country, you can fight for it.

Voice. [*Off.*] Make haste!

[*Exeunt all but CATHERINE, EUPHROSINE, and KIKINE.*]

Euph. A good riddance. Catherine dear, would you like your tea brought in here?

Cath. [*At window to KIKINE.*] Aren't you going?

Euph. I asked you a question.

Cath. I beg pardon, dear.

Kikine. I'm under orders for Vienna, as soon as my passport and credentials are made out. I am to be seine hodgeborengewurdigheitigkeiten Excellenz Alexander von Kikine.

Euph. Now perhaps you'll listen to me. I asked you if you'd like your tea brought in here?

Cath. Yes, dear, certainly.

Euph. [*To KIKINE.*] Fetch it!

[*CATHERINE is at window.*]

Kikine. [*To EUPHROSINE.*] Life of my life, you're not annoyed with me?

Euph. I am very much annoyed with you.

Kikine. Then I am paralysed. I can't stir.

Euph. Go and fetch the tea.

Kikine. I can't, I'm paralysed. Euphrosine, I love you passionately, madly, devotedly, Alexishly; fly, fly with me to Vienna! Vienna! [*Singing.*] The land of my boyhood, the land of my birth.

Euph. Don't be an ass.

Kikine. Ah, sagen sie nicht so, mein geliebte Herzen's gluckswunch. [EUPHROSINE *slaps down his hands.*] I will fetch the tea.

Euph. Take care of the hole in the floor! [KIKINE *makes an extravagant ecstatic gesture, pretends to trip over hole and exit.*] Well, dear?

Cath. [*Turning from window.*] I beg pardon, dear; only I'm so anxious about the Emperor.

Euph. Oh, I shouldn't be that, dear. Everybody round him is thoroughly wretched, so I suppose he's perfectly happy. [CATHERINE *appears exasperated.*] Why aren't there candles lit?

[*Takes a paper off table and lights candle from it.*]

Cath. You mustn't do that. Those are Imperial documents.

Euph. There's lots left.

Cath. My good woman!

Euph. It's done now.

Cath. You'll get Alexis into trouble with his father; believe me you will.

Euph. He couldn't be in any worse than he is now. Poor fellow, they've sent him up there to look after that mud-burrowing or canal-making, or whatever they called it, day and night, and in all weathers. He's there now, a night like this. I think his father behaves like a brute to him.

Cath. Please, dear, please remember who his father is, and please, who I am, also.

[EUPHROSINE *makes faces at CATHERINE behind her back.* Re-enter KIKINE with glass of tea; trips over hole in floor, upsets tea.

Euph. You've done it really now, clumsy! You know, I got my foot in there the other day, and gave it such a wrench; I nearly broke my ankle.

Cath. You got your foot into that little hole?

Euph. Why, couldn't you? [*Putting foot through hole.*] Do you see? Do you see? See if yours will go in.

Cath. My foot is just as small as yours.

Euph. Well, try then, try.

Cath. In comparison to my height.

Euph. [*Maliciously.*] Your height — or your size, which? Don't get angry, dear, it isn't my fault.

Cath. [*To KIKINE.*] I'd better be off. No, no! I can't put up with it any longer. Please fetch my things. [*Exit KIKINE.*]

Euph. You're not going, dear. Oh, don't go, dear! You haven't told me about the dress you're going to wear at your party to-morrow — and I must show you, I've got such a lovely piece of brocade. Alexis says — [*She has taken piece of stuff up off table at back — she suddenly sees where APRAXIN tore a piece off.*] — Well! Oh! — oh! — Look here! My dress is utterly spoiled.

Enter APRAXIN.

Cath. Well?

Apraxin. A false alarm, madam. [*Looking about.*] I left my hat — Ah! [*Sees it on table at back.*]

Euph. [*Seeing bandage on APRAXIN's wrist.*] Oh! you beast! You thief!

Apraxin. What's the matter, woman?

Euph. I had only just enough. You've ruined my dress, you devil. Take it off! Take it off at once, I say.

Apraxin. Go away, woman!

Euph. [*Turning to CATHERINE, and stamping with her foot.*] Tell him to take it off.

Cath. But he's wounded, dear.

Euph. [*Beside herself.*] I don't care. He has ruined my dress. Tell him to take it off. [*CATHERINE signs to APRAXIN to go away: he does so. Turning on CATHERINE.*] Why didn't you tell him to take it off?

Cath. My dear —

Euph. You're just simply jealous, jealous of me. Why did you come here? I didn't want you.

Cath. Why, what's the matter, dear?

Euph. With your patronizing air. And you're not really the Empress at all.

Cath. [*Flying out.*] You slut! how dare you! [*To KIKINE.*] My things. [*KIKINE helps her on.*]

Euph. Eudoxia, my future mother-in-law, that's the real Empress.

Kikine. [*Helping CATHERINE on.*] She's no right to say that.

Cath. [*Putting things on.*] Ha! your future mother-in-law! Your future mother-in-law!

Kikine. [*Aside to EUPHROSINE.*] Go on! give it her.

Euph. And when he does marry me I shall be his real Empress — not like you.

Cath. He never will marry you, poor fellow! his father won't let him. And from the bottom of my soul I pity any man who had to marry you.

Euph. Not more than I pity any man who has married you, Catherine Skavronski.

[CATHERINE gives her a look of fury.]

Kikine. Manners, manners, ladies, manners.

Cath. This comes of associating with disreputable women.

Euph. What did you call me?

Cath. You're a bad woman — a bad woman!

Euph. You're a bad woman and a low woman, too.

Kikine. My dear ladies!

Cath. Now you be careful! Just you be very careful!

Euph. And when I'm Empress, I'll have you on your knees — [*Pantomime of scrubbing floor*] — pail . . . scrubbing brush . . . skirts up . . . you know, like you used to do for Pastor Gluck. [CATHERINE gives her a slap in the face; then forces her into chair, holding her arms. KIKINE comes between them. ALEXIS heard outside. EUPHROSINE rushes out to him.]

Kikine. Had you not better — ?

Cath. Oh, no, thank you. I'm not going to give her the chance of telling a lot of lies behind my back.

Euph. [*Off.*] And up with her hands and hit me, and all without my having done anything.

Enter ALEXIS and EUPHROSINE; then IGNATIEFF.

Alexis. What does this mean? Have you struck her?

Euph. [*Whimpering.*] And called me —

Alexis. Don't cry, darling. Please to explain.

Cath. Now look here, Alexis, that's not the tone to take up. She insulted me grossly; she insulted me first.

Euph. [*Still whimpering.*] She tore my dress.

Alexis. You'd no right to strike her.

Euph. And so hard muscles
like fish-wife.

Alexis. 'Sh! dear, 'sh!

Cath. Here is Kikine. He saw it all. I ask you,
sir, which of us was in the right?

Kikine. Well — er—so far as I can remember, one
of these ladies called the other lady — no less a lady
in her way than the other lady — well, she called her
a gay lady. Well, I mean—not a *good* woman.
Not a *good* woman. When I say *good* woman, I
mean a really—a really good woman. And good,
really *good* women are scarce. When I say a good
woman, I mean a regular, downright, plain, straight-
forward, good, ugly old woman. That's what I
mean.

Cath. [*Assuming great dignity.*] I have sufficiently
listened to your impertinence. [*To EUPHROSINE.*]
To yours, miss—[*To ALEXIS*] and, sir, to yours.
I forget who I am. I forget you are but my subjects.
You, miss, may thank my merciful disposition that
I do not have your back well knouted, and your
libellous tongue cut out of your head. You, sir, I ad-
vise you to get quit of this — [*Designating EUPHRO-*
SINE]—of this. Until you have done so, expect no
further favours of me; except this last one—which
is the only reason for my coming here to-day—to
tell you your father, if State business permit, purposes
visiting you this afternoon to examine the progress
you have made in his affairs. I have put you on
your guard.

Euph. [*Calling out after CATHERINE.*] You're a
bad woman!

Alexis. My father coming! What shall I do? I
have done nothing. [*Hand on pile of documents.*]
Look here!

Euph. Is my face still red? Oh, the ——

Kikine. Well, I should advise you, on the spur of the moment, to — er ——

Ignat. Haven't you done harm enough? You, who try to solve everything off hand?

Kikine. [*Knowingly.*] Oh!

Euph. Then will you this time ask him to let me marry you? Alexis, listen: will you ask him?

Alexis. What does it matter?

Euph. What does it matter? I am struck, insulted! What does it matter?

Alexis. Is it generous of you? Haven't I trouble enough already?

Euph. Haven't I? Is it generous of *you*? You, who have raised me and taught me goodness and purity, who have given me new, high ideas; and now, when I want to live up to your ideas, and ask to become your wife: no, say you! What am I really to you?

Alexis. You know you are everything to me.

Euph. Yes, till I wear out, like a coat or a new hat! Ah! don't come near me! I'll stay with you no longer. Here, take back all your presents.

Alexis. Euphrosine!

Euph. Will you ask him?

Alexis. You know I daren't.

Euph. Yet I, the poor peasant girl, dare be struck and insulted for your sake; and you, the Prince, daren't risk even a cross word or an angry look for mine! I am going to shut myself into this room, never to come out again except to be your lawful wedded wife.

[*Closes door, and locks herself in room R.*]

Alexis. [*At door.*] Euphrosine! Euphrosine!

Peter. [*Off.*] Where is General Bauer?

Ignat. I think we'll——

Kikine. Wait downstairs.

[*Exeunt* IGNATIEFF and KIKINE.]

Alexis. Whatever will become of me?

Peter. [*Off.*] Is Bauer ever coming?

Alexis. Things must take their course; I can't alter them, though I might have altered them. [*Arranging a place for PETER at table.*] A minute or two and here he'll be sitting glowering at me—"draw this! draw that!—what! done nothing?" Yes, the books. [*Fetches book off table at back.*] "Especially the diagrams." It's too late now. [*Looks through books; in moving some papers, discloses pistol on table, picks it up; contemplates it; dirties his hand with it; idea strikes him; rubs barrel against hand; wraps handkerchief round it.*] "I'm afraid I can't draw; I've hurt my hand." Only I must keep calm and appear easy, or he'll detect me. Let me think of something else. [*Opens "Thomas à Kempis" lying on table.*] "Do not make it a matter of moment who may be for you or against you; the perversity of man cannot injure those whom God wills to befriend."

Peter. [*Off.*] Let me know when he comes.

Enter PETER *with a bayonet under his arm.* ALEXIS
slips book into pocket.

There you are; glad to see you, my dear boy. [*A great gust of wind.*] Ah, bellow on, you great full-mouthed bully! What do you say? You say your name's Wind, do you? and I say mine is Peter, which means Rock. Aha! and his isn't quicksand, do you hear? All at us! On the one side men, gods and elements—on the other, I and you. I must be getting old, I talk so much and

brag so much. [*Throws himself on couch, mops forehead.*] I'm dead beat, but I'm in good spirits. Do you know why? Because I've got you, that's why. And now I've got you to step into my shoes, I feel my work can no way fail or pass away. All ready for me, I see. That's right. But before we go to work——

Enter General BAUER.

Bauer. I was told ——

Peter. [*Rising.*] Aha, my General Bauer! [*Holds up bayonet.*] From your steel works, isn't it, General Bauer?

Bauer. [*After having examined it.*] From the steel works entrusted by you ——

Peter. Oh, punctilious German! It's a good bayonet! [*Bends it double.*] Isn't it? So pliant. [*Bending it about.*] You can use it as — as anything, except a bayonet, which is made to prod and stick people with; but this is no use for prodding and sticking people with, is it, General Bauer?

Euph. [*Off.*] Alexis! [*PETER looks round, leaving bayonet in BAUER'S hand.*] Alexis!

Peter. Oho! Oho!

Euph. Do you mean to ask him? Alexis, are you there?

Peter. [*Trying to imitate ALEXIS.*] I'm here.

[*Shakes finger at ALEXIS. BAUER wants to speak to him. PETER stops him.*]

Euph. You won't get over me by trying to be funny. It doesn't suit you. Do you mean to ask him, when he comes?

Peter. But ask him what?

Euph. Oh, you know. Ask the old man [*PETER points enquiringly at himself*] to let me marry you.

Peter. Oh, the exorbitant creature!

Euph. [*In trepidation.*] Who's that? [*Silence.*
In greater trepidation.] Alexis! Alexis!

[*EUPHROSINE* heard unfastening door, which
PETER gets up against. *EUPHROSINE*
re-enters.

Euph. Why didn't you? What's the matter?

[*Looks round*—*sees* *PETER.* *Silence.*

Peter. You are always popping up unexpectedly.
[*With mock bow.*] Madam, my would-be daughter-in-law and future Empress of Russia. That's what you want to be, Empress of Russia, is it not?

Euph. I should like to be, certainly.

Peter. You would like to be, certainly. So would some others I know. Let us see. We give you Russia: what do you offer us in return? A pretty little face—value that—[*places money on table*]—and a neat little figure—value that . . . You're an impertinent, exorbitant little creature! Pick up your proper value—we rarely get taken at it—and be thankful—and be off!

Euph. But mayn't—

Peter. [*Assuming a mock ferocious air.*] Would you like me for a father-in-law?

Euph. [*Runs out centre.*] No, I wouldn't, I wouldn't.

Peter. [*To ALEXIS.*] You keep to the same one.

Bauer. Your Majesty—

Peter. Well, Bauer?

Bauer. This bayonet has been put to uses no bayonet would stand.

Peter. It certainly won't stand the use for which it was made. Perhaps you make your bayonets for picking teeth.

Bauer. It has been in the fire.

Peter. Has it?

Bauer. They will do it. Poke up their camp fires with them; toast bread on them —

Peter. I believe it has; General, I exonerate you. Draw out an order of the day: any soldier found using his bayonet for any but its proper purpose — well, a dozen notes of exclamation can stand for the — eventuality. [BAUER *about to go.*] Er — General — how are you getting on with those materials for my history?

Bauer. Well, your Majesty.

Peter. That's right! [*Exit* BAUER.] So we jumble them all up together? I've such an ill-stocked tool-chest; I have to plane with my adze and hammer with my bradawl; and so you get my General — Hist — historiographers and my Senator-Quartermasters — and myself — who know something about everything and everything about nothing. All which makes the Westerners laugh at us. But we have set ourselves to overtake their orderly cavalcade, and if, in doing so, we wobble a bit in our saddles, it doesn't much matter, as long as we do overtake them — which we shall; and hustle them up a bit — when we do.

Alexis. Father!

Peter. Well?

Alexis. Will you . . . may I . . . let me . . . marry her?

Peter. You — marry! Marry . . . marry . . . who? — who?

Alexis. Euphrosine. [PETER *opens eyes wide and blows through lips.*] Father, I do love her so; do let me; if you would only — father, will you?

Peter. What devil's nonsense is this? Who the devil —

Alexis. Oh, father, why get angry?

Peter. Quite right! Why get angry? Ha, ha! It's too absurd, too. Do you mean to say she won't — er — without your — Eh? — Oh!

Alexis. I respect her; I revere her.

Peter. What, that little —

Alexis. I want to make her my wife. Surely, father, marriage is a sacred thing.

Peter. Marriage a sacred thing? Yes, of course. Oh, yes, as head of the Church I must confess it. But, damn it all! You're not going to marry every woman you fall in love with!

Alexis. I shall never love any other woman but her.

Peter. You say so now. You're not in love; you're love-sick; love-sick, my boy. Doesn't it sound nasty?

Alexis. Then you won't let me?

Peter. Certainly not! You have got to marry a Princess: make an alliance, sir, and strengthen my position in Europe. Now, I've got my eye on —

Alexis. But if I don't love her.

Peter. What is all this rigmarole about loving people? Love, what the devil's love? Children come without it. Witness yourself! Did I love your mother? Yet here you are; such as you are.

Alexis. [*Eyes fixed on vacancy.*] And what an unhappy marriage it has been! Then you married Catherine, because you loved her. You're happy with her.

Peter. [*Controlling himself.*] Look here. Let your Euphrosine prove herself a Catherine, and then it'll be time enough to . . . To our studies.

[*Sits himself.*]

Alexis. It seems to me immoral to marry a woman you don't love.

Peter. I don't care what it seems to you. Morals, my boy, are dangerous things to meddle with, especially for young men, take my word for it. Leave morals to those whom they concern; and let's have no more on this subject, or I shall feel obliged to remove this Euphrosine creature. Come now, to work. [*ALEXIS recalls to mind the pistol business, etc., which, in the warmth of the foregoing scene, he had quite forgotten. PETER takes out spectacles.*] You know this is a real pleasure to me; I feel I'm stretching my hand out over — over years and years of — of posterity — of life after death. Come here! [*Puts spectacles on ALEXIS, who utters an exclamation of surprise.*] Aha! Isn't it an invention? Ever so much clearer, don't you see with them, eh?

Alexis. Yes, I do, and — yes, much clearer.

Peter. H'm! I suppose your eyes are also weak.

Alexis. What is it makes that?

Peter. That's the science of optics; isn't it wonderful? You shall learn that too, in time. Yes, I wanted to tell you before we begin work; I've been thinking over what you said, you know, about getting to know one another, and all that: I think perhaps you were right, so I mean to have you much more about me in future; and we'll see more of one another, won't we? Well, now, have you been at the Euclid?

Alexis. [*Feebly.*] Yes.

Peter. That's right. And the fortification?

Alexis. Yes.

Peter. [*Loud.*] Yes. Excellent, excellent! Ah, you'll maintain me, you'll carry me forward, won't you? You see now, don't you, how prodigious — how great — my work is?

Alexis. Yes, father, I do — of course.

Peter. H'm! Let us begin elementary. You don't know what a pleasure this is to me. You don't. Now, sir, draw me a rhomboid.

[*Hands paper to ALEXIS.*]

Alexis. I'm afraid, father, I can't draw to-day.

Peter. Why not?

Alexis. I've hurt my hand.

Peter. [*Testily.*] What did you do that for?

Alexis. It was an accident.

Peter. Let's see it.

Alexis. Ah, don't. It hurts even to ——

Peter. Do you think I don't understand?

[*Tries to draw hand out of waistcoat.*]

Alexis. Don't really.

Peter. Is it a sprain, or a burn, or what? How did you do it?

Alexis. With that pistol.

Peter. [*Picks up pistol. A sudden change comes over his face.*] With this pistol?

Alexis. Yes.

Peter. How?

Alexis. I —— I forgot it was loaded.

Peter. You're quite sure this is the pistol?

[*A single gun fired.*]

Alexis. Yes.

Peter. Go on! [*Fiercely.*] Go on! Tell it out!

Alexis. I was turning it about ——

Peter. Forgetting it was loaded ——

Alexis. And it ——

Peter. Went off: so!

[*Fires pistol.*]

Alexis. Yes, and ——

Peter. Reloaded itself! [*Pause. A single gun is fired. PETER puts out his arms and then raises them above his head; drags ALEXIS' hand out of waistcoat, tears off bandage; draws up his own sleeve, disclosing a*

real wound. Forcing ALEXIS into chair.] Draw! draw, I say!

Alexis. [*Getting up.*] I can't draw.

Peter. You simply haven't opened these books?

Alexis. I haven't opened them.

[*A single gun fired. PETER throws open door. Papers are blown all over room.*

Peter. [*To DOLGOROUKI, seated outside.*] Curse; what's that cannon for?

Dolgor. The water is rising in the river.

[*Pause. PETER raises his hands above his head.*

Peter. Keep me informed. [*Closes door.*] Help nowhere! Lazy, cowardly liar! Nothing avails. All is vain. My words are borne away upon the wind — what am I going to do with you? I turn to you; I ask you. I suppose you've thought of it yourself? You don't suppose I'm going to let you stand stupidly still—as you are now—staring at nothing, eh? Oh, that dumb-driven, stupid, vacant stare! I am a man: I must die. And do you think I am going to entrust my tender half-ripe fruit-trees to one who, like the lazy servant in the Bible, buried his talent in the ground? Mute—always mute! God! let us get something out of you! You *shall* disclose yourself. [*Plunges hands into ALEXIS' pockets, brings forth some letters and a small book.*] Ah! Eu-phrosine!—er! [*Tears up letters. Opens book and reads.*] Thomas à Kempis. "The Imitation of Christ." "Do not busy yourself in other concerns, or entangle yourself in the affairs of the great."—Underlined. "It is vanity to seek honour and to strive for high positions." Is—is this what you believe?

Alexis. I like it.

Peter. “Quiet that excessive desire for knowledge”
—twice underlined. And this, too, you believe in?

Alexis. I would like to believe it.

Peter. Oh, God! the prop has crumbled in my hands. [*Wind and cannon.*] They’ll have me down between them. Let the waters come! What wisp of a thing are you that I have mistaken for a staff? Stubborn only not to be bent. [*His eyes fill with tears.*] It’s the cruelest trick that ever was played on man.

Alexis. Father, I have deceived you.

Peter. I don’t mean you. I mean He that brings all these powers against me, that puts only the mother into the son. [*With rising fury.*] It is her cursed spirit that lives again in you. [*Tapping book.*] Fudge and rubbish! Malingering, mawkish, shirking, hypocritical! It is old Russia. You want to sit throned upon Inertia. To do nothing, and snore away your time: that is what it all really means. Who is not for me is against me. Do you hear that?

Alexis. I cannot help it.

Peter. I can and must. I am not yet in your hand. You are still under mine. And it shall be heavy upon you. One day death will strike me down and take my shoulder from the stone that in blood and sweat I have raised thus high, and it is you — you! — that should have stood ready at my shoulder to take on my shoulder’s burden. You! think of it! A thing like you! It would soon brush you aside and crash down over my prostrate body — down, down into the quagmire and frog-pond out of which I dragged it. [*In a very loud voice.*] So hear me now, what I say! Once and for all, this is my first

warning! You cannot any longer go on as you are — neither fish, flesh nor fowl. If you continue to stand out against me, I disinherit you; I lop you off from me like a blasted limb. Now you have heard, and by the will of God I shall fulfil it! Better a worthy stranger than an unworthy son. Better, better a thousand times ——

[*Heavy firing.* ROUMIANTZOFF *rushes in, followed by* TOLSTOI, APRAXIN, *etc.*

Roum. They've renewed their attack! The bridge is swept away! We are cut off from the redoubts!

[*Pause.*

Apraxin. [*In a whisper.*] We must retreat.

Peter. [*Casts a scornful look at APRAXIN. Seating himself and thrusting out his foot.*] Retreat! Help me off! Quickly! damn you! don't you hear? [*TOLSTOI pulls one boot off, ROUMIANTZOFF the other. To ALEXIS.*] Shame on you!

Tolstoi. What are you going to do?

Peter. Swim over to them. They are my children. Better a worthy stranger — haste!

Many. No, no; you'll be drowned.

Alexis. Father, don't — don't!

Peter. Then is your chance.

Alexis. Then let me go with you. I am no coward; you shan't despise me!

Peter. "Do not busy yourself in other concerns, nor entangle yourself in the affairs of the great."

[*Exit* PETER.

Alexis. "Better a worthy stranger than an unworthy son." Well, you shall have your worthy stranger, my mighty father; I will stand no longer in your way.

[Enter, in expectant haste, KIKINE and IGNATIEFF,
afterwards EUPHROSINE.

Ignat. }
Kikine. } Well, what has occurred ?

Kikine. We heard him storming at you. [Sneeze.

Euph. Alexis, don't let me be drowned.

Ignat. Keep quiet, child !

Alexis. There's no danger, dear.

Ignat. Why don't you speak ?

Alexis. Everything is decided.

Kikine. Hurray ! the standard of revolt streams
forth upon the breeze.

Ignat. One word to me ; from me to the Bishops ;
the Bishops to the Priests ; the Priests to the
people.

Kikine. The Emperor is a dear old friend of mine ;
he'll lend us his armies ——— [Sneeze.

Alexis. Yes. Furl up your standard ; keep back
your circular whisper ; and, pray you, put yourself
under no obligation to your old friend the Emperor
on my account. Ah, my father is great ! I am
proud to be his son. There he is out there, in the
water, risking his life for his people. He will die for
his people yet.

Ignat. You have given in to him ?

Kikine. Knuckled — vilely — under.

Alexis. I am abdicating.

Euph. What does that mean — abdicate ?

[KIKINE and IGNATIEFF dumb with amazement.

Enter DOLGOROUKI.

Dolgor. Another false alarm.

Euph. [From one to the other.] Tell me what it
means — abdicate.

[IGNATIEFF puts his hat on the table.

[IGNATIEFF and KIKINE take EUPHROSINE
aside and explain to her.

Alexis. Did my father plunge into the water?

Dolgor. There was no need; common sense might have told him, only they'd all lost their heads, and you'd so excited your father. [*Exclamation from EUPHROSINE.*] The redoubts are as much cut off from their attack as from our assistance.

Ignat. [*To EUPHROSINE.*] And you no empress — that's what abdication means. Exert your influence.

Kikine. [*Aside to EUPHROSINE as she crosses him.*] Flee with me to Vienna.

Alexis. [*Staring into vacancy.*] He meant to have done it.

[DOLGOROUKI crosses to KIKINE and IGNATIEFF.

Euph. Alexis, you really can't be surely going to be so silly.

Alexis. To lay down all cares and worries but you, my one care, my one and only worry.

Kikine. [*To IGNATIEFF.*] Come along!

Ignat. [*To DOLGOROUKI.*] Thank you. You are an honest man.

Euph. Yes, but I want to be an empress.

Alexis. You think you do.

Euph. Oh —

Kikine. Too late! He's talking to Tolstoi on the landing.

Ignat. }
Kikine. } Alexis.

Alexis. I am quite calm; I see everything clearly before me.

Kikine. Yes, but what about us? If we are found here —

Ignat. We have always been your friends.

Alexis. Get into that room there. [*Exeunt KIKINE and IGNATIEFF, who has left hat on table.*] You, dear, go into yours. [*Exit EUPHROSINE.*] Now I will relieve my father's soul.

[*Re-enter PETER, followed by DOLGOROUKI and MENSHIKOFF. PETER looks hard at ALEXIS for a moment or two.*]

Peter. Wait outside. I shall not be long. [*Closes c. doors.*] Forget what I said. [*Sits.*] I will draw the figure for you myself, and letter it too.

Alexis. [*In a low voice, shaking his head.*] You were right. I am unfit. I will do your bidding. I will abdicate.

Peter. [*Rising gradually.*] You'll what? — You'll — no, no! — You desire . . . the greatest heritage that ever . . . you desire? . . .

Alexis. To ease you of me.

Peter. Miserable cur! [*Gives him a buffet in the chest. ALEXIS turns his face to the wall and weeps.*] Why, he simply leaps at it. My supreme threat is a boon to him — a dainty morsel in his mouth.

Alexis. [*Vehemently.*] Why did you strike me?

Peter. I will strike you again and again. I will thrash you and I will goad you. You have only felt my fist for the first time.

Alexis. What do you want of me? How is it possible to content you?

Peter. What do I want of you! Don't madden me! Mercy of pity! What do I want of him! You are a false thing — a forged, dishonoured thing. A lie pronounced by —

Alexis. Don't — don't, father!

Peter. My child — and none of me! My flesh — and not a pulse responds to me! My blood — and not a drop to shed for me!

Alexis. Oh, pity me!

Peter. *Pity me!* You are advised to this. Answer me! Are you not?

Alexis. I only wished to please you.

Peter. To please me — by showing me that you are the meanest, most unambitious thing that ever formed an obstacle to such a man as me. You are an obstacle, for — [*Suddenly sees* IGNATIEFF'S *hat on T.*] That was not here just now. [*Goes to door L., brings out* IGNATIEFF. *A pause.*] Ground at last! The prospect clears by darkening. Here is your black shadow. [*Calling out at door C.*] To the fortress with him! Put him to the question! [*Soldiers march* IGNATIEFF *off.*] You are the fixed opponent of my work. Their hopes are thick upon your head. Your desire to abdicate was an ambushade. Be clean and clear with me. You can't deceive me now. I have seen you and that man together once before. Then my capital was in flames, my subjects' blood — the best of it — was flowing in the streets. I did not connect you then, but I do now.

Alexis. What do you mean?

Peter. [*Turning suddenly on him.*] I will tell you what *you* mean. You count the days and hours to my death.

Alexis. Oh, never — never!

Peter. Then they do for you. That is the same to me. They count the days and hours to my death, to take out even the very traces of my footsteps. You are all of you crouching in ambush. This

willing abdication is an ambush, so that you may follow me securely behind the hedges; and, as soon as I am dead, leap out and murder my first-born, my true son, my life-work.

Alexis. You speak of murdering?

Peter. Ay, ay, of murdering.

Alexis. What are you talking of? I ask only to be left in peace.

Peter. That you never can. [*Pause.*] Yes, there is one clear way still left.

Alexis. Only let me marry Euphrosine ——

Peter. Again! [*Half aside.*] We'll see that you're cut off from her, anyhow. And hear me now. You have refused my mantle, for it seemed heavy to you; you have put aside my sceptre, for it was of iron; you will lay down your finger from my crown, for it is not padded to the head like other crowns, but bites purple into the brows it weighs on. And you can do all this?

Alexis. I can.

Peter. You may.

Alexis. I may?

Peter. Yes — in a monastery.

Alexis. In a monastery.

Peter. Along with your mother. It is a monastery or my work!

Alexis. No, father, no.

Peter. Light or total darkness — but no treacherous twilights! Crushing labour, or utter purulent stagnation. The bitter black bread of toil and the brackish waters of affliction — or neither bread nor water, but bare, stark starvation. A monastery or my work!

Alexis. But in the middle of my youth ——

Peter. A monastery or my work!

Alexis. [*Sinking his head.*] Woe on me! I wish that I were dead!

Peter. So do I. [*They look long at one another.*] I leave you for a few moments. I shall return. Make up your mind and choose. I must feel some security. It's wretched to be near you; but it's horrible to be away from you. A monastery or my work! My heart is still open to you; still warm to receive you back. Lean towards me, and you may lean upon me. Lean away from me, or lean neither way—— A monastery or my work! [*Exit.*]

Alexis. [*Rushes to door L., throwing door wide.*] Alexander! Alexander!

Enter KIKINE, covered with fluff.

Kikine. I got under the bed as he came in.

Alexis. Have you heard?

Kikine. There is only one thing to do. You must get away from him.

Enter EUPHROSINE from door R.

Alexis. Euphrosine! they will tear you from me; they will shut me in a monastery!

Kikine. Calm yourselves! Listen to me!

Alexis. But he threatens Euphrosine!

Kikine. You must take refuge abroad.

Alexis. Where? How?

Kikine. With the Emperor. Only too glad; he can use you against your father.

Alexis. Against! Yes, I am against him. He struck me. I hate his cruel work! I am against him!

Kikine. You can come disguised amongst my servants as far as the frontier.

Alexis. But Euphrosine?

Euph. Alexis, you won't leave me. [Pause.]

Kikine. She must come disguised too, as another servant.

Euph. What, I?

Alexis. But all in a moment—can I? Is it possible?

Kikine. As soon said as done. I'll go and see to your passports and to the clothes for both of you.

[*Aside to EUPHROSINE.*] We shall still be together.

[*Exits and re-enters.*] Your father's coming up!

[*Exit.* EUPHROSINE runs off into her own room. Re-enter PETER, followed by TOLSTOI and MENSHIKOFF.]

Alexis. Father, I have decided.

Peter. Well?

Alexis. I will go into a monastery. [Silence.]

Peter. Go! I have no son! Tolstoi, I have no son! [*Exit ALEXIS, C. PETER stares for some seconds into vacancy, suddenly sits down and commences looking over and signing pile of ukases on table.*] Tolstoi, draw up a formal act of abdication. [*Handing papers to MENSHIKOFF.*] Promulgate these!

[*Exit MENSHIKOFF.*]

Tolstoi. Good master, not a thousand acts of abdication will make him less the Tsarevitch.

Peter. He is to become a monk.

[*About to commence writing.*]

Tolstoi. Emperors have come out of convents before now, batooshka. The cowl is not nailed to the head, you know.

[*Their eyes meet. They look away from one another, PETER walks up and down clenching and unclenching hands.*]

Enter Masha, carrying a uniform.

Peter. What have you got there?

Masha. The Prince's uniform, your Majesty.

Peter. The Prince's uniform.

[*Exit Masha into room R. PETER sits, takes up paper, mechanically creases it with finger and thumb.*

Tolstoi. Your Majesty! [PETER looks up.] Not all the powers of the world can take the crease out of that piece of paper.

Peter. [Looks at the paper, rises, tears paper to pieces.] It is out now!

Curtain.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Naples. A garden within the walls of the Castle of St. Elmo. Large gate in outer wall at back with small pass-door in it. Entrance to castle on R. Table R. Seat L. The point of a sentry's bayonet now and then appears above outer wall. In the distance the crater of Vesuvius.*

The two Captains discovered pacing stage together.

CARLO *laying table.*

1st Capt. At what hour was this?

2nd Capt. About three this morning. [Pause.

1st Capt. Did you question the sentry yourself?

2nd Capt. Yes; I made a point——

1st Capt. How were they dressed?

2nd Capt. As far as he could see, ordinarily.

1st Capt. Like Italians——there were two of them, you say?

2nd Capt. He only saw two.

1st Capt. And they made off at once.

2nd Capt. As he raised his rifle.

1st Capt. [Turning on Servant.] Who's that being laid for?

Carlo. For the Chevalier.

1st Capt. Do you let him meal out here?

2nd Capt. He begged so hard.

1st Capt. H'm——but——

2nd Capt. "As one in concealment, not in confinement," so say my instructions.

1st Capt. But there's only a wall between him and——[Urchin's head has appeared above wall. He

makes a sign to CARLO; drops stone with note round it on to flower-bed below. 1st Captain catches sight of Urchin] — you little — [*head disappears*] — There, you see —

2nd Capt. They only come to steal the peaches.

[*CARLO has stealthily picked up and concealed the stone with the letter round it.*

Enter Major STEINMITZ, laughing consumedly.

1st Capt. Why, Major!

[*Major crosses to table, falls into chair, sinks head on table, laughing to burst himself.*

2nd Capt. You seem amused.

Stein. Amused — a woman! ho! ho! ho! a girl!

1st Capt. What the devil's the joke?

Stein. He's a woman. [*Paroxysm of laughter.*

Captains. [*Together.*] He's a woman!

Stein. She's a man, then. I don't know.

1st Capt. What he? What she?

Stein. The boy, the Chevalier's valet, is a girl all the time.

Captains. What rubbish!

Stein. No, it's not. It comes straight from Vienna. It's a fact.

1st Capt. Come now, that would certainly explain a good deal.

Stein. An enormous lot. [*Another paroxysm.*

1st Capt. Really — h'm — yes — there's something decidedly funny about it. [*Begins to laugh.*

2nd Capt. Stop it, will you; here she comes.

Stein. Take me away, then. If you don't I shall explode right in her face.

1st Capt. We'd better all go and get accustomed to the idea before we — [*Exeunt L.*

Enter EUPHROSINE in male attire.

Euph. [*Eagerly to Servant.*] Well, well?

Carlo. [*Giving stone with paper round it.*] Here you are, sir; it's a terrible risk I'm running. I should lose my place if I were found out. [*EUPHROSINE gives him money.*] Oh, thank you, sir, thank you.

[*Exit.*

Euph. [*Unfolding letter.*] Now let me see. "Sweetest, your truly treasured letter has kindled the wildest hopes within my bosom." [*Looks about to see no one is coming.*] "You ask me how I obtained a sight of you and how I penetrated your disguise. The limbs of youth are nimble"—he is young—"and the eyes of love are piercing. Gold also is a great power, and I have not stinted it"—and rich too, young and rich. "I am waiting for you to-day at the same place, and between the same hours. You can take advantage of the carnival to mask your fairy features. I shall wear a blue domino trimmed with white, and a mask. Ah, if only you could know the difficulties I have had to get this letter done into your language, then you might understand something of the pious, all-absorbing, all-subduing love of yours to command, Antonio, Count of Campastrella." I must go; there'd be no harm in it. [*Music and laughter in distance.*] There it is! Yes; I must be there! Oh, oh, oh! I must, if only for an hour.

[*Enter ALEXIS with gardening implements and a bundle of flowers, which he lays on table.*

Alexis. There you are, dear. Look at my flowers. What a lovely country it is! The birds

and the sunshine, and the flowers, I never thought I could have been so happy.

Euph. [*Having seated herself.*] Come and eat something. Don't go wandering about!

[*Throws flowers aside out of her plate.*]

Alexis. [*Reproachfully.*] Oh, Frine, Frine!

Euph. Did you put them there?

Alexis. I planted them and grew them for you. They are petunias.

Euph. [*Picking them up.*] Oh, I'm sorry.

Alexis. And such things spring up here—almost wild. Why, after poor, bare Russia, it really seems like Paradise, doesn't it? Every hour of the day I feel as if I were going to burst into tears. My heart is so full, my happiness so complete—I can't sit still. Do let me walk about.

Euph. Alexis!

Alexis. Well, dear?

Euph. Oh, nothing—go on.

Alexis. And the people here think me really clever and good for something, not like—[*Shrugs shoulders and shivers*]. They say I've learnt their language quickly. And they see I'm so fond of their poetry and the lovely pictures in the chapel. I feel I was born for something here; and I feel other, deeper things, too—amongst these really cultivated men—And then to be alone, we two, quite all alone, and no one to disturb us. I could live and die here. [*Seated.*] Willingly, willingly—

Euph. [*Suddenly.*] I shall die here, if I don't get some kind of change soon. Oh, it's not so astonishing! What is it but a sort of imprisonment, after all?

Alexis. [*Heaves a long, deep sigh, and puts hand to head.*] Euphrosine, what can I do for you?

[*Noise of carnival in distance.*]

Euph. Let me go there, in amongst the carnival; only this once — only for an hour or two; may I go, Alexis? — Oh, Alexis, dear, do let me. [*ALEXIS shakes head.*] I will, Alexis, I must! [*Angry.*]

Alexis. But why get angry and stamp your foot at me? Have I ever refused you anything I could do for you? But this I can't do for you.

Euph. Oh, yes, you can. You can ask the Governor when he comes. And when I do come back, I'll love you ever so much better, and never, never want to leave your side again.

Alexis. How do I know you ever will come back? Once the cage has been opened —

Euph. Why, Alexis, why; how foolish of you! Why, where should I go to? Do, dear Alexis, do! You know that I am yours. I have neither home nor money, nor anything, except what you give me.

Alexis. Is that the reason?

Euph. And I love you.

Alexis. You do love me?

Euph. [*Kneeling by ALEXIS, and twining her arms round his neck.*] Do I love you?

Alexis. Ah, meeletchkaya! doosenka maya! You know I can't refuse you!

Euph. [*Hugging him.*] Good dear! Good dear!

Alexis. To love and to be loved; to love and to be loved! Your dear blonde hair; your sweet, soft face! My calm! my calm! my calm! — a pretty name! My sweetness of Russia! My soft-water sprite! Your cheeks are like fresh snow tipped with the aurora. And your eyes are like two small blue liquid flowers. I can almost hear them ripple

as I look into them. Yes, yes; you shall go down to the blue water's edge; only promise me that you'll not plunge in and become foam and sand and anemones as you used to be before. Promise me not to do that, *maya roosalitchka*. Promise me.

Euph. [*Getting away.*] 'Sh! Now ask him.

Enter Field-Marshal DAUN, *followed by* STEINMITZ *and the two Captains.*

Daun. [*Stiff and pompous.*] Good day to you, Chevalier.

Alexis. Good morning, Field-Marshal. My page here is most anxious to see something of this fete to-day.

Daun. Not to be thought of. My orders, Chevalier, are imperative.

Euph. You've no orders to disobey his orders.

[*General surprise.* DAUN *ruffled.*

Alexis. 'Sh!

Daun. Of course, if you, Chevalier, particularly desire it——

Alexis. I do.

Daun. Carlo—— But about getting back?

Euph. You had better give me the key of the small door.

[DAUN *signs to* CARLO *to give key to* EUPHROSINE.

Daun. [*To ALEXIS.*] Let him be sure that he returns before dark, or he will not gain admittance to-night.

Alexis. Yes; be sure you do.

Euph. Oh, never fear!

[CARLO *and* EUPHROSINE *go up to door back.*

Daun. Had not someone better accompany him?

Euph. No; I'm not a girl! [Officers try to stifle their amusement.] I can look after myself.

[Nods to ALEXIS and exit; DAUN waves hand to Officers, who exeunt.

Alexis. [Sitting.] I feel quite drowsy. I've been working hard in the garden all day.

Daun. I have brought you that Petrarch. It's rather antiquated Italian; but I think you may derive some pleasure from it, nevertheless.

Alexis. Oh, I am very much obliged to you.

Daun. [Gravely.] Your Imperial Highness ——

Alexis. You have news for me?

Daun. Grave news!

Alexis. Am I discovered?

Daun. No, no. Not of that.

Alexis. Then there is *no grave news* for me.

Daun. Let your Imperial Highness prepare himself.

Alexis. It is the delays that throw me into a fever. Tell me the worst.

Daun. Her Imperial Majesty the Empress Catherine has presented the Tsar, your father, with a son.

Alexis. Better news never came to me.

Daun. But your succession?

Alexis. The burden is off my shoulders. Let *him* make the best of it. I am free.

Daun. At the same time your father's agents show no slackening in their endeavours to discover the place of your concealment.

Alexis. Ah, tell me of that. Am I found? Quickly, the worst!

Daun. Your Imperial Highness, I will not disguise from you the fact that a fortnight ago there arrived in Vienna, incognito, an emissary of your Imperial

father's. He set about his inquiries immediately. When clues failed he had recourse to bribery. That also failed. We hope so, at least.

Alexis. But you have doubts?

Daun. A week ago this emissary evaded the vigilance of our police, and vanished, as it were, into space. We hope he has returned to Russia, but of course he may ——

Alexis. What was that?

Daun. I heard nothing.

Alexis. Behind the tree.

Daun. Where?

Alexis. No, no; it's nothing. Go on!

Daun. That is all.

Alexis. Do you know that man's name?

Daun. He was a Monsieur Tolstoi.

Alexis. Then I am lost. He will find me. That was the meaning of my dream ——

Daun. My prince, my prince ——

Alexis. Why, I had forgotten him entirely. And suddenly in my sleep there he was, with a trowel in his hand, digging and digging. And when he had dug a deep hole — his back was to me, but I knew it was he — he took a great bundle from under his coat, and he put it into the earth and put the earth all over it. And a week passed — and I waited and watched to see what would grow up from the bundle he had planted. Then I took a spade and I dug up the bundle. The cloth was all bloody. I untied it. And in my hand I held my own decaying ghastly head. I dropped it and I woke up shrieking. There's someone behind that tree!

Daun. Why, who can get in here? It's impossible! Don't you see the sentry's bayonet? Doesn't that reassure you?

Alexis. Why did I let Euphrosine go?

Daun. Really, you need fear nothing. We had better come indoors; it's getting late.

Alexis. No, no! I shall wait out here. [*Getting over to chair.*] That sleepy feeling's coming over me again. [*Sinks into chair.*] My forehead's so wet. It must be raining.

Daun. Your over-excitement has done that. Well, I must take my departure. Good-night to your Excellence. [*No answer. DAUN comes down and looks at ALEXIS.*] It seems a sort of swoon, more than a healthy sleep. I'd better send into the town for a doctor. He can't take any harm here.

[*Exit. Silence. Music. Twilight.*]

Euph. [*Outside.*] No, no, Count! [*Key in lock.*]

Tolstoi. Let me see you safe inside.

Euph. You must go. The sentry will be round in a moment.

Enter EUPHROSINE. TOLSTOI forces his way in after her.

You are mad! Count!

Tolstoi. [*Removing mask and presenting pistol.*] Not a sound!

ROUMIANTZOFF *enters.*

Roumiantzoff, cover the man!

[*EUPHROSINE has sunk on her knees before TOLSTOI.*]

Roum. [*Having advanced towards ALEXIS sleeping.*] It's the Tsarevitch.

Tolstoi. Don't wake him. Do you mean to keep quiet?

Euph. Yes; only take —

[*Motioning him to put pistol aside.*]

Tolstoi. [*Lowering weapon.*] There! Will you —?
[*Motions her to seat. Pointing at sentry's bayonet appearing above wall.*] You see, you are well guarded.

Euph. What are you going to do to us?

Tolstoi. Do to you?— nothing. We are evidently both in search of adventures; and we have both found them.

Euph. [*Alluding to ROUMIANTZOFF, who is behind her.*] He sha'n't stand behind me!

[*Makes a sudden movement.*]

Tolstoi. [*Pointing pistol at her again.*] Don't disturb the sleeper. Captain, stand in front of the lady.

Euph. If you mean no harm, why do you point that at me?

Tolstoi. Because I want to have a little quiet chat with you; I know my methods are clumsy, but if I don't take Alexis back with me ——

Euph. He will never — only by force ——

Tolstoi. Of persuasion.

Euph. Do you think you ——

Tolstoi. No; but you might. For the sake of your devoted, doting Count. [*Takes her hand.*]

Euph. Oh, you horrid old creature!

Tolstoi. "I only live to touch your hand ——"

Euph. To think I let you — Oh, I could pull my lips off for it.

Tolstoi. It wouldn't do to let Alexis know about it.

Euph. Know about what?

Tolstoi. That you had betrayed his secret into the hands of his father's envoys.

Euph. But I didn't know. I thought ——

Tolstoi. That you were going to an assignation with a young Italian nobleman, your lover.
[*EUPHROSINE moves to end of seat and looks at*

TOLSTOI *in perplexity and amazement.*] Which version do you, or would he, prefer, do you think?

Euph. Oh, but I'm in a fix.

Tolstoi. Yes; you are rather. But there is a way out of it. Second my efforts. Persuade Alexis to return to his father; do so, and you will have secured the Tsar's good will. He will rather support than oppose your marriage to the prodigal son returned.

Euph. But how do I know it would be as you say?

Tolstoi. Does it not stand to reason?

Euph. Well——

Tolstoi. Don't be in a hurry. Let it sink in. Let it sink in. If you take the other course you only have to choose which of the two versions of our present situation you would prefer the Tsarevitch to hear. [*To ROUMIANTZOFF.*] I think he's ours.

Euph. Well, what am I to do?

Tolstoi. To go indoors and wait for Alexis. When he comes to you in a state of distraction, urge him to return to your future father-in-law.

Euph. I'll do it.

Tolstoi. Sweetest, I kiss your hand.

Euph. Oh, go along.

Tolstoi. "The eyes of love are piercing."

Euph. Oh, go along with you.

[*Pushes him in the chest and exit.* TOLSTOI
stands smiling at ROUMIANTZOFF.

Tolstoi. Why so heavy, captain, why so heavy?

Roum. I don't like it.

Tolstoi. What, my methods?

Roum. No, the idea that we are working towards the killing of a son by his own father. For you say that's what he means to do with him.

Tolstoi. He means to remove the crease.

Roum. Then I wish to God I was not in it!

Tolstoi. I've no objection to taking your share of the credit—and the honours! How sound he sleeps!

Roum. You've not succeeded yet! *I* don't think you will.

Tolstoi. I do. And I count on your co-operation.

Roum. I must obey your orders.

Tolstoi. Then go and wait behind those trees out of sight. When you hear me say "He is coming to you himself," walk out to us with these two letters. Give this one to him and this one to me. His is from the Tsar. Mine I shall make up according to the needs of the case.

Roum. But if I walk in suddenly, you'll never make him think——

Tolstoi. He never thinks. By that time he'll be frantic with apprehension.

Roum. Supposing any officer of the garrison or the Viceroy——?

Tolstoi. I shall know how to manage them. These letters will put the culminating point to his distress. He will rush wildly to Euphrosine. And so the bits of our puzzle fall together and form—[*with significance*]—a block! Ah! he's waking. Go! Remember!

[*TOLSTOI stands near trees towards the left. ALEXIS wakes, stretches himself, looks at watch, moves up stage. Suddenly stands quite still, breathless, moves a little forward, utters a loud cry for help. TOLSTOI does not move; neither does ALEXIS.*

Alexis. [*With a low groan.*] Tolstoi—speak, if you are alive!

Enter DAUN, with a Doctor and other Officers.

Alexis. [*Rushing to him.*] Look there! Do you see?

Daun. [*Furious.*] Who the ——! How the ——!

Alexis. You see someone, don't you?

Daun. See someone! Guard, turn out! Answer for yourself! You are liable to be shot!

Tolstoi. I am ready to be shot. [*Giving paper.*] This will answer for me.

Alexis. [*Whilst DAUN is reading paper.*] It's he! It's Tolstoi! Don't let him stay!

Daun. You are Monsieur Tolstoi? [*TOLSTOI bows.*] I would suggest that the dignity of your Imperial master would be better preserved were his envoy to go about his master's business openly and not like a marauder.

Tolstoi. Your Excellency, we meet fraud and concealment by fraud and concealment.

Alexis. That is at me. He hates me. Make him go!

Daun. We can hardly do that.

Alexis. You are in league! You gave him admittance. I am among the pitfalls! I am taken!

Daun. Prince, prince, you do not understand! Diplomatic usage. There is no suggestion of force.

Tolstoi. I am here to reason with you, to endeavour to persuade you.

Alexis. What of? That you are not a black-hearted traitor? That you would not be glad to see me dead?

Tolstoi. You see what a wild, angry boy it is!

Alexis. No; I am quite calm. [*To DAUN.*] The Emperor will not give me up?

Daun. He will not derogate from his Imperial word.

Alexis. [*Folding his arms.*] What do you want with me? Let us have your message, and have done with it. [*TOLSTOI slightly disconcerted.*] What do you want with me?

Tolstoi. I come from the Tsar, your father, to reclaim you, his son and his successor.

Alexis. You come from a tyrant to reclaim his slave, a ploughman his plough-horse——

Daun. Prince, prince!

Alexis. No; hear me.

Tolstoi. Let him speak.

Alexis. Ay; let me speak. He will entrap me. Leave that to him. Do you know my father has struck me? [*To TOLSTOI.*] Oh, don't hold up your hands. It's true, you know.

Tolstoi. His father dotes on him! He is his only son.

Alexis. That's a lie! for Catherine has just given birth to another. You didn't think I knew that. See how I have confounded him. Now you see what he is! [*TOLSTOI disconcerted.*] Is that all your message?

Tolstoi. That is all.

Alexis. And this is my answer — calmly and with folded arms. To Russia during my father's lifetime I will never return! Now go!

Tolstoi. You prefer to wait till he comes over to you.

Alexis. He is not coming here? [*To DAUN.*] You wouldn't let him see me?

Tolstoi. When they admit the servant they are hardly likely to keep out the master.

Alexis. But he can't force me to go with him?

Daun. He cannot force you.

Tolstoi. But he can force your protectors to relinquish you; and he will, by force of arms, if need be!

Alexis. Make war for me?

Daun. Sir, do not think to frighten us with threats.

Alexis. You are talking idly. Though blood must not be spilled for me.

Tolstoi. Alexis Petrovitch, Tsarevitch of Russia, for the last time I summon you to make submission to the Tsar your father, before it is too late. These were his last words to me: "Tell my son that if he will return to me of his own free will, I will forgive him everything."

Alexis. You say he said so. Do you think I believe your word?

Tolstoi. "If not, and I have to come for him—I will forgive him nothing. But he cannot long elude me."

Alexis. He mustn't see me. Take me to some fresh hiding-place!

Tolstoi. To be discovered there even as you were here. You fancied these high walls and the bayonets of your sentries and the power of Austria rendered you inaccessible; did they? You may turn a deaf ear to me. But what will you say to your father? For I swear to you—*[In a loud voice]*—that he is coming here himself. Accede only to force and you will encounter nothing else but force as long as you are alive.

Enter ROUMIANTZOFF. General astonishment.

Alexis. My father has come!

Tolstoi. *[Aside to DAUN.]* Don't interfere!

[ROUMIANTZOFF gives despatches to TOLSTOI.]

Tolstoi. [*Reading.*] "For my son." [*Crosses to ALEXIS and gives despatch to him.*] From your father.

Daun. [*Advancing.*] But I can't lend myself to tricks——

Tolstoi. [*Taking him aside.*] A word with you. I am fresh from Vienna. I know the mind of your Government.

Alexis. [*Sinking into chair.*] He means to come!
[*Head in hands.*]

Tolstoi. They want our alliance against the Turks. If you wish to advance yourself, get them honourably rid of our Alexis.

Daun. This may be true, or it may not.

Tolstoi. [*Giving papers.*] Read these. They will convince you.

Daun. The minutes of the Aulic Council. How, in heaven's name, did you get these?

Tolstoi. How did I get in here? I like to assist merit. You are evidently a painstaking man, Field-Marshal. I should be sorry to see your career run aground for lack of a little reliable information. Here you have it! And I rely on your support. [*Having opened his despatch.*] Is this true? That there is amongst the prince's suite a woman masquerading as a man?

Alexis. Oh, Euphrosine!

Tolstoi. [*Aside.*] Say it's true.

Daun. I believe it is so.

Tolstoi. My master calls upon your Government to separate this creature from his son——

Alexis. No, no!

Tolstoi. And put an end to this disgraceful scandal. — Say you will!

Alexis. There's no harm in it.

Tolstoi. [*Aside to DAUN.*] Preferment hangs by it.

Daun. In such a matter it would be hard to disregard a father's——

Alexis. Ah! They will separate us. Perhaps already!—They may have already!—Euphrosine! Euphrosine! [*Rushes into castle.*]

Daun. Come after him! He'll have another seizure!

[*Rushes off, followed by all his Officers. It is much darker.*]

Tolstoi. The end has begun.

Roum. It's fabulous.

Tolstoi. And it was not such child's play, either. For once—would you believe me?—he tripped me up most prettily. Oh, he's not such a fool! I shan't be really happy till we have got him on the other side of our Russian frontier. Then I shall be certain of my Count's title, and you, your rank of General.

[*EUPHROSINE bounds in, clapping her hands.*]

Euph. Hurray! Hurray! We are going home!

Tolstoi. Well done, my little Empress!

[*EUPHROSINE signs to him to keep his distance. Re-enter ALEXIS with some books under his arm, DAUN and Officers.*]

Alexis. I will follow her—your advice. Take me back to my father.

Tolstoi. [*Kneeling and kissing ALEXIS' hand.*] Once more our Tsarevitch.

Roum. [*Aside.*] The kiss of Judas.

[*The doors have been thrown open.*]

Alexis. [*Shaking DAUN's hand.*] Thank you, thank you very much for all—. You see I am taking my poets with me. [*Tears come into his eyes.*] Please

wear this in remembrance of me. [*Gives him a ring off his finger; then turns to 1st Captain.*] And for you — please this. [*Gives him a second ring, turns to 2nd Captain, feels for something about himself.*] What have I for you? This was my mother's gift to me. I have only my best thanks. Thank you all — all very much. [*Half breaks down.*]

[*Sounds of the Carnival. ALEXIS raises his finger, turns and sees red light above Vesuvius.*]

What is that light? It seems an evil portent.

[*Moves down stage.*]

Daun. A thing of everyday occurrence. We will accompany your Highness some of the way.

[*ALEXIS moves up stage again. TOLSTOI and ROUMIANTZOFF close eagerly round him.*]

Alexis. Why do you close in on me so?

[*Hesitates, comes down stage, seats himself.*]

Tolstoi. It all hangs by a thread.

Alexis. Dear Italy! How happy I have been here.

Euph. [*After a word with TOLSTOI.*] Come on, Sas henka! Let's be off.

Alexis. [*Rising and going up stage.*] The happiest chapter in my life is closed.

Tolstoi. And it's the last but one.

[*DAUN and Officers go off first, then ALEXIS and EUPHROSINE, and then TOLSTOI and ROUMIANTZOFF. The stage is left empty. Music.*]

Curtain.

ACT IV.

SCENE.— *St. Petersburg. The Great Hall of the Senate.*

June 24th, 1718. 3 a. m. From about half-way up the stage tiers of benches raised one above the other. Between the two blocks of tiers in centre of back wall large folding doors. Smaller doors R. and L. Near door R. a wooden barrier with chairs in front of it. Large table covered with documents C. Two chairs behind it, and one on its right. Gallery at back. Two Servants discovered lighting candles.

[*Enter COUNT TOLSTOI, followed by six Soldiers, a Non-Commissioned Officer and two Clerks. Non-Commissioned Officer sets two Soldiers at each door. One of the Soldiers at door C. is MANSOUROFF. Enter MENSHIKOFF at door C.*

Menshik. We are all here, *Count?* [*TOLSTOI bows.*
Tolstoi. And the clerics?

Menshik. They, too. *Count,* we have always stood by one another. Do tell me what is to be the subject of this extraordinary enquiry?

Tolstoi. Are your peculations making you feel uneasy?

Menshik. That is a boat I should not sail in alone, *Count.*

[*Enter GENERAL ROUMIANTZOFF from door R. As door is opened and shut, a low moaning sound is heard. He hands TOLSTOI a paper, which TOLSTOI looks over.*

Menshik. Well, well; we are ready when you are.
[*Gives a long sigh.*] This anxiety is terrible. [*Exit.*

Tolstoi. [*Giving back paper.*] Not enough! Give him ten more!

Roum. Will you write it down, Count?

Tolstoi. Certainly, General. [*Writes on paper.*

[*CATHERINE has appeared at door L. Soldiers attempt to bar her entrance.*

Cath. What are you doing, blockheads?

Tolstoi. [*Looking up.*] Your Majesty! Fellows, be careful.

Cath. [*Hurriedly.*] What are you going to do to him?

Tolstoi. Judge him.

Cath. I have a great service to ask of you. Will you let someone — someone I particularly wish to be present at this —

Tolstoi. I must know who it is.

Cath. No, I can't tell you. It's quite dark there at the back — you'll do this for me?

[*Beckons off at door L.*

Enter EUDOXIA, closely veiled, etc.

No one could possibly distinguish right up there among all the other clerics.

Tolstoi. But indeed —

Cath. If the worst happens, it is I shall succeed my husband.

Tolstoi. For the first time in my life I turn my back upon your Majesty. I have seen nothing.

[*Goes R. says something to ROUMIANTZOFF.*

Cath. Wait till the others come in and take theirs; or you'll be spied out at once.

Eudoxia. God reward you, noble Catherine. [*As ROUMIANTZOFF opens and closes door a shriek is heard.*] It's not him ——

Cath. No; but they're torturing someone.

Eudoxia. You don't think they'll take his life?

Cath. No, no; I don't — not his life.

Enter MENSHIKOFF.

Menshik. Are you ready now?

Tolstoi. Yes, come in, all of you.

Enter at door C. a throng of Officers and Officials of all kinds, also of Ecclesiastics of various grades.

Eudoxia. You have kept your word to me.

Cath. Oh, not too well. I once let my petty anger with that Euphrosine woman —— But all I can —— tho' it should cost me my life —— I will do for him to-night.

Eudoxia. You are a better woman than ever I have been.

Cath. Now, now; don't make me tearful. It's only by joking with him that I can manage him at all.

Tolstoi. All secular officers to the right! Ecclesiastics to the left!

Cath. Now! —— I am going into the gallery.

[*EUDOXIA ascends tiers; CATHERINE exits C. They all arrange themselves upon tiers of benches.*

Enter APRAXIN with the model of a ship in his hand.

Apraxin. The Tsar will be here in a moment.

Tolstoi. What's the boat for ?

Apraxin. [*Makes room for model on table.*] I suppose he's going to work on it during the Court.

Enter General BAUER with a pile of manuscripts.

Tolstoi. What are these ?

Bauer. The materials of my history. He's going to correct them.

Tolstoi. And you too, I expect.

Bauer. That's certain. He told me to sit next to him.

Tolstoi. Sit here then. [*Silence. An Officer in the front row of the R. block is trying not to drop off to sleep.*] They're as still as mice. They're all of them quivering inside; each one thinking his own turn has come.

[*A door heard to slam.*]

Apraxin. He is here.

Enter PETER in a rough working costume, and followed by a Servant, carrying a rich coat. All rise. PETER motions them to be seated. He strips off rough working coat, and gets into the rich one. CATHERINE laughs in gallery, and gives her hands a clap.

Peter. Who was that cackling ?

Cath. I! Katinka !

Peter. Go home and nurse your child.

Cath. Peter ; how are you treating yours ?

[*PETER takes a seat apart, and motions to TOLSTOI.*]

Tolstoi. The Court is opened! Officers of the Crown and Prelates of the Church, you are all assembled in this place to take cognizance of the facts concerning, and after having deliberated upon them, to give judgment between the most merciful Tsar, our Father, and his rebellious, unfilial and but lately fugitive son, Alexis Petrovitch, sometime Tsarevitch of Russia! Bring in the prisoner!

Peter. Tell them they are to forget that I am here.

Tolstoi. You will forget that the Emperor is here.

Peter. And tell them not to keep all their eyes fixed on me.

Tolstoi. Do not all look at the Emperor. You are to forget that he is here.

Peter. [*Prodding man who is dropping to sleep.*] Wake up, will you?

[ALEXIS is brought in between two Non-commissioned Officers. He rushes forward and throws himself at PETER'S feet.]

Alexis. Father! once before I threw myself at your feet. You rebuked me then.

Tolstoi. Deliver your sword into the hands of the Court.

Alexis. But then I had not wronged you half so deep as I have since. And now I dare not stand up before you! [*Silence. PETER sits with arms folded and biting his lips. All seem afraid to act.*] Father! say a kind word to me.

[PETER turns away and fiddles with model of boat.]

Peter. [*Fiercely, to TOLSTOI.*] You are the President of the Court. Enforce its discipline.

Tolstoi. Keep the prisoner to his place and take his sword. [ALEXIS is seized and dragged backwards.]

Alexis. What does this mean? [*A groan is heard.*]

Peter. Who groaned there?

Cath. [*Out of gallery.*] I.

Peter. Oh, you!

Tolstoi. [*Reading.*] Alexis Petrovitch, you are accused —

Alexis. Accused, accused, accused —

Tolstoi. Of having conspired —

Alexis. But this can't be. Your solemn oaths! Father, your letter.

Tolstoi. Be silent. You shall be heard in your defence.

Alexis. Then I am to be tried? And these are all my judges. And he! You, whose very lips. . . Of what am I accused?

Tolstoi. Of having conspired against your father's Crown and Empire!

Alexis. How have I been duped! "Conspired against your Crown and Empire." It's false as mad. The head of this state is perjured. All oaths are broken! Allegiance is annulled. You may commit me of disinclination, that is the worst you can—that is no crime. I suppose I may have a chair.

[*A chair is brought at a sign from* TOLSTOI.]

Tolstoi. Fetch in the first witness.

Peter. [*Looking over manuscripts.*] There were only 2,194 killed at Poltava—this is a gross blunder.

Bauer. A discrepancy of ten or so.

Peter. Do ten count for so little when we are making so much of a single one?

[*KIKINE led in, livid and half fainting.*]

Alexis. [*Advancing towards him.*] Ah! he has been tortured.

Tolstoi. Hold him to his place!

[*They hold him back.*]

Alexis. What have I brought upon you, Alexander,
my friend? [Sobs are heard.]

Peter. Is someone sobbing there?

Cath. I sobbed.

Peter. Oh, you!

Tolstoi. [To KIKINE.] Tell us what you know of
the prisoner's treasonable practices?

Kikine. I — one day, when — he ——

[Nearly sinks to the ground.]

Tolstoi. Prop him up!

Kikine. Don't, don't! — I'll speak. My head's
gone quite empty — I can't think. Give me time —
Not back there! not back there!

Alexis. [Face in hands.] Oh, misery! misery!

Peter. Let him sit and try to collect himself.

[KIKINE is placed on seat in front of barrier, R.]

Alexis. You have over-tortured him!

Tolstoi. Meanwhile, here are copies of his depo-
sitions. Read them amongst you.

[Clerks hand about depositions.]

Peter. Well, go on!

Tolstoi. Bring in the second witness.

Alexis. What horrible absurdity is this!

Peter. [To Man who is dropping off again.] If you
go to sleep again, I shall assail you with unnecessary
violence.

[IGNATIEFF is led on. He is in much the
same plight as KIKINE, but manages to
walk firmly.]

Alexis. My poor confessor. Oh, bring it to an
end!

Tolstoi. Tell us what you know.

Ignat. [In a firm, deep voice.] Turn your head to
me, Peter Romanoff, and you shall hear! I say,

look every one of you within yourselves — into your own hearts — and which of you all set up to be his judges —

Alexis. Brave, staunch father —

Ignat. — should not be standing there, beside your Prince? — They all desire your death, Peter Romanoff! What! why don't you bark and fawn upon him, and lick his hand? That's strange. Have you found a little courage herded so closely? Where are the sheep-dogs, Tolstoi and Menshikoff?

Peter. Take him away!

Ignat. Back to the torture chamber?

Peter. Ay, back to the torture chamber. [*Walks up and down a bit.*] I know he said the truth. Oh, now let my spirit uphold me! Go on, the next!

Alexis. Another! [*Suddenly utters a piercing scream.*] It's her! [*Struggles violently.*

Tolstoi. Hold him!

Alexis. They have tortured Euphrosine!

Peter. We have not.

Tolstoi. Indeed not.

Alexis. Swear it to me. I'll cry out till you do.

Peter. I swear it to you. What she says she comes to say gladly and readily.

Alexis. Then it will be nothing against me.

Peter. It will be all against you. The door is open. Watch it!

Alexis. And I do. Oh, father, your Court mis-carries, but such tricks as these won't set it on its feet again. The first you had over-tortured; the poor second you did wring some truth out of him. Some truth — *the* truth! The very truth. And now you think with such a shallow device — Take lessons of Tolstoi. He lays his man-traps better!

Peter. The door is open, watch it!

Enter EUPHROSINE lightly.

Alexis. Yes, it's she — Euphrosine — and she's smiling. God be praised for that!

Euph. Oh, I am really sorry, Alexis —

Alexis. We should never have left Italy. The head of this state is perjured. But make haste, dear, and get out of all this horror.

Tolstoi. Repeat those words of his again — you know the ones! Loud, so that all may hear.

Euph. [To ALEXIS.] I am sorry. He said, "yes, I am against my father." [Utter blank amazement of ALEXIS.] "I wish he was dead."

Alexis. What are you doing?

Euph. And that when he was Emperor, he said —

Alexis. Euphrosine! Euphrosine!

Euph. He would leave Petersburg to the wolves.

Alexis. Euphrosine!

Euph. [With a deprecating gesture.] And destroy the Navy.

Peter. [With tremendous emphasis.] Hear that!

Alexis. [Lifting up his voice and crying aloud.] And this out of the lips I have filled with kisses. For this woman I have stripped myself bare to the bone! Take her out of my sight! Now I confess it all.

Peter. You do confess it all?

Alexis. All, all, all.

Peter. Her words as well?

Alexis. Her words! Can falseness come out of a woman's mouth?

Peter. Then pass to sentence. He acknowledges.

[TOLSTOI gives directions. All consult together.]



Euph. Alexis, what was I to do?

Alexis. Don't talk to me, or I may turn and accuse you; and that I would not.

Euph. We had to be separated.

Alexis. Who was it brought me to—? no, no. Be off! Don't drag me down any further.

Cath. Oh, you young Zebezel—I mean Zezebel. Peter, why don't you have *her* knouted?

Peter. Hold your tongue.

Cath. I've done. [*Half to herself.*] Disgrace to our sex.

Euph. [*To PETER.*] Your Majesty will not forget your promise?

Alexis. [*Looking up.*] Oh, there *was* some inducement!

Peter. What promise?

Euph. To settle me with a well-to-do husband.

Cath. Let me alone to choose a husband for her!

[*A pause.* EUPHROSINE touches KIKINE playfully on the shoulder. He looks up at her. She gives a little exclamation of horror.]

Peter. Hold your tongue! [*Prods the man who has been dropping off to sleep all the time.*] Wake up! You've got to marry this woman. Make her as happy as you can.

Euph. But——

Peter. He is good enough to be my officer, he's surely good enough to be your husband. Take him along with you. Take them away.

Alexis. It is well disposed of. It's justice for you. He's a man. What do you want more? [*The two are hustled out by the Soldiers.*] Nothing can touch me now!

Peter. [To BAUER.] You're more than a hundred out this time.

Alexis. Father, let me come near to you, for I want to talk to you close to.

[PETER signs to Guards, who release ALEXIS.
He comes up to PETER.

Peter. I have always wanted to hear you. How often have not I asked you to open your heart to me!

Alexis. I will do so now. A great waste void has been made in both our hearts.

Peter. [In a low voice.] Ay, that there has.

Alexis. Ignatieff made that in yours. You heard me cry out as the void came into mine — but out of its emptiness my heart has found its voice. I abhor your work. I did not understand it. I fled from it out of fear, — but I do understand it now.

Peter. Do you?

Alexis. And were I free again, I would flee from it out of disgust.

Peter. Disgust at what?

Alexis. At it all. At these hideous, honourless, virtueless hirelings of yours. And disgust at you yourself!

Peter. At me?

Alexis. Let me go on. I said once — Old Russia for me! But I say now, neither old Russia nor new Russia. I have been abroad and I have seen — true civilization.

Peter. And I went abroad, and I saw it too.

Alexis. No, you did not — your vision was too narrow.

Peter. Are you laughing at me?

Alexis. The power of your work is such as the power of the frost. It will be unproductive. The

soft, swift river you plate over with plates of iron, so that armies and artillery may pass over it. But the powers of the yielding waters and the wafting winds — the greater powers of love and humbleness and mild control — the sail, the winds and the currents all working in sweet unison —

Peter. What mad talk is this ?

Alexis. This, I say, you know nothing of. You only see strength in what you can stamp your foot on, in what you can break and shatter other sorts of things against.

Peter. I have preferred my Navy before everything. What are you saying ?

Alexis. What you will not understand, but what must find some echo even in their degraded souls.

Peter. You wish to stir them up against me ?

Alexis. And I wish to shake the proud heart that rejoices in its cruel labours.

Peter. You shall not go on.

Alexis. I will — I must ! One day shall see you sitting destitute amongst the damp flakes and the crumbling plaster of your half-finished ramshackle edifice — for building can't be carried on in the frost. Remember that ! And your years of frost are coming.

Peter. You shall say no more.

Alexis. Cage me up in a Monastery, if you will.

Peter. I gave you that choice once. It'll not be offered you again.

Alexis. Crush me beneath your chariot wheels — do what you will with me, I have made you quiver in your heart.

Peter. I have done my best. They all know we must pass through worse to better.

Alexis. This miserable Russia struggles in your grasp.

Peter. Through worse, I say, to better. Through worse to better!

Alexis. The same mad ferocity, the same thirst of blood, the same brutish fury burns in your eyes and in theirs. It is the tussle of a mad man with a mad dog. So you see, I give you some superiority. Ay, rave and curse. Prove what I say upon me before them all. I care not now how often you may strike me. [*Murmurs amongst the assembly.*]—Blood and torture was the foundation of your work; with blood and torture you have watered it; the root of it is in the depths of the darkness; the luxuriance of the leaves is the luxuriance of rankness and decay, blood and torture, manglement and butchery—they shall hold it together; and when you die, a hecatomb shall be your only monument.

[*MANSOUROFF suddenly levels his bayonet, and rushes at PETER. He is seized. PETER draws his sword. A general commotion.*

Mansour. I rebel! I rebel! I knew I should rebel!

Peter. [*Sword in hand.*] I'll stab whoever stirs! Call in fresh soldiers! Silence! and sit, I say!

Alexis. The tide rose with a great sweep then.

[*Murmuring stops entirely. All reseate themselves.*

Mansour. His cannon wheels went over my son's body.

Peter. Take him away, but don't kill him. He's mad, and we'll study him.

Mansour. Then he cut up my son's body with his own hands. With his own hands he cut it up.

Alexis. What, that day! Was that your son?

Mansour. [*As he is dragged out.*] And I was drunk — drunk — when my only son — He has no place of burial — — — — — [*His voice dies away.*]

Tolstoi. We are resolved upon our sentence.

Alexis. Do you remember that occasion?

Peter. Silence — and hear your sentence!

Alexis. The blood that seemed cold has begun to smoke again.

Peter. I'll have you removed!

Alexis. It is you who are on your trial. There! I'll be silent now.

[*A sort of convulsion comes over PETER. He is evidently trying to control himself.*]

Peter. Read!

Tolstoi. It is with a heart full of affliction, and eyes streaming down with tears — — —

Alexis. Good, good!

Tolstoi. That we, as subjects and servants, pronounce this sentence, which is, as agreed upon unanimously by us all, that the crimes of Alexis Petrovitch, sometime Tsarevitch of Russia, against the most mighty and merciful Tsar — — —

Alexis. Merciful! — and we all keep our countenances! — — —

Tolstoi. Against the most mighty and merciful Tsar, our Father, are deserving only of death.

[*EUDOXIA utters a piercing scream and faints.*]

Alexis. [*Utterly bewildered.*] Death! Death!

Peter. Let me have a sight of that secret partisan.

Alexis. Did Euphrosine know this?

Tolstoi. To conclude, we submit this sentence we now give, and the condemnation we at present make, to the sovereign power and will, and merciful

review of his Czarian Majesty, our most merciful monarch.

[EUDOXIA *has been supported down half fainting between two men.*

Peter. Let me know who — [*Withdraws veil from EUDOXIA'S face.*] It is the root of all this evil. It is your mother!

Alexis. My mother! My one friend!

[*Would go to her ; is restrained.*

Peter. Do not hinder him! It is not much. Who loosed her? And who brought her here?

Cath. [*Out of gallery.*] I did. I am coming down.

Alexis. Mother, I have been a bad son to you.

Eudoxia. Alexis, oh, Alexis, this cannot be!

[CATHERINE *enters at back, falls on her knees, and takes PETER'S hand in hers.*

Cath. Mercy, my lord! All of you on your knees and implore his mercy.

[*All kneel, excepting ALEXIS.*

Peter. You sentenced him, and now you kneel to me.

Cath. } Mercy! Mercy!
Eudoxia. }

Alexis. It is no use. He has resolved my death. It was in his eyes as he looked at me. How did I ever come to let it startle me? I ought to have been prepared!

Cath. But, Peter, you'll not do this?

Eudoxia. Husband — our child!

Peter. Not one of all you is with me. Not even you.

Cath. In all else I have been — but, Peter —

Eudoxia. Husband — our child!

Peter. No words can move me, only I can move myself. Leave me one and all! Clear the room! Take your prisoner to the fortress. Let his mother have access to him. Alone! Alone! Alone!

[TOLSTOI, MENSHIKOFF *and* Soldiers *get everybody out of the room.*

Eudoxia. The Lord fill your heart with mercy!

Alexis. [*Being forced out.*] Mercy! Expect no mercy from him! Kill me! Murder me! You have killed *her* already!

[*They are all forced out.*

Cath. Don't bring this curse upon our child.

Peter. I am lifting a curse away from him.

Cath. By baptizing him in his brother's blood?

Peter. Do you think he would not confirm himself in his?

Cath. Then I would I had never borne you any son! Better had I remained the common servant-girl I was!—that is what I say, and let all Russia know it!

Peter. Close all the doors! Let no one come in!

Cath. Ah, husband, husband! [*Exit.*

[*The doors are all closed. PETER is left alone, his hands resting upon his stick and his forehead on his hands.*

Peter. Never a man had his heart screwed up in a vice like me. All their hands are on the long handle—all of their hands are on it—turning and turning it! The last drops of blood and the last clots of flesh seemed to have oozed out of it. They can take their hands from the handle; their work is done; the two iron sides have come together—or no, not quite together—the shrivelled

skin of what was once a joyful human heart still just keeps them from touching. But come—the sentence! Let's grip and wrestle again. But let me get both shoulders to the ground this time. I thought I had done so before,—I had not. The paper is there, and there is the pen. [*Has made a space on the table for the Sentence of the Court and has laid a pen beside it.*] Were I to let him live?—If I came forth out of here and told them all?—They all think me pitiless.—If I did that? It is a temptation. Unscrew the dry skin of my heart out of the vice. Turn my back on all my labours—my factories and my dockyards; on all the companions of my toil—on Gordon, Lefort, and the rest; on all the men who have died for me; and lead my people back into the desolate steppe, where Time wanders aimlessly with a tent and a herd through barren space! No! never! I can't do that. Yet my thoughts won't let me mount them, and spur them on, on, on—as I used to—through the mist, into another mist, maybe, but still ever on and onwards.—No, to-day the trumpets are silent in my heart. If I let him live, could I ever make him love me? No; what would he see in my great mercifulness? Only humanity—ordinary common humanity. They can see no life and death struggle in it, not one of them. A father kill his son, that's all they see in it. Only the very mightiest—Cæsar, or Hannibal, or Charlemagne—*they* might look into my heart and know its cruel agony! At it again; my head is beginning to whirl! But I must end it. Which shall stand first—Father or Emperor? Who shall tell me that? [*Clenches his hands and prays.*] *You made me both! You set them both at variance! You know that my*

heart is not cruel towards him! You know that it is full of pity; but, like the rain-cloud with the thunder-bolt in its bosom, though it grieves for the parched-up fields, it must let the bolt fall somewhere. Let me but feel the purpose of my life this once! In this great final moment, show me in which your will is found. Oh, God — No, no! it must be fought out here within me. No sanction for me but my own soul's sanction. [*Goes toward table, takes up pen, lays it down.*] It is not fought out yet, and it must be! [*Walks up and down.*] Which would I rather do? Which tempts me? The one that tempts me is the one I ought to put aside. I know which I would rather do. I will not juggle with my conscience. I would rather make all my arsenals and my fleet, and the very ground I stand on — this Petersburg of mine — safe and secure. Then ought I to choose the opposite? But the opposite is so much easier; for what other men call pain and weariness, is my joy and my refreshment. I cannot judge myself like other men. Yes, and if I slink back and hold my hand, that would secure my fame. It would secure me honour amongst men for all that I have done, even though it soon fall to pieces after me; so that in destroying him, I make an equal sacrifice myself — the sacrifice of my historic glory. But I make it to my work. Let fame and glory pass from me, but let my work stand firm, for together our two bodies will sink down into the marsh but to make firmer the foundation of the city — and a great city that shall flourish and thrive happily over our graves. Yes, for happiness and peace, and the love you spoke of, son, shall spring up out of all this blood and torture. Son, I begin to understand it now — I hear the

trumpets sounding in my heart. I am for light and love; you are against it. You only see the amputation and the cruel surgery; I see God's light brought back to the darkened eye, and circulation restored to the stagnant blood. And yet — No, you are not against me, you are with me! For light and love! — your own words have laid you low. [*Grasps pen.*] Therefore, as you are with me in the wish, but cannot follow me in the means — the only way to save us both — I sign! Oh, my son, Absalom! Oh, Absalom, my son — my son!

Curtain.

ACT V.

SCENE.— *A casemate in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. Two Embrasures look over the Neva. Day is breaking.*

[ALEXIS discovered looking out of one of the embrasures. PETER enters by door R. ALEXIS looks round, then looks across the water again, then again looks round.

Alexis. My father, my accuser and my judge — are you also come to be my executioner ?

Peter. I come to ask for your forgiveness.

Alexis. You are going to spare my life ?

Peter. No ; I cannot do that.

Alexis. And I am to forgive you ? I don't think you need mock me.

Peter. Son, look into my face. Or, if the light's too feeble yet, then put your fingers to my eyes.

Alexis. Is this hypocrisy, or what ? — No, I think I begin to really know you now. You are hardly a sane man. Your eyes are dazzled and blinded with looking on the brilliancy of this greatness of yours.

Peter. Then you do confess that I am great ?

Alexis. Oh yes ; men call you so.

Peter. I live for men. That is enough for me.

Alexis. Do you remember telling me that to be great was to be ankle deep in smoking blood. Well, you are that. It will be a particle of an inch higher

than your ankles in a few minutes or so. And the last few drops will be of your own brewing and of your own shedding.

Peter. Ah, don't go down to the grave cursing me! We are both to be pitied — I as much as you.

[*Cannon discharged.*]

Alexis. What are the cannon for?

Peter. To-day is the anniversary of Poltava.

Alexis. It will be a double anniversary in future. Mind you keep it with due celebration. There'll be many of you drunk to-night, when I'm dead. I suppose you'll get drunk, too, won't you?

Peter. Well, I don't know. I generally do.

Alexis. There is a boat putting off from the other side. Tolstoi is in it, and Menshikoff. It's going to be a lovely day. It will see something memorable, a son put to death by his own father.

Peter. Your end will be sharp and momentary. Mine will be long, life-long. I shall live on into the night-time of my life. And as the sun sinks the shadow of this deed will lengthen and lengthen across my path — and yet — yet I must do it.

Alexis. Yes, I suppose I shall rather damage your fame.

Peter. Perhaps you will. Although I shall not have deserved it, I have got into an inextricable mesh. I have had to choose and I have chosen without pity, with consideration to myself. You do not die for me, but for those who are already dead for me. Go, son, and join the martyrs of your country, more glorious than all, because your sacrifice was willing!

Alexis. I can't believe it. But my heart is opening to you.

Peter. It is! Ah, give it way — my arms are open to you.

Alexis. At least you have lived for something higher than Euphrosine.

Peter. The waste of all your life will be repaired. We have been hardly dealt with.

Alexis. Father, we have! [*Rushes into his arms.*] Your life has been more nobly spent than mine. And I will lay mine down for you.

Peter. For Russia! In this last moment I have known you for my son. For this last moment I have lived in you!

Alexis. For the duty I have failed in, father, forgive me!

Peter. And if I have failed in love, forgive me, son!

Alexis. Yet it is better that I should die. For I should fail in duty to you again.

Peter. And I might fail again in love to you.

[*Monks heard chanting.*]

Alexis. What is that chanting?

Peter. Your requiem in the Cathedral overhead.

[*Bell tolls.*]

Alexis. And that bell?

Peter. To announce your death.

Alexis. The time has come!

Peter. [*Looks at his watch.*] It is past your time.

Alexis. Then let me die at once.

Peter. Be brave! be brave. [*PETER goes to door and beckons in the Doctor and two others.*] Wait for him in that room. He will come to you.

[*Exeunt Doctor and others R.*]

Alexis. Poison is it to be?

Peter. Ay, poison; keep up to it, and yours will be the noblest death in history.

Alexis. She — I mean my mother — she will mourn me bitterly. She only really loved me.

Peter. She shall know how you died, confessing my glory and the greatness of my Russia.

Alexis. No, tell her my last thought was for her; and — and, father, take care of Euphrosine. See now, what a poor weak thing I am — unworthy for this world.

Peter. You *do* forgive me, son?

Alexis. I understand that you can be forgiven, father. [*Rushes out.*]

Peter. I understand that you can be forgiven. [*A shriek.*] It is done.

[*Falls on his knees and crosses his hands.*
Chanting and bell are still continuing.]

Enter TOLSTOI and APRAXIN.

Tolstoi. My lord — your son —

Peter. My son!

Tolstoi. The infant Tsarevitch is dead.

Peter. [*Removing his hat.*] Then I am childless.

Apraxin. Shall we put off these celebrations?

Peter. No. [*Band of military music in distance.*] I hear them coming. Let Poltava have her glory. [*ALEXIS is carried in dead.*] And let it mingle with his requiem. He made fullest atonement at the last. I honour him. Let Russia honour him. He was my son, my own, my very son.

[*Curtain falls amidst chanting of choir, tolling of bell, and blare of approaching military bands.*]

THE END.

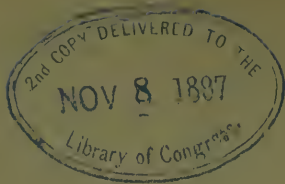
PETER THE GREAT

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

BY

LAURENCE IRVING

[Printed for private use only.]



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: April 2009

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN COLLECTIONS PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cape Fear, North Carolina, USA 28406

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 006 929 867 9

