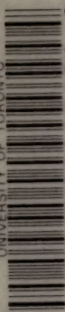


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THE LIBERATORS

BY

SRGIJAN TUCIC

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A remembrance from

Stratford-on-Avon - 1919.

from B. & C.

THE LIBERATORS.



THE LIBERATORS

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

BY

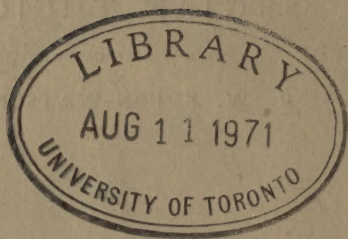
SRGJAN TUCIĆ.

WITH A PREFACE BY

R. W. SETON-WATSON.



THE SHAKESPEARE HEAD PRESS
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PREFACE.

For many centuries the north of our own island was the scene of a racial feud between two neighbouring nations, so furious and so persistent that its evil effects long survived the union of the crowns and even the closer parliamentary union which followed a century later. If we could think ourselves back into the outlook of our ancestors, we should find the deep-rooted conviction that fire and water could not more easily mingle than Englishman and Scot. And yet to-day these old hatreds are happily buried beyond possibility of recall: and each people, without for a moment surrendering its national tradition or individuality, regards the other as indispensable to its own very existence. No better example can be found of the manner in which the imperative claims of geography have in the long run imposed themselves upon brawling and short-sighted humanity.

Those who are in search of a modern parallel cannot do better than study the relations between Serb and Bulgar in the twentieth century. Since the expulsion of the Turks the Balkan peninsula has been covered by a sufficient veneer of Western culture to delude the superficial observer. In reality its inhabitants, despite the telephone, the railway and the machine-gun, despite even the effect of Paris and Berlin upon the life of the student or the trader, are still for the most part in the same stage of civilisation as produced the

reivers of the Scottish border and the endless bickerings of the Highland clans. If a stranger from Spain had told Johnnie Armstrong that his great grandchildren would be the friends and allies of the English, or had even prophesied to a Highland chief that Campbells and Macdonalds would swear the "Bessa" after centuries of enmity, he would undoubtedly have been laughed to scorn: and in the same way it would be absurd for us to expect a Macedonian komitadji to admit even the possibility of future friendship between Serb and Bulgar.

If the spirit of compromise has come to be regarded as the most characteristic product of English political life there was little enough of it in the Debatable Country or within sight of the Highland Line. And it would be equally absurd to expect such a spirit from races which have only just emerged from five centuries of grinding Turkish tyranny, and with whom the days when every man's hand was against his neighbour are still as vivid in the imagination as were the memories of '45 in the youthful brain of Walter Scott. In the Balkans we are too apt to fancy that the issue was always clear as daylight between Cross and Crescent, between lord and peasant, between conqueror and slave. In reality there have always existed the infinite complications which come from racial rivalries, the treachery of neighbours and above all the soaring ambitions and petty intrigues of foreign potentates. In the last and most critical century all this resolved itself into the warring tendencies of the Great Powers—Russia, the great Slav and Orthodox brother, Austria, the

herald of Germanism tempered by the spirit of the Vatican and perpetually handicapped by her unruly Magyar yokefellows—and behind the two great rivals the other Powers, democratic and autocratic, all fishing in the troubled waters of Balkan diplomacy, until the black maelstrom of Sarajevo should drag them down. Amid all this network of mine and countermine, of intrigue, conspiracy and hatred, the unhappy Balkan races stand out as the victims of a fate beyond their control, desperately clinging to what they hold, fiercely brooding over what they once possessed, and utterly reluctant to renounce one iota of their claims or one foot of the soil which was already drenched in the blood of a secular struggle.

The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 are the crowning tragedy of this unhappy process. The miracle of fraternal union in a high and noble cause is followed by a sordid scramble for the spoils, amid ebullitions of hate such as recall the worst passions of the Turkish era. The combatants, locked in deadly strife, are blind to, or fail to detect, the sinister figures that direct the puppet-show from the background. The profound alarm into which Lule Burgas, but still more Kumanovo, plunged Vienna and Budapest, gives place to the scarcely veiled glee of the *tertius gaudens*, when news arrives that Tarnowski and Ferdinand have triumphed, and that the night-attack of the Bulgars has been launched against the Serbian lines. And if Serbia's fresh triumph on the Bregalnitz and the Nemesis which so soon overtook Bulgaria at Bucarest seemed to rob the schemes of the Ballplatz of the success for which

they had plotted so long, they could console themselves with the knowledge that a fatal wedge of discord had been driven in between two races whom Nature had intended to be brothers, and that the way thus lay open for vast designs which Armageddon will even now bring to fruition unless the Allies can at length grasp the full seriousness of the Balkan problem.

Seldom has the atmosphere been more heavily charged with electricity than in those fatal days of June 1913 in Belgrade and in Sofia. Never shall I forget the sensation of *malaise* and impending disaster which seemed to dog one's every footstep during a week spent in the Bulgarian capital on the eve of the catastrophe. The intolerable strain was reflected in every face, and I remember that we turned away shuddering to the rosewalks of the Boris Garden, as regiments of boyish recruits—the wild-flowers with which they had decked their caps throwing into relief their fierce, relentless faces—marched in from the country, chanting their national airs in cadences that were uncanny beyond expression.

Two years later that strange atmosphere was recalled to me in all its original vividness, as I read the manuscript of "The Liberators." Written with all the poignancy of disillusionment, by one whose ardent patriotism never outstrips his feeling for drama, this play grips the reader from the outset by imposing on him the conviction that it has been "lived." Those who know the subject with which it deals must admit its passionate reality; but its main appeal lies just in the fact that it reveals as in a flash of lightning utterly

unfamiliar scenes and motives, without demanding from the careless reader any noticeable effort, but riveting his attention upon the human drama. Above all it is redolent of that larger spirit of Jugo-Slav patriotism which has caught up the whole younger generation of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in an irresistible movement for national unity. Its author, Mr. Tucić, is a Croat, steeped in the literary and artistic traditions of Zagreb (Agram), and brought up in the political faith that inspired the great Bishop Strossmayer in claiming the Bulgars as a fourth and equal link in the chain of Jugo-Slav fellowship. He himself had stood as a symbol of that unity; for he has been equally at home in Zagreb, in Sofia—where he spent some years as director of the national theatre—and in Belgrade.

Mr. Tucić was already known as a writer of daring and imagination, both by his short stories ("Under Life's Scourge," etc.) and by his strange allegorical drama "Golgotha." But "The Liberators" provided that rarest of all combinations—literary merit and political *actualité*: and its central theme, the enormity, nay the criminality, of bloodshed between Serb and Bulgar, appealed with peculiar force to the Croatian public in the period of disillusionment that followed the Second Balkan War. For that very reason it was distasteful to the authorities in Zagreb and to their masters the Hungarian Government, whose policy for years past has been inspired by the motto "Divide et Impera," and who made all the greater efforts to promote discord between Serb and Bulgar, as they came to realise the utter futility

of maintaining the artificial distinction between Serb and Croat. "The Liberators" was banned in Croatia, and its author, like other interpreters of national sentiment, was frowned upon in official quarters. When the present war broke out, Mr. Tucić found himself in London, and like all other Serbo-Croats and Slovenes who are beyond the reach of Austrian or Magyar tyranny, is an enthusiast for the cause of Jugo-Slav Unity—for the ideal of national Self-determination proclaimed long ago by the great Mazzini and now affirmed anew in Russia.

The play has sometimes been criticised as a pacifist tract, and if by this is meant that it brings home to its readers with extraordinary vividness the horrors of war, there may be some truth in the charge. (In this sense every writer or painter who has dared to depict war in its grim reality, would stand condemned.) But those who read the play in the light of the ideas to which I have endeavoured to give expression, will, I hope, realise that it is something very different. It is above all else a fiery indictment against the mortal sin of civil war; for as such he, in common with many farsighted men of his race, regards a war between individual branches of the Southern Slav race. It is upon the consciousness that fraternal concord must in the long run triumph over the passionate hates and misunderstandings of a cruel present, that our hope for the future of the Balkans must centre.

R. W. SETON-WATSON.

This translation has been made by FANNIE S. COPELAND ; it has been read (and approved) by the Author.

THE LIBERATORS

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

- General Rashko Karastoyanoff.* Commander of a Bulgarian Division.
- Milada.* His mother.
- Lyuben.* Subaltern in the Bulgarian Guards, his son.
- Katya.* His daughter.
- Dragolyub Bayalovitch.* Subaltern in a Serbian cavalry regiment.
- Sofia Popova.*
- Boris.* Her son.
- Dr. Nikola Markoff.*
- Petya Kozlubhoff.* Russian student, Bulgarian volunteer.
- Vyera Ivanova.* Red Cross Nurse, engaged to Dr. Markoff.
- Petkoff.*
- Gantcheff.*
- Hristoforoff.*
- Naumoff*
- Stoyanoff.* } Officers disabled in the first Balkan war.
- Georgi Drutchkoff.* Peasant.
- A Soldier.*
- A Police Officer.*
- A Woman.*
- A Refugee.*
- Maids, Refugees.*
-

*The scene is laid in Sofia, 1913, during the second
Balkan War.*

THE LIBERATORS.

ACT I.

Morning-room, which also serves as study, in the house of General Karastoyanoff. C. back-ground, main entrance with glass doors and a large ante-room beyond. R. entrance to the other living rooms. L. two windows overlooking the street. Furniture: good but plain, writing-table, book-cases (two suites of furniture represented) and a small table for the samovar, etc. On the walls portrait of King Ferdinand, by Lazlo, and a few reproductions of no particular artistic value. Beside the near window a large old-fashioned arm-chair and small work-table. From the ceiling hangs a large somewhat elaborately ornamental paraffin or electric lamp. The room suggests the traditions of plain, well-to-do families.

Morning: one window is open. As the curtain rises, the stage remains empty for a few seconds. Voices in the ante-room, then the door opens.

Enter Milada and Vyera.

Milada [aged 74, her grey hair parted in the centre, knotted at the back, and the coil swathed tightly in a dark silk handkerchief according to Bulgarian custom.—A gaunt old woman, still vigorous, though slightly bowed with age; voice somewhat trenchant; eyes vivacious, but their glance calm and authoritative. She is plainly dressed, like any elderly Bulgarian gentlewoman who does not take kindly to modern ways. Leading in Vyera, cordially]. My dear child, how kind of you to come! We have seen nothing of you for a long time—as if you had wished to hide from us! Do sit down, my dear!

Vyera [aged 28, less pretty than interesting and intelligent-looking. Cheek-bones slightly high; complexion pale; deep-set, dark and beautiful eyes. Taken as a whole she gives a sympathetic, harmonious impression. Voice rich and warm; movements gentle and well-considered]. Thanks,—I should have come sooner—but—

Milada [smiling kindly]. I know, I know, my child; war is over, and the drudgery of the sick-room has been exchanged for a better, pleasanter occupation.

Vyera [happily]. Oh, yes—far better, a hundred times better; [under her breath] for tears of joy.

Milada [stroking her hair]. And when—when is it going to be?

Vyera [smiling]. In a fortnight,—we hope. Nikola is free now, you know.

Milada. My child, you thoroughly deserve it. You have dried many tears, and healed many wounds. It is time that you too should be happy. How pleased Katyenka will be! Wait, I'll call her. [goes to door R. and calls] Katya! Katyenka, my dearie, Vyera is here.

Katya [within, joyfully]. Vyera? I'm coming directly!

Milada [returning to Vyera]. She will be here directly.

Katya [entering quickly, full of joyous excitement; age 22, a beautiful, high-spirited girl]. Vyerutshka, you darling! [kisses and embraces her impulsively] What ages since I have seen you! How are you?

Vyera [returning her caress]. And you, little one?

Katya. I? oh, just as usual [taking Vyera by both hands] Are you happy?

Vyera [smiles—jokingly]. As happy as you are!

Katya [in high spirits]. Oh,—I!—

Vyera. Well: you?

Katya. Oh, my happiness is yet to come!

Milada. You are still a child, and your happiness lies here with us.

Katya. Fine child of twenty-two !

Vyera. Be glad, that you may still be a child !

Katya. But I don't *want* to be a child.

Vyera [*smiling*]. Why not ?

Katya. Because — because [*blushing, confused*]—

Vyera. Because ?

Milada. Because she does not know anything about it

Katya [*suddenly with decision*]. I *do* know, Granny !

Vyera [*still smiling*]. Then tell us

Katya [*still more confused*]. I won't !

Milada. You are a nice girl !

Katya [*innocently*]. Well, you brought me up !

Milada. Listen to her ! She'll be putting the blame on me next !

Katya [*hastens to Milada, throws her arms round her neck*]. No Granny ! I'll never do that !

Milada [*withdrawing herself from Katya's embrace*]. Well, well, that's all right Leave me alone and entertain Vyerutshka . . . I must attend to the kitchen, otherwise your father will get no dinner [*turns towards main exit*] And you, Vyerutshka, don't go without saying good-bye. You'll find me in the kitchen.

Vyera. Of course—Granny—I'll not forget !

Milada. My son and my grandson will soon be in : and the General *does* like dinner to be punctual—[*smiling*] Now that he is at home ! I wonder how he fared at Kirkilisse ? Who knows how often he waited for dinner till midnight ? Entertain each other, children, and be happy [*exit C.*]

Vyera. How amazingly well your grandmother keeps !—she is simply wonderful.

Katya. Before the war she always said : “I must

live, I *will* live to see the day of reckoning. Then let the Lord take me hence." And now she says: "I must live, I will live to enjoy the fruits of the reckoning."

Vyera [*sits ; seriously*]. But for that, we should never get over what we have lost.

Katya [*tactfully*]. But you have not lost by it?

Vyera. We have lost! The people—the country—*our* country.

Katya. Lyuben says: every drop of blood we have shed to free our brothers is like a drop of gold which they will repay us a thousand-fold.

Vyera. Of course—a thousand-fold! — But, so much blood! [*short silence*] so much human blood!

Katya [*sits beside her*]. Vyera!

Vyera [*in a low voice*]. What is it, Katya?

Katya [*in a low voice*]. This blood brought you—to him!

Vyera [*raising her head, quivering*]. Katya—What do you mean?

Katya [*as before*]. This war led to your happiness.

Vyera [*almost sharply*]. How can you — ?

Katya [*very earnestly, with emotion*]. Don't be angry with me, Vyerutshka. Listen to me. I have thought about it all so often lately—as if everything fulfilled a purpose— For while *you* and he were working, side by side, in the hospital, nursing the wounded—our heroes who have shed their blood to set our brothers free—comforting the stricken, and with gentle hands closing the eyes that have ceased for ever to look upon the sun, and life, and happiness—just then your sun, your life, your happiness were born. It was an unconscious gift of the suffering and dying to you, and their last transfigured smile in the face of death blessed your happiness—many suffered and many died that you might find joy and happiness.

Vyera [*horrified*]. Katya!

Katya. But for them, their groans and suffering, your eyes might never have been opened to love, your hearts might never have met.

Vyera [*firmly*]. Never, never in all that time did we with a single word touch upon our feelings.

Katya. And if you had done so, would it have been a crime?

Vyera. It would have been heartless—horrible!

Katya. Is it heartless, in the face of the loss of so many lives to dream of the creation of new lives, which shall replace those that were taken?

Vyera [*gazing at her in amazement*]. Where did you get those ideas, Katyuschka?

Katya [*with gentle irony*]. Now you see that I am no longer a child.

Vyera. Yes, dear—I see.

Katya. Children have died out in this land. These bitter times have turned them all into men and women. We have all passed through a school of blood, and every day has meant years of growth. . . . All of us, Vyera, especially we women—for we are the mothers of the Bulgaria that is to be!

Vyera. If I did not see you with my own eyes, I should never believe that it was you speaking. . . .

Katya [*smiling*]. Oh, when granny is there, you only hear me chatter like a heedless child. Granny doesn't approve of young people who think. With grey hair and wrinkles, I should still be a child in her eyes; [*earnestly*] but with you Vyera, [*impulsively*] with you, who have looked upon all the misery of life and understood it, with you I have the right to be a woman!

Vyera [*touched*]. Certainly—most certainly you have!

Katya. And to contemplate the task which our heroes have bequeathed to us; that we shall become the mothers of a new generation.

Vyera [*mournfully*]. A happier generation than ours—

Katya. The generation of peace! To this end we have watered the earth with our tears and the blood of our brothers. To-day all Bulgaria is free, even though the flower of our youth is crippled. The price of all liberty is blood. The countless graves of Lule Burgas, Kirkilisse and Adrianople are altars of sacrifice to the hydra of liberty, and without a murmur we gave her our nearest and dearest. But our hearts have remained with us and from that fount of living blood shall spring the happier generation. *That* is the task we must keep before us, for that is what gave you the right—even beside the death-bed of the past—to lay the foundation-stone of the future.

Vyera [*musng*]. I have never heard you talk like this—and yet—every word is true—terrible—but true!

Katya. Drago says—all truth is terrible.

Vyera [*looks at her in astonishment*]. Drago?

Katya [*slightly confused*]. Yes, Drago—Lieutenant Bayalovitch you know.

Vyera. Ah, yes, of course, Lyuben's friend, and my patient. . . . How is he?

Katya. Very well—as well as possible at least—his future can only be a tragedy.

Vyera. That is so . . . so young, and without his arm—his right arm!

Katya. And he lost it for us—for our Adrianople. [*vehemently*] There lies his tragedy!

Vyera. *Katya*—it was for the common cause.

Katya. But his sacrifice is greater!

Vyera. Does he regret?

Katya [*smiling sadly*]. Ah, no! He is a hero in his soul—a true hero! “My other arm also for my brothers”—that is his answer to all condolence. . . . And what is his reward?

Vyera. But why?

Katya [*passionately*]. Why? How can I tell? For no reason at all? For the sake of pure greed!

Vyera. I don't understand you!

Katya. It's not right, what we are doing. It is a crying shame!

Vyera. I really don't understand you.

Katya. We are blind with self-will—forgetting where we ought to stop.

Vyera. What are you talking about?

Katya. I fear the day will come when we shall shed tears, more bitter than all those we have wept hitherto.

Vyera. You are too pessimistic, my dear, and take far too gloomy a view of things. I am sure that all will end well and that the Serbs will see that we are in the right.

Katya. In the right?

Vyera [*decidedly*]. Most certainly! That which is ours ought not to be taken from us!

Katya. Are you so sure we are in the right?

Vyera. Why not? Surely the treaty is sufficient to prove the lawfulness of our cause?

Katya [*emphatically*]. No!

Vyera. But, Katya—

Katya. The foundation of lawful right must be based on a sense of justice—in working together for a common cause—on mutual love, not robbery.

Vyera [*with a slight smile of disappointment*]. You do not speak like a loyal Bulgarian!

Katya. I speak as every Bulgarian woman should. For our feelings are more subtle and our instincts are truer than those of our greedy diplomats and ambitious politicians

Vyera. But we are only insisting on what we have been guaranteed. Surely you too desire that our country should become a great power?

Katya. Of course I do, perhaps more than all of you. But I do *not* want to purchase our greatness with the blood of others, when so much of it has already been shed on our account. Are we not mightier, when we are equal in might? Surely their love, and the blessings of peace will be worth more to us than hatred and never-ending jealousies? [*suddenly despondent*] Oh, Vyera, all this can only end badly.

Vyera [*crosses over to her and caresses her*]. You are a little Radical and [*smiling*] rather too prejudiced in favour of Serbia.

Katya [*embarrassed*]. You are wrong there . . . believe me you are quite wrong. I am a better Bulgarian than any of you.

Vyera [*smiling*]. Really?

Katya [*seriously*]. My patriotism is affection and not merely ambition.

Vyera. And love.

Katya. Yes, and love as well.

Vyera. For? . . .

Katya [*blushing*]. For all that is ours, and for all that we may justly claim.

Vyera [*jesting*]. And for nothing else?

Katya. Why? Surely you don't think? [*suddenly very embarrassed*] you are mistaken . . . really, you are quite mistaken,

Vyera. Now it is my turn to ask whether it would be a crime?

Katya [*earnestly*]. Listen, Vyera: if I *do* marry, I shall marry a Bulgarian.

Vyera [*smiling*]. May I ask why?

Katya. I have already told you the duty every Bulgarian woman owes her country.

Vyera [*becomes serious; takes Katya's hand*]. I know what you mean Katya . . . you are a brave girl. I was only joking—forgive me, dear.

Katya. Oh dear ! Vyera, surely we are still young enough to appreciate a joke. [*cheerily*] Would you like me to call him ?

Vyera. Whom ?

Katya [*laughing*]. Him !

Vyera [*understanding*]. Oh ! of course . . . my patient ; by all means, I shall be delighted to see him.

Katya [*going to the door R.*] You musn't chaff him—he is terribly serious. [*opens door R. and calls*] Lieutenant Bayalovitch !

Dragolyub [*within*]. Yes, Miss Karastoyanoff !

Katya. Do come here for a moment ! We have a visitor, whom I'm sure you will be glad to meet again [*she remains by the door*].

Dragolyub [*appears at the door, age 28, handsome, well-built ; he is wearing the undress uniform of a Servian Cavalry regiment ; he has lost his right arm, the sleeve hangs empty from the shoulder ; his expression is manly and serious. He is a trifle pale, and his looks plainly show the trace of recent illness. On catching sight of Vyera his face brightens*]. Oh, my dear Miss Ivanova ! [*approaches her with a look of pleasure and offers his left hand*] How are you ? [*with a smile of bitter irony*] Please excuse my left hand ; I would gladly offer you my right to express all my thanks to you.

Vyera [*warmly, heartily*]. I value your left hand quite as much : I'm sure it is equally sincere.

Dragolyub. Believe me, it is indeed !

Vyera. And how do you like staying here with us—with Lyuben and—Katya ?

Dragolyub [*candidly*]. I am very happy — though somewhat covered with confusion.

Katya. But why ?

Dragolyub. Because I am an interloper who has trespassed on the hospitality of strangers far too long.

Katya [*a little offended*]. If you had taken the trouble to become better acquainted with us, you would not need to talk of us as strangers.

Dragolyub. It is your kindness which covers me with confusion. You won't allow me to feel that I am a stranger, and yet I scarcely know by what right I belong to you?

Vyera. By the right of a friend.

Katya. Or, if you prefer it, as our prisoner of war, and you know prisoners of war are treated—

Dragolyub [*interrupts, smiling*]. With frigid politeness.

Katya. Have you experienced that from us?

Dragolyub. No—certainly not! What I experienced in this house has more than compensated for the loss that caused me to impose upon your hospitality.

Katya [*goes to him and takes his hand in both of her's, warmly*]. Dear friend!

Vyera. Lieutenant Bayalovitch, you were my favourite patient . . . [*with a tactful smile*]. No, I'm not going to flatter you . . . But I do admire a man and a hero—And so I am delighted to see that you have found your second home with us, in a Bulgarian family. Some day, when you have returned to your own beautiful Belgrade, you will surely put in a good word for us.

Dragolyub. Is it possible to put into words all that I owe this house?

Katya [*very gravely*]. Yes—words of vindication.

Dragolyub [*amazed*]. Why should I vindicate you?

Katya. Because of the guilt that some of our people will incur.

Vyera. *Katya!*

Dragolyub. I don't know what you mean. [*suddenly toneless*] Or—have they already . . . ?

Katya [*quickly*]. Nothing has happened! I only said that—in case. No one can foresee the future [*almost in*

tears] and I cannot bear to think that one day you might curse us.

Vyera. Katya! How can you!

Dragolyub [*fixes a long and penetrating glance on Katya*]. I could never curse you. [*He passes his hand over his brow as if to drive away evil thoughts; then he turns cordially, almost cheerfully to Vyera*]. And how is our dear Doctor?

Vyera. You will see him to-day; he is coming to fetch me.

Katya. Ah, you don't know yet.—Vyera is engaged to Dr. Markoff.

Drayolyub [*greatly pleased*]. Really? [*shakes hands*] Heartiest congratulations to you both. If anyone is entitled to happiness it is you two . . . you deserve it.

Vyera. Thanks, my friend, I know you mean it.

Milada [*Opens C. door*]. Katyushka, hand round the preserves, dearie!

Katya. Yes, Granny! [*Exit C. with Milada*]

Dragolyub [*as soon as Katya has gone, turns to Vyera, nervously excited*]. I implore you, in the name of your happiness, Miss Ivanova—tell me all there is to tell!

Vyera [*greatly embarrassed*]. Why?—what? I don't understand you, Lieutenant Bayalovitch!

Dragolyub [*as before*]. Something . . . something is happening! I feel it . . . I feel it all round me. They are trying to keep it from me, and yet every look, every word, betrays a load of anxiety. Tell me, Miss Ivanova—for Heaven's sake—In the name of our common Faith—tell me, *what* is happening?

Vyera. Nothing, Lieutenant Bayalovitch, nothing—a slight tension—Our Government insists on adhering to the treaty, and the Serbs demand revision . . .

Dragolyub. Well?

Vyera. All will end in peace—they will come to an agreement.

Dragolyub. And what if they don't ?

Vyera [embarrassed]. Oh, but they will !

Dragolyub [insistently]. But if they should *not* come to an agreement, Miss Ivanova ?—If they should not come to an agreement ?

Vyera [as before]. The treaty is quite clear and explicit.

Dragolyub. And it cannot be altered ! That's it ! That's the line your people are taking up, and ours will not give way.

Vyera. Not up to date.

Dragolyub [almost fiercely]. They never will ! [in a low sad voice] They never will give way—and that means—Bloodshed !

Vyera. But, my dear friend !

Dragolyub [pressing his hand to his head]. Bloodshed ! Brother against brother !

Vyera [quickly]. Hush ! Katya is coming. [Enter Katya carrying tray with jam-dishes and tumblers of water.]

Katya. Vyerutshka, my dear, do help yourself !

Vyera [mechanically helps herself to a small spoonful of preserves, and then takes a sip of water]. Thanks !

Katya [offering preserves to Dragolyub]. And you, Drago ?

Dragolyub [absently]. Thanks—I can't.

Katya [remains standing before him—looks at him]. What is the matter ?

Dragolyub [looks up and looks deeply at Katya]—

Katya. What is the matter with you, Drago ?

Dragolyub [under his breath]. Everything, and nothing !

Vyera [takes Katya's hand, draws her aside, softly]. He has guessed.

Katya [startled, in a low voice]. Good Heavens ! [puts tray on table.]

Vyera [speaking in her ordinary voice]. Yesterday as I

was walking down the Pepinière, I met Kozluhoff . . . He never said "how do you do," but simply came along and began railing at himself.

Katya [*mechanically*]. Yes?

Vyera. He has composed an epic on the Balkan war. It is to be published in the "Nyiva"*. . . and now he is ashamed of it.

Katya [*as before*]. Indeed?

Vyera. He would'nt tell me why he was ashamed of it. He just called himself a silly idiot and a beast of a Russian—

Dragolyub. Petya is a good sort.

Katya. He has a warm heart.

Vyera. I never said he hadn't, only sometimes he is rather—odd

Dragolyub. Well it grieves him too.

Katya [*in a low voice*]. He has a Russian heart.

Dragolyub [*also in a low voice*]. Yes . . . a Russian heart.

Milada [*enters*]. Well, children, have you lost your tongues! Young people, and all silent, hanging your heads? [*To Vyera*] Vyerushka, my dear, your good Doctor has just sent word to say that he cannot call for you . . . and that he is coming round to your house this evening.

Vyera [*unpleasantly surprised*]. How is that? He is off duty now, and he is bound to pass this way.

Milada. He was urgently summoned to a Cabinet meeting.

Vyera [*rises quickly*]. A Cabinet meeting? He . . . Then I think I ought to go home; mother will be expecting me.

Katya. Come again soon!

Vyera [*absently*]. Yes, dear, certainly . . . good-bye.

Milada. Good-bye, Vyerushka!

Vyera [*shaking hands with Dragolyub*]. Au revoir, Lieutenant Bayalovitch.

* "Field."

Dragolyub [*retains her hands a moment*]. Perhaps this is the last time you will give me your hand in friendship.

Vyera [*cordially*]. All must end well—you will see, all will end well—and even though—things may happen, I shall always freely and frankly think of you as a friend—*au revoir!*

Dragolyub. Thanks—and—*Au revoir!* [*Vyera goes with Katya to the main exit, and at this moment enter Lyuben rapidly.*]

Lyuben [*Age 26, slenderly built, smart appearance and sunburnt. He is wearing the uniform of the Bulgarian Cavalry Guards. As he perceives Vyera, he remains in the door*]. *Hullo, Vyera, how are you? Must you be off already?*

Vyera. Yes, I'm sorry—but I must go.

Lyuben [*makes way for her*]. Love to Nikola.

Vyera. Thanks. Good-bye! [*exit with Katya; Lyuben comes down stage.*]

Lyuben. Good morning, Granny! [*kisses Milada on the forehead, shakes hands with Dragolyub*] Morning, Drago!

Dragolyub. Morning, Lyuben!

Milada. Where is your father?

Lyuben. At the War Office! He ought to be back any minute.

Dragolyub. Are you free this afternoon?

Lyuben [*somewhat confused*]. I think so . . . I mean . . . unless there's an order from head-quarters.

Dragolyub [*bitterly*]. To attack the Serbs.

Lyuben [*hurt*]. Oh, come, Drago.

Milada. What is the meaning of this? Surely you do not suppose after all that has passed that brothers will fall on one another?

Dragolyub. It would be horrible, unspeakably horrible.

Lyuben. It would be criminal!

Dragolyub. And yet, who can tell?

Lyuben. I don't think it'll come to that.

Dragolyub. But you don't say it's impossible?

[*Re-enter Katya ; with her Petkoff, Naumoff and Stoyanoff.*]

Katya. Here are more guests, Granny. They would like a glass of vodka before dinner.

Milada [cordially]. Come in, my dear heroes. Come in, children, come in.

[*Petkoff, age 26, strongly built, but pallid and gaunt. His left foot has been crippled by a shell. He walks on two crutches. Uniform of a Bulgarian officer of the line ; white summer blouse.*]

Petkoff. Good morning!

Naumoff [Age 24, very sturdy, sunburnt, heavily-boned face, head and left eye bandaged ; left hand in a black sling ; he wears civilian trousers and an officer's white summer blouse. Together with Petkoff]. Good morning!

Stoyanoff [Age 21, slim, delicate, with pallid and haggard face. His eyes are very large and dark and wear an expression of utter depression. He has lost both arms ; the sleeves hang empty from the shoulders ; civilian clothes, tidy and unassuming. Together with Petkoff and Naumoff, in a low voice, almost humbly]. Good morning!

[*Exit Katya, as soon as the three have entered ; returns immediately with a bottle of vodka and liqueur glasses on a tray.*]

Milada. Sit down children, sit. You have met our guest?

Petkoff [with a slight bow towards Dragolyub]. Yes!

Naumoff [also bows]. We have had the honour!

Stoyanoff [approaching Dragolyub, in a low voice]. I am so glad to see you! I am sorry I can't shake hands.

Dragolyub [passing his hand over Stoyanoff's head]. And I have only *one* hand to greet you!

Stoyanoff [in a low voice]. Thank you!

Lyuben [*approaches them after shaking hands with Petkoff and Naumoff. To Stoyanoff*]. How are you, Ivantcho?

Stoyanoff [*with a bitter smile*]. Like a tree without branches.

Lyuben [*lays his hand on Stoyanov's shoulder, kindly*]. Poor old chap!

Stoyanoff. It doesn't matter . . . a tribute to liberty! [*goes into a corner and sits there with bowed head until his exit.*]

Katya [*fills glasses*]. Here is vodky, boys. [*Petkoff and Naumoff each take a glass and drink.*] And you, Ivantcho, won't you take anything?

Stoyanoff. No thanks!

Milada [*approaches Stoyanoff*]. Ivantcho, my boy, how is your dear mother?

Stoyanoff [*in a low voice*]. She weeps.

Milada [*looks at him for a moment, then wipes her eyes*]. Oh, my God, my God! [*comes down stage.*]

Petkoff. Lucky dog, Lyuben: glad, eh, what?

Lyuben. Why?

Petkoff. Well, you are fit for the front still.

Lyuben [*quickly, in a low voice*]. Shut up!

Milada. Heaven forbid, what war is this?

Naumoff [*cuttingly, with sidelong glance at Dragolyub*]. Against Serbia.

Katya [*quickly*]. Are you mad, Naumoff?

Naumoff [*sardonically*]. Their lordships won't give in.

Lyuben [*somewhat sharply*]. What rot!—and it's in jolly bad taste too.

Naumoff. And what about the Serbs?

Lyuben. Oh, there'll be peace right enough!

Drago [*reproachfully*]. Why are you keeping the truth from me, Lyuben?

Lyuben. I am not keeping anything from you, old chap. The man in the street is a bit out of hand, that's all.

Petkoff [to *Dragolyub*]. You needn't worry about it; you will be all right with us—on the shelf!

Katya. Control yourself, Lieutenant *Petkoff*.

Petkoff [breaks out]. Do you know, Miss *Karastoyanoff*, it's jolly hard for a man to control himself when his friends are off to the front, and he's got to stay behind with the women and children, and roll bandages!

Dragolyub [calmly]. And when will it come?

Lyuben. Rot! it won't come. We are only taking precautions.

Stoyanoff [from his corner, a little louder than before, but in a sad, mournful voice]. It will come—I know it will come, and the brothers of one race will again fall upon each other's swords.

Lyuben. *Ivantcho!*

Milada. What did you say, my child?

Stoyanoff. *Perditio tua ex te, Israel!*

Dragolyub [bows his head]. Amen!

Milada. But why? In heaven's name, why?

Naumoff [defiantly]. They won't give in!

Dragolyub. And you?

Petkoff [furious]. Why should we?

Lyuben [greatly embarrassed]. Look here, can't you leave it alone? Surely there's something else to talk about.

Petkoff [as before]. Why should I leave it alone?

Stoyanoff [interrupts with decision]. There is something else . . . [short pause; then in a lower voice] When they cut off my arms, I was unconscious When I came to myself, the surgeon stood beside my cot; he smiled good-naturedly and said, "You are all right now." I had no idea what had happened to me, but I wanted to wipe away a drop of sweat from my forehead. It was trickling down slowly and irritating me. [short silence] First, I tried to raise my right hand and then my left,

and I couldn't understand why I could not do it. In the cot next to mine lay another wounded man and he kept on smiling "Tell me, brother" said I, "what is wrong, that I can't raise my arms?" Then he began to laugh out loud, almost merrily, and said: "Wait till you grow another pair!" [silence] And that drop of sweat trickled down over my forehead and into my eye, and there it stayed a moment, and then it trickled down to the corner of my mouth. I felt it bitter and salt to the taste [pause] I think it must have blended with a tear in my eye [in a low, imploring voice] My poor mother!

Katya [pitifully, very delicately]. Ivantcho!

Naumoff. Well, you are a hero, and a martyr for your country!

Stoyanoff [without taking any notice of *Naumoff*]. She smiles to my face, sometimes she even sings, and she is always telling me how happy she is to have borne a hero . . . but her smile is so sad, and there is a ring of quivering pain in her voice, and while she talks to me of joy and pride I see her black hair change to white threads of frozen grief Look you—that is that other matter, of which we should talk—again and again, and then we would think twice before we clench our fists, and throw ourselves upon the living hearts of our brothers to rend them in pieces.

Petkoff. O, yes, I know—you are a dreamer and an idealist!

Stoyanoff [bitterly]. Give me back my hands, that I may hide my eyes from that which is no dream!

[Silence]

Petkoff [takes another glass]. Good Lord, what next!
[Drinks] Here's luck!

Milada [in a low voice]. Amen.

Katya. When will this end? When will this end?

[*Knock at the main entrance ; enter Sofia, with her son Boris ; a woman of fifty, decidedly passée, conspicuously dressed, very stout, lively, almost skittish in her movements. She flies up to Milada and embraces her effusively.*]

Sofia. Ah, *ma chère*, how delightful to see you ! We were passing your door—my Bobby and I—and I said “ Let’s pop in and see how dear Madame Karastoyanoff is to-day.”

Milada [*simply*]. Delighted, my dear Mrs. Popoff !

Boris [*bows to Milada*]. *Bon jour, Madame !*

Sofia [*embraces Katya*]. And my darling Katya ? How are you ? [*to Lyuben*] *Bon jour, Lyuben.* [*to the others*] *Bon jour, gentlemen !* [*all bow*]

Boris [*ceremoniously, bowing to Katya*]. Mademoiselle ! [*Noticing Dragolyub whom he does not know, approaches him.*] Boris Popoff.

Dragolyub [*with a bow*]. My name is Bayalovitch.

Sofia [*sits*]. We have just come from my sister’s, the Cabinet Minister’s wife, you know. Just fancy, there is a Cabinet meeting with the King at the Palace, going on at this very minute !

Boris. A decisive meeting !

Sofia. Yes, Bobby, my angel—a decisive cabinet meeting There’s no doubt about it at all—the war is practically a fact. My sister—the Cabinet Minister’s wife—has confided to me that the Serbs are to be attacked this very night.

Dragolyub [*nervously*]. Without declaration of war ?

Katya. That would be criminal !

Boris. Why criminal ?

Sofia. Bobby is right—why criminal ?

Boris [*insolently*]. Surely we wouldn’t ask their permission ?

Stoyanoff. No, we shall slaughter, and slaughter, and merely slaughter !

Boris. We shall settle them in a week !

Sofia. Bobby is right—in a week, although my sister, the Cabinet Minister's wife, says it may take quite ten days.

Boris. Surely I know better I know my countrymen !

Lyuben [*who has been painfully embarrassed by this conversation*]. I think the Cabinet Minister's wife is quite wrong. [*to Boris*] And you are wrong too. There won't be any war !

Boris. I beg your pardon ; and why not ?

Lyuben. Because common sense must prevail.

Katya. It *must* prevail.

Milada. Heaven grant it !

Lyuben [*with conviction*]. It *will* prevail.

Boris [*ironically*]. But whose ?

Petkoff. Our common sense will prevail right enough !
. . . . But what about the Serbs ?

Dragolyub. I must confess I am in a very difficult position, but I will say that *justice* ought to prevail !

Boris. Ergo, and right *is* on our side . . . we cannot yield.

Sofia. Bobby is right . . . Bobby is *always* right !

Naumoff [*maliciously*]. That is why he will get on !

Boris [*insolently*]. Yes, I shall get on. My Uncle, the Cabinet Minister

Sofia [*interrupting*]. Yes, my Brother-in-law, the Cabinet Minister, has been repeatedly amazed by Bobby's shrewdness.

Boris. My close connection with our Government circles enables me to voice the authentic opinion of the very Highest Personages in all matters in dispute.

Stoyanoff. Our Ministers are criminals !

Boris [*scandalized*]. Sir !

Stoyanoff. Hangmen !

Sofia [outraged]. My brother-in-law?

Stoyanoff [sharply]. All of them!—including your brother-in-law. They won't shed a drop of their own blood!

Boris. I beg your pardon, but they owe that to their position.

Dragolyub [with irony]. You are in the Diplomatic Service, I presume?

Boris [looks at him contemptuously]. Unfortunately not . . . So much the worse for the Diplomatic Service.

Sofia. Excellent, Bobby, excellent!

Dragolyub. Then I presume you are in the army . . . in mufti for the moment?

Boris [uncomfortable]. No—I am not in the army.

Dragolyub. But you have been through the war?

Sofia. Unfortunately not; my poor boy was sorely out of health the whole time.

Dragolyub. Oh,—I quite understand.

Sofia. My Bobby is a poet!

Boris [proudly]. I am a Bulgarian.

Petkoff. *Tu felix, Bulgaria!*

Boris. In my leisure hours I am a poet, but by profession I am a Bulgarian!

Kozluhoff [who has already appeared outside the open window]. By profession you're a gas-bag!

[all turn towards the window, startled]

Boris [affronted]. Excuse me—but you can't.

Kozluhoff [drily]. Sorry, but I can.

Lyuben. Come in, Petya!

Kozluhoff [piously]. Heaven forbid! You'll have to air the room first!

Sofia [insulted]. An! *c'est impertinent!* [rises, deeply offended] To insult my Bobby like this! [to Milada] You will understand, my dear, that I, as a lady, cannot expose myself to these vulgar affronts!

Milada. Don't be offended with him . . . Petya is a good lad !

Boris. Mamma, we must report that to the Cabinet !
[*follows Sofia to the main exit*] *Adieu ! Adieu !*

Sofia. *Adieu, my dear ! Adieu, gentlemen !* [*with furious glance at the window*] *C'est impertinent !* [*Exit quickly with Boris.*]

Kozluhoff [*leaps in through the window. Age 22, fair, prepossessing. Long dark trousers, dark blue Russian shirt with embroidered collar and shirt-front ; wide black patent-leather belt. He is wearing a Russian Student's cap which he does not remove*]. Here we are ! Morning, everybody !

All. Morning, Petya !

Kozluhoff. I wish you joy of that specimen !

Lyuben. We aren't all of us like that.

Kozluhoff. Well, that would be the limit ! As it is, the whole country is no better than Bedlam.

Petkoff, Naumoff. Oh, ho !

Milada. Gently, Petya.

Kozluhoff [*plants himself defiantly before Petkoff and Naumoff*]. Well, what's wrong—my lords and invalids ? As I see, you were about to protest . . . Well, you just go along to the Cabinet meeting and protest there, and see to it that these fools don't land you in a mess that will leave you with sore heads for many a long day. [*to Dragolyub*] How d'you like the new two-step ? To-day you're a guest and to-morrow perhaps prisoner of war—

Lyuben, Katya. Petya !

Kozluhoff. Come on, all of you, come on—cut each other's throats. There are too many of you anyhow—not enough cripples—not enough graves !

Lyuben [*wrathfully*]. A bless'd Bedlam !

Kozluhoff. If it weren't Bedlam, it wouldn't become a

shambles either! [*wrathfully*] Oh, how I begrudge every day I spent at the front with you!

Petkoff. Why didn't you go with the Turks then?

Kozluboff [*rudely*]. Wish I had! You don't deserve your liberty, if you can fool it away like this.

Naumoff. Tell that to the Serbs!

Kozluboff. You and the Serbs! I say it to both. And more particularly to you. You who fancy yourselves as the brains of the nation and the cream of it, you ought to know better than to drag the common people into risks and dangers just to satisfy your own damned ambitions. You are forcing a war which will not be a war of liberation, but a war of wild beasts. You are on the verge of committing a crime, not from necessity, no—from sheer love o'wickedness!

Petkoff. We want to be great, and strong, and independent.

Kozluboff. Rats! You are only hankering after power; the supremacy of a ring of insufferably conceited political wire-pullers and generals . . . but, mark my words! You are not the nation. For the nation does not want war! Go out into the villages of your country and ask the sorrowing mothers, inconsolable widows and starving orphans, whether they still prefer blood to bread, and hate to love . . . go and ask your army which is still under arms, ask the common soldier, the heart of the people, whether *he* wants war, and you will hear just *one* answer—We want peace and love!

[*Georgi Drutchkoff heard singing and chuckling in the ante-room.*]

Hear him! The joy of losing his two sons has turned his head, and now he'll send the third along to the shambles!

Georgi [*opens the door and puts in his head. Age 70, with white tousled hair and beard; stooping and trembling*

Peasant's clothing worn threadbare. In his hand he carries a round, roughly-made wicker cage with two birds]. Would you give me a little millet . . . please, only just a very little millet for my dear chickies?

Kozluboff. Come in, daddy!

Georgi. Heaven's blessing on all! [*crosses himself endlessly before the ikon on the wall.*]

Kozluboff. That'll do, daddy—crossing yourself won't do any good. And if you go on till Doomsday . . . they won't come back to you.

Georgi [*turns round and looks foolishly at Kozluboff*]. Who?

Kozluboff. Your heroes, Kristo and Stoyantcho.

Georgi [*chuckling*]. How stupid you are! [*holds up his cage*] Look at them!

Milada. Don't talk such blasphemous foolishness, Georgi!

Georgi [*looks foolishly at Milada*]. But they *are* there . . . believe me, lady . . . there they are . . . Surely I must know? I know my Kristo and my Stoyantcho . . . If only Ilya were here, he would say so too.

Kozluboff. And where is Ilya?

Georgi. At the front, yes, at the front: he too is a hero, [*in a low voice*] and he too will be killed.

Milada. Why should he be killed? He will surely come home all right.

Georgi. That would be fine! For the field is not ploughed yet, and how shall I get millet for Kristo and Stoyantcho? But when Ilya comes home, he will plough and reap, and all will be well . . . But if they kill him—

Katya [*comforting him*]. They won't kill him.

Georgi. But if they kill him I shall find him too . . . I know his voice . . . just as I know Kristo's and Stoyantcho's, and I will sit in the ditch by the road, under the ash-tree, and I will strew millet on the palm

of my hand and wait and wait as I waited for Kristo and Stoyantcho [*laughs mischievously*] Oh, but you should have seen them coming! At first nothing would induce them to come on my hand—they pretended not to know their own daddy but I called them, Kristo, my boy, Stoyantcho, my boy! look at the beautiful millet from our very own field Come, my dear boys, come, my heroes! But they would not come, they only kept on chirping, czrr, daddy, czrr, daddy! Oho, I said, you have grown very grand, you have stuffed yourselves with the Czar's bread, and now you want none of your poor old dad and his millet! Wait, you ungrateful brats, I'll go home, and never speak to you again! And then I really went away . . . [*pause*] Only first I scattered a little millet on the ground, so that my babies should not go hungry and the next day it was just the same, and the next and every day the same But one day—Hop! Kristo perched on my hand and twittered and pecked at the millet, and no sooner was he there than Stoyantcho came along too. Ah, there you are, my chickens, said I, and I took hold of them, gently, very gently, first one and then the other, and hid them under my shirt, on my breast. And they pecked away on my bare breast quite gently all around my heart—all around my heart, and they twittered and chirped czrr, daddy, czrr, daddy, czrr, daddy! And they were so sweet! [*laughs cheerily*] Now I've got them safe! [*holds up the cage; with grotesque affection*]: tcho, tcho, tcho, czrr, czrr, kss, kss! chickabiddies, say good morning! [*teases the birds with his fingers.*]

Dragolyub [*in a low voice*]. Horrible!

Stoyanoff [*in a low voice*]. Katya!

Katya [*crosses over to Stoyanoff*]. What can I do for you, Ivantcho?

Stoyanoff [as before]. Please, wipe my eyes. [*Katya takes out her handkerchief and dries Stoyanoff's tears. Then she sinks down on the floor beside him, hides her face against his breast, and breaks into bitter sobbing.*]

Georgi [greatly perturbed]. Why does she cry?

[*At this moment the telephone bell on the writing table rings loud and shrill.*]

Lyuben [goes quickly to the telephone and takes up the receiver]. Yes . . . I'm Lyuben . . . yes father. [*suddenly he grows pale; with trembling voice*] What, already? [*with scarcely audible voice*] Yes, father, yes, and you? Yes . . . I'm coming! [*drops the receiver and sinks down on the arm-chair beside the writing-table and covers his face with his hands.*]

Milada [after a short oppressive pause goes unsteadily up to Lyuben, takes him by the shoulder, speaks with a trembling voice full of apprehension]. Lyuben!

Lyuben [starts up, passes his hand over his brow: absently]. Yes—nothing. [*forces a laugh*] Nothing, granny! father wants me! I must go to him at once—[*tries to go.*]

Milada [holds him back]. And?

Lyuben. I'm coming back . . . soon . . . with father . . . [*with sudden energy*] Let me go, Grandmother! [*almost screaming*] I must! [*tears himself away, exit hurriedly. Oppressive silence.*]

Kozluboff [*is the first to regain his self-possession*]. Devil take it! Here's a pretty kettle-of-fish! [*paces to and fro in his excitement. Dragolyub has gone to one of the tables, taken a chair there and is lost in gloomy meditation.*]

Georgi [*timidly picking up his cage*]. Come away, chickies, these be sorrowful folk.

Kozluboff [*bawls at him*]. Stupid folk, daddy, wickedly stupid folk!

Georgi [*in great alarm*]. I never said anything to you

Kozluhoff [*bawling*]. They will kill your Ilya, don't you hear? kill him—kill your Ilya—

Georgi [*looks round in every direction, then at Kozluhoff, first timidly*]. It's a lie, brother, it's a lie. [*with a howl of grief and rage*] It's a lie!

Milada [*who has painfully regained her self-possession*]. Why do you torment him, my son? [*to Georgi*] Come, daddy, I will give you some millet . . .

[*She takes Georgi by the arm and leads him away. Kozluhoff continues pacing the floor.*]

[*Silence.*]

Petkoff [*half aloud*]. After all . . .

Naumoff [*half aloud*]. Yes, after all.

Kozluhoff [*roars at them*]. Get out of this! What are we doing here?

Petkoff [*shrugs his shoulders; in a low voice*]. Well . . . let's go!

Naumoff [*in a low voice*]. By all means!

[*Exeunt toward main entrance. Kozluhoff stops midway, turns round, and goes to Dragolyub, takes his head in both hands, and kisses him abruptly on the forehead. Then he goes out quickly, followed by Petkoff and Naumoff. Dragolyub bows his head again as if he had not noticed Kozluhoff.*]

Stoyanoff. Bayalovitch, I say, Bayalovitch! [*Dragolyub raises his head a little, and glances over to Stoyanoff.*] Will you raise Katya, please? . . . I cannot. [*Dragolyub rises quickly and crosses over to Katya, who immediately rises to her feet.*]

Katya. Thanks, it's not necessary . . . [*Dragolyub stands before her and looks at her.*]

Stoyanoff [*in a low voice*]. Oh the night before I was wounded, your soldiers were singing in camp. It was at some distance, and yet each word was plain . . . And I understood every word; it was a sad song:

“Dearest Mother mine, dearest Mother mine,
 Who will love you, dearest Mother,
 When your son is slain in battle,
 Dearest Mother mine.”

Dragolyub [*deeply touched*]. Yes . . . that is our song !
Stoyanoff [*with passion*]. And I understood it as though
 it had been our own ! [*rises trembling*] And now we shall
 stifle it in blood ! [*goes towards the door, turns*] *Katya*,—
 lay your hand on my head [*in a low sobbing*] Lord
 pity us all ! [*Katya clasps his head in silence and presses
 his forehead against her face ; they remain thus for a moment.*]
 Thanks ! I must go home to my mother. Good-bye !

Katya. Good-bye, *Ivantcho* !

Dragolyub. Good-bye, my boy !

Stoyanoff. Good-bye, *Bayalovitch*. Perhaps I have
 never been so sorry before that I cannot shake hands
 with you. Good-bye !

[*Katya opens the door for him. Exit Stoyanoff.*]

Dragolyub [*after Stoyanoff has gone, looks long at
 Katya who remains standing at the door*]. Now we are
 alone for the first time, alone face to face with this new
 tragedy—our tragedy ! [*painfully*] *Katya*, what shall
 we do ?

Katya [*calmly*] We must be strong to overcome !

Dragolyub. Shall we find strength for it ?

Katya [*gives him her hand*]. I—yes ?

Dragolyub [*taking her hand gratefully*]. *Katya* !

Katya [*raising one hand and demanding silence*]. From
 henceforth we must be silent do you understand,
Drago, silent. For words are treacherous, and might
 create an abyss between us where silence is sowing pity.
 But I pray you, remember one thing ; whatever may
 happen, believe me that we are fond of you.

Dragolyub. *Katya*, what should I have done without
 you ?

Katya. You would have hated me, my people, and my race, and would have never discovered that it is the sin of Cain which we are on the point of repeating The day will come when we shall all discover this. Some day, when it will be too late

Dragolyub. I too believe in this discovery, for it must come at the moment when we find out the meaning of true love !

Katya. The love of Man for his fellow-men !

Dragolyub [*warmly*]. The meaning of *our* love !

Katya [*with a penetrating look*]. Yes—of our love !

Dragolyub. A love which guards the glad fore-knowledge that happiness is bound up with the future.

Katya. The future of peace !

Dragolyub. Yes, peace in the soul of the nation, peace in our hearts, in your heart—*Katya*—and in mine !

Katya [*closes her eyes for a moment ; then quickly opens the door and calls*]. Granny ! Granny dear !

Milada [*from within*]. Yes, my child ! [*appears at the door*] What do you want ?

Katya. Stay, Granny—stay here with us—

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT I.

THE LIBERATORS.

ACT II.

The same as in Act I.

Evening. The large lamp is lit, also the standard lamp beside the writing-table.

By the window in the great arm-chair sits Milada with a grief-stricken, care-worn expression on her face.

In the arm-chair beside the writing-table sits Dragolyub, leaning his head on his hand ; he is serious, depressed. Dark plain clothes.

On a low stool in one corner sits Stoyanoff ; he leans his head against the wall and looks fixedly in front of him. Not far from him on the sofa, Petkoff and Gantcheff. Gantcheff is half lying down ; age 28, dark complexion ; short, black moustache and short, thin beard. Undress uniform of a Bulgarian officer of the line. His manner in speaking is nervous and irritable. He carries one arm in a sling. Katya sits at the writing-table with an open Bible before her and reads aloud Lamentations, Chap. I. 8, &c.

Katya. “ Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore she is become as an unclean thing. All that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness : yea, she sigheth and turned backward.

“ Therefore she is come down wonderfully ; she hath no comforter. Behold, oh Lord mine affliction ; for the enemy hath magnified himself.

“ The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things.

“ For she hath seen that the heathen are entered into her sanctuary.

“Concerning whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.

“All her people sigh, and seek bread. They have given their pleasant things for meat to refresh the soul.

“See, Lord, and behold, for I am become vile !”

[*From the street voices of news-vendors.—“Wetherna Poshta !” Great victory of our army !—“Den !” The Greeks defeated at Gevgeli ! Roumanian advance upon Varna.—“Bulgaria” : “five stotinki,” Special edition ! The Serbs and Greeks defeated. Great victory of the Bulgarian Army !*]

Milada [*slightly raising her voice to Katya*]. Hark ! . . . what are they crying there ? [*all listen. The cries are repeated and then die away in the distance.*]

Petkoff [*in an uncertain voice*]. Bulgarian victories.

Stoyanoff. Lies, nothing but lies !

Katya [*sighs, then proceeds*]. “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ?

“Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me.

“Wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger !

“From on high he hath sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them.

“He hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back.

“He hath made me desolate and faint all the day.

“The yoke of my transgression is bound by his hand.

“They are knit together, they are come upon my neck, he hath made my strength to fail.

“The Lord hath delivered me into their hands against whom I am not able to stand.”

Milada [*with a deep sigh*]. Lord have mercy !

Katya [*continues*]. “The Lord hath set at nought all my mighty men in the midst of me ;

“He hath called a solemn assembly against me to crush my young men ;

“The Lord hath trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughters of Judah.

“For these things I weep. Mine eyes, mine eye runneth down with water.

“Because the Comforter that should refresh my soul is far from me.

“My children are desolate, because the enemy hath prevailed.” [*Wipes the tears from her eyes with her bare hand ; half aloud, beseechingly*] Oh, Lyuben, Lyuben ! Where is he now ?

Petkoff [*as tactfully as possible*]. He’ll come back all right, *Katyenska*, he’ll come back—

Stoyanoff [*in a low voice*]. For the Comforter is far from us, that should refresh our souls.

Dragolyub [*without altering his position, half aloud*]. Last night I dreamt again of blood, terribly hot and terribly red. Never have I seen such blood—not even in the carnage at *Kumanovo*.

Gantcheff [*maliciously*]. You needn’t dream of blood . . . you can sing, “*Te Deum*,” “*Jubilate*.”

Dragolyub [*as before*]. Hot and red, like no blood that ever was seen ! It is the blood of our brothers.—

Milada. Lord ! how will this end ?

Petkoff. Don’t be alarmed, mother ; surely you heard that we have gained some victories. We had bad luck in the beginning, that’s all.

Gantcheff. The Roumanians played us a dirty trick.

Stoyanoff. We did that ourselves, my boy, we did that ourselves.

Milada. And no news from my son . . . Just one single letter from Lyuben at the first, and then nothing more—not a word !

Katya. This uncertainty . . . it is so terrible !

Petkoff. I went down to the War Office after lunch. They have published the casualty lists at last—at least so far as they have been able to ascertain them.

Milada [*eagerly*]. Well?

Petkoff. Many—very many, too many!

Milada [*in great anxiety*]. Any of ours?

Petkoff. None on the list.

Milada [*relieved*]. Thank God!

Gantcheff. Zolotovitch is killed.

Katya [*staggered*]. Killed?

Gantcheff. And Yaneff, and Tapshileshtoff, and Bortcho Shumensky

Milada [*beating her breast*]. Oh, God in Heaven!

Petkoff. They say the Turks are before Adrianople.

Milada [*starts to her feet, furious*]. That's a lie!

Petkoff [*calmly*]. They say

Katya [*almost speechless*]. But—that—that is—impossible.

Dragolyub [*passing his hand over his brow*]. Horrible!

Stoyanoff. My hands! I left them there! Now they will spit upon them.

Petkoff. Perhaps it's not true either. [*suddenly bangs the floor furiously with his crutch.*] Lord! Why am I a cripple? A damned cripple!

Milada [*wringing her hands*]. Bulgaria is lost—Merciful Heaven, Bulgaria is lost!

Dragolyub [*deeply moved*]. Why should it be lost? Everyone of us has been both tempted and purified—Nations as well as individuals. Perhaps from these very hours of bitterness, Bulgaria will rise to a happier future!

Gantcheff. It's all very well for you to talk!

Dragolyub. No, my friend, it is hardest of all for me. If you could look into my soul, you would see how my heart bleeds and suffers because of all that is going on now. Believe me, there is not one spark of hatred in

me for you, nor is there any in the hearts of my countrymen. I am *sure* of that.

Petkoff. Then why did you attack us?

Dragolyub. You have once plainly admitted that Bulgaria was the aggressor; so why discuss that further? The War is going on, and fate has decided that you should be unfortunate. The same might have happened to us. It is more important to decide whether all this war was inevitable.

Gantcheff. If the Serbs had given way, there wouldn't have been any war.

Dragolyub. I should put it that they could not give way, that it would have been wrong for them to give way!

Petkoff. And what of that?

Dragolyub. The Bulgars did not choose to give way.

Petkoff. To do so would have been suicidal.

Stoyanoff. And so, to avoid suicide, we have voted for wholesale slaughter instead.

Katya. And now we are punished for it.

Gantcheff [*raising himself; passionately*]. There cannot be any punishment for Bulgaria! We shall find a way out, and then woe to our enemies!

Dragolyub [*calmly*]. Sir, we are invalids!

Gantcheff. Well?

Dragolyub. We have done our best to set our brothers free; now we must do our best to reconcile them.

Petkoff [*spitefully*]. And how do you figure that out?

Gantcheff. Perhaps by the cession of the territories in dispute?

Petkoff. Or by a humiliation of Bulgaria?

Dragolyub. A humiliation of Bulgaria would grieve me as deeply as yourselves. Reconciliation is only possible when we realize that we are indeed brothers of one race.

Gantcheff [*with a contemptuous movement of his hand*]. You are brothers of the Greeks and Turks!

Stoyanoff. And we are brothers of the fiend incarnate, who has turned us into monsters!

Petkoff [*viciously to Stoyanoff*]. You'd have liked to volunteer for them, wouldn't you?

Stoyanoff [*with a bitter smile*]. No! But if I still had my arms, my good arms, I would stand between those two armies—I would stretch out my arms and call to each of them! Thou shalt not kill! For woe unto him that raises his hand against his brother, for it shall wither, and the curse of Cain shall be his reward!

Petkoff. You don't love our country.

Stoyanoff [*rises, quivering with passion*]. More than you! A hundred times more than you. And I am stronger than you because I can love the whole world, I can love—mankind. What men most prize—that I gave for my down-trodden brothers: my two hands—my arms! But my love, that was not for them alone—I gave that to all the world,—to the Macedonian slave, to the brigand of Rhodope, to the Turkish soldier who fired the shell that maimed me. In the eyes of God they are all my fellow-men and I have the strength to love them all And perhaps the Turkish soldier also is now an armless cripple And if by chance we should meet, perhaps our heads would incline towards one another and our lips would meet in a kiss of pure human love!

Gantcheff [*mocking*]. Congrats! I wish you joy of it!

Stoyanoff. But I have nothing but hate—hate that is a hundred times stronger than my love—for those whom insensate greed has bereft of reason, and who are now goading their own children like cattle to the shambles, out of sheer wickedness, as a sacrifice to their ungodly arrogance.

Petkoff. You dare to speak of a Bulgarian Empire as “ungodly arrogance”!

Stoyanoff. Who will carry on your Bulgarian Empire when our arms are lopped off, our feet crippled, and the flower of our youth destroyed? We don't want a Bulgarian Empire, but we *do* want a happy Bulgaria!

Dragolyub. We want a happy Balkan equally for us all!

Milada [*in a ringing voice*]. We want our children, to rest our weary heads upon their hearts!

Katya [*crosses over to her, puts her arms round her*]. Granny, dear! dear sweet granny!

Stoyanoff [*in his usual low voice, listless, mournful*]. My mother's head is weary and grey . . . she leans it upon my heart, but I cannot embrace her, [*almost weeping*] I cannot raise her face to my lips! . . .

[*The C. door opens. Enter Vyera, in Nurse's uniform, a red cross on her left arm. As soon as she has entered she sinks down upon the chair nearest the door. She is weary and spent.*]

Vyera [*in a low voice*]. Good evening!

Milada [*crosses to Vyera and caresses her*]. You must be *very* tired, my dear?

[*Vyera nods assent, then breaks into silent, convulsive weeping.—Silence.*]

Don't cry, Vyera, my darling, don't cry!

Katya [*likewise crossing to Vyera*]. Vyera!

Vyera [*sobbing*]. I thought I would come . . . to you . . . to ease my heart a little . . .

Milada. Well, dearie . . . then why do you cry?

Vyera [*disconsolately*]. Where else can I weep?

Katya. Cry, my dear—cry, Vyera: perhaps we have not yet lost all since we still have tears—!

Milada [*takes Vyera's hand and leads her to the large arm-chair by the window*]. Sit down, my dear . . . rest a little; you look absolutely worn out.

Vyera. I haven't had a moment's rest since six o'clock this morning.

Milada. How do you do it—merciful God . . . how do you do it?

Vyera. If you only knew how many there are, and each of them has to wait . . . each one is in need of help . . . The agony in every face! Those listless eyes full of misery—those sighs of utter hopelessness!

Milada. I believe you, my child. I can see it all.

Vyera. Of course there were many in the first war too . . . but in spite of pain and agony every eye glowed with triumph! And now in every eye just this one ghastly question—Is this the end?

Milada [*in a toneless hopeless voice*]. Is this the end?

Petkoff. No, it is not the end! It cannot be the end!

Stoyanoff. Let us seek the path of love—love that walks in all the ways of the Lord, love that glows in the sunshine, that perfumes the flowers and trembles in every dew-drop—love that dwells in the hearts of men—and we shall not perish!

Gantcheff [*involuntarily moved*]. And where shall we find it?

Stoyanoff [*to Dragolyub*]. Drago! Friend! Come to me, I beg of you! [*Dragolyub crosses over to him*] Look me in the face! You are a Serb . . . and your whole heart goes out to your Serbian brothers.

Dragolyub [*candidly*]. Certainly!

Stoyanoff. And you are proud of their victories . . . of course you are! . . . and I am a Bulgarian . . . you understand . . . and so we are enemies—we are bent on butchering each other . . . without mercy . . . [*suddenly with deep emotion—with his whole soul*] Do you love me, brother? Do you love me?

Dragolyub [*likewise with emotion*]. Ivantcho!

Stoyanoff. Kiss me brother, for the love of God, kiss me! [*Dragolyub draws Stoyanoff's head to his lips and imprints a long kiss on his forehead.*] Thanks! . . . we have found the way!

Dragolyub [*affectionately*]. A way which makes your defeat as grievous to me as our victories are to you!

Petkoff [*disgusted*]. Sentimental play-acting!

Vyera [*solemnly*]. A truth, Petkoff, which we are too late in finding out.

Katya. A truth written in blood!

Petkoff [*shrugs his shoulders*]. May be! [*takes his crutches*] Sorry, but I am not educated up to this sort of truth. I'm off to the War Office. Perhaps there's some later news. [*going*] Good-evening!

Milada. If you should be passing again don't forget to let us know!

Petkoff. All right, mother!

Gantcheff. Wait! I'm coming too, and then we can come back together: [*to Milada*] you'll give us tea?

Milada. Of course, children, you're always welcome!

Gantcheff. So long!

Katya. Good-bye for the present, Gantcheff.

Milada. Good-bye for the present!

[*Exeunt Petkoff and Gantcheff.*]

Katya [*after the two men have left, to Vyera*]. Is Nikola still at the hospital?

Vyera. He couldn't get off. To-night he will be free; he is only waiting for Dr. Kyriloff to relieve him. He is coming to fetch me.

Milada. Coming here? I shall be so glad to see him; poor lad, I am sure he is sadly over-worked!

Vyera. Beyond words—you know what he is; he forgets all, and above all things—himself.

Milada. But for all this, by now you would have been man and wife.

Vyera. Yes [*seriously*] But we don't think of that now

Dragolyub [*crosses over to Vyera and offers his hand*]. Do you hate me?

Vyera [*astonished*]. Why?

Dragolyub. Because it is through my people that your happiness has been put off for a while?

Vyera [*takes his hand*]. But that is not your fault!

Dragolyub. I am one of them.

Milada. That is true: you are one of them, but you disapprove of their action.

Dragolyub [*looks at Milada; in a low voice*]. Would you hate me if I said that in my opinion they were justified?

Milada [*quivering*]. In murdering my Lyuben?

Dragolyub [*firmly*]. No but if I were proud of their victories, if I were to share their splendid feeling of superiority would you hate me for that?

Milada [*harshly*]. Yes!

Katya [*horrified*]. Grandmother!

Milada [*repeats more emphatically*]. Yes! I should hate you and with these my two hands I could kill you!

Dragolyub. Only because—

Milada [*interrupts in pitiless tones*]. My son and my grandson are in the field all my kinsmen are in the field, the avengers of my father; do you hear, sir? the avengers of my father! Listen: two-and-fifty years ago, the thrice-cursed Turks tortured my father to death they impaled him! In the night I stole the blood-soaked stake, and there in that room I have kept it to this very day as a sacred relic, as a talisman of retribution, a heritage of blood and vengeance. My father's blood is dry upon it, and black as night, but in my veins that blood is strong and alive and it languished until the day when we cleansed our land from that devil's spawn, when the ground that guards the bones of my father became free and hallowed! and now our liberators are shedding their blood in conflict with a new enemy, an enemy who

has lain in wait to butcher my son—to butcher my Lyuben! and whoever is with this enemy, he is against me, and he is rolling a stone upon a mother's heart.

[*Dragolyub quivers, is on the point of answering but catches Katya's glance and controls himself.*]

Stoyanoff [*after a heavy oppressive silence*]. I must go!

Katya [*mechanically*]. So soon?

Stoyanoff [*goes toward main exit*]. I must go, [*bitterly*]

I must go home to my mother no-one knows what she suffers; for she mourns her living son and yet she craves no vengeance she feels no hate she only weeps silently and in secret [*quivering from head to foot*] Lord! Where is Thy Scourge! [*breaks down again; and in a low voice, almost humbly*] Katya, will you open the door for me!

Katya [*opens the door*]. Give my love to your mother, Ivantcho!

Stoyanoff. Thanks. [*in a low voice*] Good-bye. [*Exit, accompanied by Katya, who returns immediately.*]

[*Dragolyub has sat down on the sofa, lost in gloomy brooding. Vyera sits in the large arm-chair, also lost in thought. Long, oppressive silence.*]

Milada [*in a dry dead voice*]. Zolotovitch is killed!

Vyera [*half aloud*]. I know.

Milada [*as before*]. And the Turks are before Adrianople

Vyera [*in a low voice, with difficulty*]. So they say . . .

[*Renewed silence.*]

Milada [*takes the samovar and carries it away*]. I will go and prepare the tea—

Katya [*goes to her*]. Let me do it, Granny.

Milada. No let me I can do it alone [*exit with the samovar.*]

Vyera [*after Milada has left*]. When I passed the

War Office I saw the old man Drutchkoff
Georgi Drutchkoff. Poor wretch he was dancing—
throwing his cap in the air and singing

Katya. He has been sorely tried It must be
grievous, yet surely he must be proud as well !

Vyera. I should think it was grievous to lose three
sons—

Katya. How three ?

Vyera. The youngest has been killed too.

Katya, Dragolyub. Killed ?

Vyera. So they told him, and it is down on the list
as well.

Katya [*deeply moved*]. Poor Georgi !

Dragolyub [*clenching his fist, in a rage*]. Lord, what
dost thou ! Lord, what dost thou !

Vyera [*apathetically*]. The daily papers have been
confiscated and will not appear from to-day—except the
official papers

Katya. Things must indeed be very bad

Vyera [*resigned*]. Worse than bad. [*after a short
silence, mournfully.*] We are being visited by a terrible
calamity unutterably humiliated.

Dragolyub [*with feeling*]. Dear friend !

Vyera [*looks at him sadly*]. Is not your pity but one
more humiliation ?

Dragolyub. It is not pity—only grief—as great as
your own.

Vyera. But you are the victor !

Dragolyub. A victor who cannot rejoice because he
has shed his brother's blood.

Vyera. Yet they are full of rejoicing—with you,
over there.

Dragolyub. I would scarcely say that. On the con-
trary, I am convinced that as a nation the Serbs bitterly
regret having been forced into this murderous war.

[*warmly*] My dear friend, as a nation we are kindly and warm-hearted, you may believe me! I do not deny that we have our faults, we have made mistakes, and been guilty of ill-considered actions. But our hearts are in the right place, and we are honest in our dealings. We may have too much of the poet and the dreamer in us, and we are rather too quick in our enthusiasm for what we love and for what belongs to us. And if we are called upon to defend that, we are carried away by our burning love for our country, and our passionate desire to secure a better future for our down-trodden and oppressed people. I don't wish to be unjust, but Serbia has never been in the good books of Europe like your country. For every step forward we have had to pay with endless self-denial, and often, far too often, with painful humiliations; and now, when at last we had reached the goal we had dreamed of for centuries, now, when we had set our enslaved brothers free and regained Kossovo—Kossovo of a thousand songs and a thousand battles then our own flesh and blood, the brother of our race, stood up against us and said "Hands off!" and this from our brother hurt us a hundred times more deeply than when strangers had so often bidden us "Hands off!" And so our swords were crossed, and the work of Cain was begun But don't think any Serb would rejoice over this. No, my friend. Perhaps this war is even more tragic for the Serbs than for the Bulgars because it has robbed us of our faith in our brothers, and until quite recently this faith seemed our best guarantee of a happier future for the Slav Balkan.

Katya [*almost afraid*]. And now all these bright prospects are buried?

Dragolyub [*shrugs his shoulders; half aloud*]. I don't say that—that depends on the Bulgars.

[Enter Dr. Markoff, age 46, well built ; full strong beard. Eye-glasses, dark suit of clothes. Weary, pain-stricken expression. He appeared at the door C. during Dragolyub's last words. He speaks in a worn-out indistinct voice.]

Dr. Markoff. What depends on the Bulgars ?

[Vyera and Katya rise quickly and turn towards Dr. Markoff.]

Dragolyub [likewise turning towards the Doctor]. The happiness of Bulgaria.

Dr. Markoff [with a bitter smile]. Our good fortune only knocked at the door for a moment, and then fled away and played a cruel game with us.

[Comes down stage, and sinks heavily, wearily, down on the divan.]

Katya. It has not fled, Nikola . . . we have driven it away !

Dr. Markoff [scrutinises Katya long and closely through his glasses]. Perhaps so . . . [to Vyera] I have come to fetch you.

Vyera. Yes, let us go, we are both tired.

Dr. Markoff [continues in a monotonous voice]. I shall sleep to-night . . . if I am not sent for . . . That will be the first time for . . . six days. [to Dragolyub] How are you, Bayalovitch ? Do you still feel pain ?

Dragolyub. It is a mental pain, Doctor, which makes me forget my physical trouble !

Dr. Markoff [as before]. Yes . . .

Dragolyub. When the soul is sick, Doctor . . .

Dr. Markoff. And Lyuben ? What news of him ?

Katya. None.

Dr. Markoff [as before]. Perhaps he is killed !

Katya, Vyera [horrified, together]. Nikola !

Dr. Markoff. Perhaps he is killed. What does it matter ? What is left for us to look forward to . . .

for us all? [to Dragolyub]. The soul my dear fellow the soul the sick soul is worse than death I spend my days and nights staring into the face of this sickness of the soul I see it in every face in every eye and when death comes it changes to a happy smile of peace To die, to die That is all our defeated heroes pray for [*in a very low voice, disjointed and indistinct towards the end*] And we slave away—carve—and saw and stitch, and do our best to patch up the lives of men who want nothing, who desire nothing but death! What is it to us that they long for death? It is our business to preserve countless pictures of misery—relics of a rotten, frantic past and yet it is so good to vanish—to pass into nothing—to forget—to sleep—and without dreams! [*short silence, then almost unintelligibly*] Raise his head a little—there nothing to be afraid of, little brother!—hurts? yes?—so sorry it does hurt,—all right it's all right now Nurse bandage, please [*he ceases—silence.*]

Vyera [*softly*]. Nikola! [*goes to him*] Asleep!

Katya. Sh-h! Leave him!

Vyera. No, I had better rouse him now; it will be so much harder for him later on.

Katya. Wait! Let me send Stoyka for a cab!

Vyera. Please do. [*exit Katya*] No wonder! He is quite worn out.

Dragolyub. He has lost hope! yet he is the living proof that all hope is not lost!

Katya [*returns*]. The cab will be here directly.

Vyera. Thanks. [*carefully rousing Dr. Markoff*] Nikola! Nikola!

Dr. Markoff [*starts, wakes up*]. Have they sent for me?

Vyera. No Nikola you have only been asleep. We're going home now.

Dr. Markoff [*passes his hand over his brow, gives a short laugh*]. How stupid of me!

Katya [*kindly*]. It's only natural, Nikola.

Dr. Markoff [*smiling*]. But it's so rude. [*looks towards Dragolyub*]

Dragolyub [*reproachfully*]. Doctor! [*heartily*] If it depended upon me, I would rest your head on my knees, and guard your sleep

Dr. Markoff [*offering his hand to Dragolyub*]. How good we are, all of us—when we understand one another!

Dragolyub [*warmly*]. When we understand one another, love is stronger than greed.

Dr. Markoff [*nods assent to Vyera*]. Come, Vyera, we must be off. [*shakes hands with Katya.*] Good-bye, Katya.

Katya [*shakes hands with Dr. Markoff and embraces Vyera*]. Good-bye, dear, do come again soon!

Dr. Markoff. So long, Bayalovitch!

Dragolyub. So long, Doctor!

[*Exeunt Vyera and Dr. Markoff.*]

Katya [*after a short silence*]. What a man! What a martyr for others!

Dragolyub. And how much more of a hero than those on the battle-field. They destroy—but he spends his life in saving his fellows—[*after a short silence*] Would that all were like him!

Katya. Over here—and over there, with you—all like yourself!

Dragolyub. Good Heavens I I have ceased to count my work is finished!

Katya. No, Drago your work is only just beginning. [*Dragolyub looks at her without understanding.*] Your work as messenger of peace and brotherly love to our two nations for we are are not bad either—at least not all of us. We also love what is ours, we also

have thrown away thousands of fair young lives that our captive kindred and the graves of our fathers might be free! We have been blinded for a moment; only for a short moment we were drunk with the fever of martial glory, and we desired imperial power, you understand, Drago, imperial power. And greatness and power are corrosive poisons, which eat into the veins till they have destroyed the blood, and the victim runs mad . . . But we have had a rude awakening—with our best blood we have paid for our arrogance—and we are defeated! And now our reason is returning, and we recognise the great aims we had lost sight of in our fool's paradise . . . and we crave again for the love we ourselves have trampled under-foot. Tell me—have we lost all claim to your belief in us . . . have we no right to rise again?

Dragolyub [*crosses to her*]. Have I ever said that?

Katya. No—not . . . you! and that is why your life has been preserved for a new ideal for the mission of reconciliation.

Dragolyub [*warmly*]. Rely on me, Katya! When peace is declared, and I return to my own country—then I shall devote my whole life to healing wounds that were not struck by the sword . . .

Katya. Thanks—and in doing so you will honour the debt of friendship that you owe to Lyuben.

Dragolyub [*takes her hand, quivering*]. And the debt that I owe you.

Katya [*confused*]. Yes . . . and the debt of friendship that you owe me . . .

Dragolyub [*in a low voice*]. Is it only friendship?

Katya [*as before*]. Yes . . . friendship . . .

Dragolyub [*intently*]. Katya!

Katya [*raises her head beseechingly*]. Say no, more, I beg of you, say no more! [*clutching her heart*] Silence is pity!

Dragolyub [*bitterly*]. You are right, I am sorry—a Serb!

Katya [*angrily*]. Drago!—how can you—

Dragolyub [*shrugs his shoulders; in a dull voice*]. Silence is pity

Katya [*scarcely knowing what to say*]. But you—you.

Dragolyub [*bitterly*]. I am a Serb!

Katya [*almost in tears*]. That was horrid of you!

[*Excited voices from within, then the door is noisily opened and enter Petkoff, Naumoff, Gantcheff and Hristoforoff. The last-named is a feeble youth, aged 23; he looks haggard and stoops considerably from having been shot in the spine. He walks with the help of two short sticks.*]

Petkoff [*in great excitement*]. Have you heard? The Serbs have crossed the frontier?

Dragolyub [*vehemently*]. Who told you?

Petkoff [*as before*]. It's all over the place!

Hristoforoff [*hoarsely*]. The Roumanians have taken Roustchouk!

Naumoff. And Varna!

Gantcheff [*yells*]. Even the Greeks have licked us—

Naumoff [*clutching his head*]. Oh, it's just hellish!

Petkoff [*clenches his fist*]. To be shamed like this!

We the heroes of Kirkilisse and Lille-Burgas.

Hristoforoff [*hoarsely*]. That is Daneff's doing!

Naumoff. And Savoff's!

Gantcheff. It's the Serbs! Only the Serbs!

Katya. Pull yourselves together, you men! What has come over you?

Gantcheff [*grinning*]. What has come over us! You dare ask what has come over us? [*rudely to Dragolyub*] Perhaps you can tell what has come over us?

Dragolyub [*calmly*]. Yes, I can tell you.

Gantcheff. Then out with it!

Dragolyub. Fear has come over you—a perfectly unreasonable fear.

Petkoff [*yells*]. Fear? Fear of whom? Fear of you, confound you?

Dragolyub [*calmly*]. Certainly not—I can't hurt you!

Katya. What are you doing, friends? Sit down, and let us talk calmly. Shouting won't help you; we are human beings and must face our trials. And if we are defeated—

Naumoff [*bursts into loud hysterical laughter*]. Who is defeated? We? Who can defeat us?

Katya. But you have just said—

Naumoff. Devil I did! I said nothing—I only said what is! [*furious*] But the day of reckoning will come . . . the terrible day of reckoning! This very night!

Hristoforoff [*hoarsely into Dragolyub's face*]. You will be wiped off the face of the earth!

Petkoff, Naumoff, Gantcheff [*together*]. You shall rot!

Dragolyub. Certainly—when my time comes!

Naumoff [*frantically*]. Serbia, sir, Serbia!

Dragolyub [*raising his voice, but calmly*]. Neither Serbia nor Bulgaria, but, please God, those shall who wish their ruin!

Hristoforoff [*grinning*]. Hear him talk! You dare insult us—in our own house?

Katya [*sharply*]. It is not your house!

Petkoff [*rudely*]. It is a Bulgarian house!

Naumoff [*moves towards exit*]. This very night you shall see! . . . you shall know what we are!

Gantcheff. Ratko Dimitrieff will teach you what Bulgars!

Hristoforoff. Three cheers for Ratko Dimitrieff!

Petkoff, Naumoff, Gantcheff. Three cheers!

[*Hristoforoff hops about with the help of his sticks,*

and intones the Bulgarian National Song—

“Shumi Maritza, okravaliena.

Platche, vdovitza liuto raniena,” etc.

(to be sung with original text if possible.)

Petkoff, Naumoff, Gantcheff, join in and sing out of time like maniacs.]

Kozluhoff [appears at the main entrance. His cap on his head and a cigarette in his hand. From the threshold]. What the devil are you bellowing about? [The invalids at once stop singing, and look at him in open-mouthed amazement. Kozluhoff paces up and down the room. Silence.]

Petkoff [with sudden insolence]. Well!

Kozluhoff [looks them up and down contemptuously, beginning with Petkoff]. You make me sick!

Petkoff. Oho, oho!

Kozluhoff [rudely]. Don't say “Oho!” I'm sick of you all!

Hristoforoff [with a bow]. Mighty Russia!

Kozluhoff [stands]. Down, dog!

Hristoforoff [furiously raising one of his sticks]. Oh—you!

Kozluhoff [seizing the stick with one hand]. Wait a bit, my friend! There's no hurry, I must tell you something first! [to Naumoff, Petkoff, and Gantcheff.]

Down on your knees!

Naumoff. What!

Petkoff. What!

Gantcheff. Are you mad?

Kozluhoff [fiercely]. Kneel down,—lest you break your knees by falling on them suddenly.

[Stands with his legs apart and his hands on his hips.

Speaks calmly, but with scathing emphasis.]

The Turks have taken Adrianople!

[Dead silence; horror in every face.]

Petkoff [*is the first to rouse himself, takes one step towards Kozluhoff—furious, inarticulate*]. You d—d scoundrel!

Kozluhoff [*with special emphasis, as if he enjoyed the crushing effect of his words*]. The Turks have taken Adrianople!

Katya [*with a sob, sinks down*]. Great God—hast Thou no pity!

Dragolyub [*hastens to her side, endeavours to raise her*]. Katya, Katya! Dearest Katya!

Kozluhoff [*to the invalids who stand dumbfounded*]. Well, what do you say to that? [*short silence*] Are you all struck dumb? Sing, my friends—sing, “*Shumi Maritza*.”

Gantcheff [*paralysed, through tears*]. But—that—that is impossible!

Dragolyub [*who has raised Katya and placed her on the divan: to Kozluhoff*]. Petya Petrovitch, why did you come here with this news?

Kozluhoff [*sarcastically*]. To please my dear ones! They preferred it so, and now they’ve got it. [*to the invalids*] Does it hurt? Eh? Why, it’s nothing, children, only a pin-prick—just a little pin-prick—there’s more to follow when their lordships march into Sofia!

Naumoff [*beside himself*]. You are mad! You devil, you are mad!

Kozluhoff. No, my little brother, I am quite sane! In three days you will know all about it and by to-morrow you will hear the big guns singing sweetly around your beloved Sofia!

Katya [*beseechingly*]. Be quiet, Petya, oh, do be quiet!

Kozluhoff [*unperturbed*]. They will roar louder in your ears than your blood-stained Maritza!

Petkoff [*in despair*]. The Serbs have done it!

Kozluhoff [*scathingly*]. Of course, my angel! Who ever said anything else? They’ve all done it, except yourselves, my tame lambkins! And the Serbs above

all! [*to Dragolyub*] Tell them—it's true—it's all your doing isn't it? tell them, do!

Petkoff, Naumoff, Gantcheff, Hristoforoff [*together, furious, frantic*]. Yes! Yes! Yes!

Kozluboff [*with bitter irony*]. Yes! Yes! Yes! And you are so many—[*points to Dragolyub*] to one. [*with a wild laugh*] Why don't you go for him?

Katya [*springing up*]. Petya, are you mad?

Kozluboff [*unperturbed, yells*]. Strike him down! Avenge the blood of your innocents! Let him pay for all of them! Quick, pay him out! Strike, you lambkins! [*He leaps over the writing table and on to the book-case where he sits banging his heels against the door of the book-case.*] Artillery masks the advance! Forward! March! Heroes! Boom, boom, boom Come on, Adrianople has fallen! And the Serbs have delivered the keys to the Turks!

Petkoff [*blind with rage*]. So they have, d—'em—the swine!

Kozluboff. And now they are bringing the Turks along to Sofia! The crescent will shine upon the cathedral! Hosanna, Allah!

Petkoff [*almost suffocated with rage*] Shut up, can't you?

Kozluboff. Come on then! Have your revenge! [*bangs the door of the book-case with his feet. Laughs; as if setting on a dog.*] Fetch him—go for him. Come on!

Naumoff [*trembles, he is like a man under a spell; speaks thickly*]. What are we waiting for? What are we waiting for?

Kozluboff [*shouting*]. What are you waiting for? Come on!

Naumoff [*like a man heavily drunk—in a thick hoarse voice*]. Let's kill him!

Petkoff, Gantcheff, Hristoforoff. Let's kill him! Come on, let's kill him!

Kozlubhoff [*shouting*]. Well done ! Bravo, heroes !

Katya [*springs from the sofa in horror, throws herself before Dragolyub to protect him, cries out*]. Brothers, have you forgotten God ?

Kozlubhoff [*scornfully*]. He is no God, since he deserted Bulgaria !—Fetch him ! Go for him !

Katya [*in frantic terror for Dragolyub*]. Petya ! Petya ! In Heaven's name, what are you doing ?

Kozlubhoff. I am driving brothers into each other's loving arms ! They still have too many feet, too many hands, [*with a cry of despair*] and not one heart !

Dragolyub [*who has all this time stood quite still and perfectly calm but pale and rigid with horror, gently puts Katya aside : with full-toned voice, frankly*]. Tell me, what have I done ?

Gantcheff [*quivering with rage*]. Give us back Adrianople !

Dragolyub. I gave it to you once, I and my brothers.—If you have lost it since, it is your own fault !

Kozlubhoff. What a lie ! How could they ? Why, they're lambs !

Dragolyub. I gave my arm for your Adrianople !

Naumoff [*rudely, furiously*]. We don't want your arm. Give us back what you have stolen !

Katya [*indignantly*]. For shame, Naumoff.

Kozlubhoff. Why negotiate ? We want war ! war ! [*bangs door of book-case as before.*]

Hristoforoff [*hoarsely*]. Yes, war ! War to the knife ! To the last drop of blood !

Petkoff. They're all against us, curse 'em !

Dragolyub. Nobody is against you, only we are against ourselves ! We are beggars, cripples, fragments of men ! Only our hatred is alive and complete ! Well then by all means, let us kill each other ! Let us exterminate each other !

Kozlubhoff. Yes, kill each other, exterminate each other, for you have not one soul between you !

Dragolyub [*with hand upraised*]. Here I am ! Do to me what you would have done to my brothers ! Kill me, you Abels of Bulgaria ! Am I not the Serbian Cain ?

Kozlubhoff [*bangs his feet as before*]. Kill him, kill him ! Fetch him ! Go for him ! [*at this moment the door opens and Milada appears on the threshold.*]

Milada [*in a voice of authority*]. What is ? What is all this ?

Kozlubhoff. A miracle-play from the Holy Scriptures ! The Legend of Cain and Abel !

Katya [*rushes to Milada, embraces her, sobbing*]. Oh, granny, dearest granny, what have we done ?

Milada. I don't understand, my child ! Tell me, what has happened ?

Dragolyub. Only what you yourself have said just now—that you could kill me ! [*Milada looks at him with wide-eyed horror.*] The graves of your fathers are in the hands of the Turks !

[*Milada gives a low moan, totters and supports herself with one hand against the door-post. Dead, oppressive silence.*]

Hristoforoff [*hoarsely*]. The Serbs have brought us to that !

Milada [*raises her head slightly—nods dryly*]. I know !

Katya [*in despair*]. Granny !

Milada [*calmly, painfully*]. Go away, children—leave me alone !

[*Exeunt slowly Petkoff, Naumoff, and Hristoforoff. To Kozlubhoff who is still sitting on the book-case.*] You too !

Kozlubhoff [*who has meantime rolled a cigarette*]. By all means. Armistice is declared ! [*lights the cigarette.*]

H'm yes ! [*leaps from the book-case*] If you want arbitration, kindly apply to me ! [*at the door, more to himself*] Swine ! [*exit Kozluhoff.*]

Milada [*after a short silence, to Dragolyub*]. Sir

Dragolyub [*interrupts*]. Pray, madam—spare yourself all further bitterness. You need not explain. I quite understand—I shall go away.

Milada [*calmly*]. Yes.

Katya. Grandmother !

Milada [*louder than before*]. Yes !

Katya. Grandmother ! Remember Lyuben's last wish !

Milada. My hopes and wishes are in my father's grave which is being dishonoured by the Turks.

Katya [*miserably*]. That is not his fault.

Dragolyub. Yes, *Katya*, it is my fault—and my fault lies in this that I cannot deny my race and in this house my race is accurst ! [*to Milada*] I am going, but I want you to know, that in my breast I bear you no ill-will I shall always think of you with undying gratitude. For I have been very lonely in this world without a human being I could turn to. I was a child when my father and mother died : my only brother—he was older than I—took their place ; but he was killed at Kumanovo Then I was left quite alone. During the siege of Adrianople I came across Lyuben—and he showed me the first kindness since my brother's death He brought me to you, to you and *Katya*, and here I heard the first words of comfort here I first met with sympathy [*in a low voice*] here I had my first glimpse of a happy home life. [*passes his hand over his brow*] But now all that is over ! [*overcomes his emotion*] It's nothing, many thanks—and good-bye. [*goes quickly towards the door.*]

Katya [*forestalls him, and places her back against the door :—emphatically*]. You shall not go !

Milada. Katya!

Katya. You will stay!—You must stay . . . because of Lyuben!

Dragolyub [*bitterly*]. Not now!

Katya [*vehemently*]. You must!

Dragolyub. Katya!

Milada. Child, what are you doing? Behave yourself!

Katya. I will *not* behave myself! I want to shake off the torment that is crushing me, I want to avert the disgrace you would bring upon this house, [*beseechingly*] I would be more than you—I would be human! [*to Dragolyub, helplessly, almost in tears.*] Do stay! Granny will be kind—quite kind again presently She is only blind with grief. We cannot let you go—it is not right that you should go. [*sobbing*] Remember Lyuben's last wish!

Dragolyub [*deeply moved, but firm*]. Let me go, Katya I cannot stay.

Katya [*clasping her hands*]. And if I beg you?

Dragolyub [*as before*]. I must,—do you hear?—I must!

Katya [*clutching her head*]. But—but—I will not allow you to go!

Dragolyub [*amazed*]. Katya!

Katya [*raising her voice*]. I won't have it. Do you want to kill me! [*sinks down, hides her face in her hands and weeps*] Can't you see that I love you!

Milada [*presses her hand to her heart, horrified*]. Katya, you shameless girl!

Dragolyub [*half afraid of his sudden happiness*]. Katya!

Katya [*rising, almost fiercely*]. Yes, I love you!

[*Georgi Drutchkoff appears in the door of the ante-room which Kozluhoff has left open. He is carrying his bird-cage. Enters quite cheerfully, whistling between his teeth, till he is in the centre of the room.*]

Georgi. Well! Didn't I tell you? What about me for a

father? Three sons, three heroes! They have killed my Ilya! Yes, killed him! Won't you believe me?—They've killed him dead as a door-nail! They've put it in print, too. [*laughs*] He isn't a boy any more now, he's a bird—just like Hristo and Stoyantcho . . . I'll catch him to-morrow! I will wait—and if I have to wait till nightfall . . . you'll give me a little millet, won't you! . . . And I will watch . . . My Ilya was so good, ever so good! [*suddenly very mournfully*] So good! And he's dead now . . . dead as a door-nail—he also. [*squats on the floor*] All three killed! All three dead—and the field is not ploughed. [*places the cage on the floor beside him sadly*] He was so good, was my Ilya—so good—and they all told me that my Ilya would come back . . . but I knew he would not come back. [*looks at Milada*] You'll give me a little millet, won't you, lady? [*to the birds in the cage*] Czrr! czrr! czrr! Ilya is coming to you, our own dear little Ilya. He's been killed in the war—like a hero—just like you! [*staring before him*] And what for? What for? [*looks at those present*] Why did they kill him? Why just him? Why? [*raises himself a little, wails*] Why? [*sinks down, stares apathetically in front of him.—Silence.—Then he begins to sing in a quavering, senile voice.*]—

Like three fair and sturdy oak-trees
Grew my sons so fair and sturdy :
And the first one was Stoyantcho,
And the second oak named Hristo,
And the third

[*ceases, shakes his head ; in a low voice, very slowly*] He will not come . . . he will not come back! [*suddenly he sinks with his whole body across the cage, weeping bitterly.*] Our Ilya will never come back. Our Ilya is dead!

Milada [*beating her breast*]. Merciful God! take me from this earth!

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT 2.

THE LIBERATORS.

ACT III.

Garden before General Karastoyanoff's house. L. foreground the façade of the house, which is a detached villa. Small terrace in front of the house, approached by steps. The garden is enclosed by an iron railing with carriage gates in the centre. Street outside the railings. In the distant back-ground the fence of the Zoological Gardens (Boulevard Ferdinand in Sofia). Before the house a reasonably large open space. R. foreground a large horse-chestnut tree. Garden-table, bench and basket arm-chair. The garden is full of bloom, shrubs, shrubberies and lawns. Time late afternoon just before sunset. When the curtain rises, one-half of the gate is open, and a Police Officer stands beside it. He is elderly, with stubbly hair and beard. White summer-blouse.

The street beyond the railing is crowded with refugees; the Police Officer is keeping order and allowing only three or four at a time to approach the open gate. All the refugees are destitute, desperate, with pallid haggard faces, and half-crazed. Most of them are in rags, with fur-caps, small fezs and filthy turbans on their heads. Their muttered prayers and lamentations are full of hopeless despair. Hundreds of lean, filthy hands, whose convulsive gestures are more eloquent than words, are thrust through the railings. Amid all the noise no connected sentences are distinguishable. The sound is more like that of waves beating on the shore, or a distant thunder-storm. Only now and again a word or two rises above the general moun.

"Me too!" "Me too!" "Please!" "Oh Lord, have mercy!" "For God's sake!"

L. In the garden is a low kitchen stool; on it a cast-iron cauldron, from which Milada and Katya are dispensing soup with large ladles in the bowls and mugs of such refugees as are admitted by the gate. Milada is without her head-kerchief. Her hair is now quite white and straggling. Her face is grey and more haggard than before, and bears an expression of unutterable suffering. Katya also looks worn-out after the strain and excitement of the preceding hours. R. foreground, Dragolyub is sitting at the table, absorbed in Serbian newspapers; beside him at the table Kozluhoff, nervously smoking a cigarette. Stoyanoff in an arm-chair, leaning back, with closed eyes, sad, pallid face. Under a clump of shrubs, extreme R. foreground, Georgi is squatting on the ground, his hand with millet stiffly extended. His expression is dull and senile. The cage stands beside him on the ground.

Milada [to the refugees, speaking almost with every spoonful she ladles out]. There, my son, There, my dear here, my poor little girl here you are, my child

Police Officer [keeping those back who are crowding behind]. Steady, steady! one at a time!

Milada. Patience, children, we're giving you all we can.

Police Officer. What are you doing out of your turn? Stand back! Oh, you would, would you?

Refugees [such as are at the gate]. Bread, give us bread!

Milada [wails]. Children, dear children, what can I do?

Police Officer [to a refugee]. You've been here already! Stand back; you can't have second helpings.

The Refugee. I haven't been in before, sir, I haven't been in before!

Police Officer [roughly]. That's a lie!

The Refugee [desperately]. God knows, mate—sir, I mean—I haven't been in before!

Milada [ladling soup into his out-stretched mug]. Here you are, my son—don't wail! Here you are; now go!

A Woman [thrusts her hand through the railings; cries frantically]. Water! For the Blessed Lord's sake, water! My baby's dying!

Katya. One moment, I'll run and fetch it! [hastens into the house, and re-enters with a jug of water, which she hands through the railings.]

Kozluhoff [as if to himself]. Oh, the pity of it! Oh, the pity of it was it necessary?

Georgi [suddenly looks up into the chestnut tree, and listens]. Czrr, Czrr! [in a low, yearning voice] Ilya, is that you? Look at the lovely millet Cheep, Cheep, Cheep! Come, Ilya! [coaxing, louder] Ilyushka! Ilyushka! [listens again] Czrr! Czrr Czrr! [as the twittering is not repeated, his head sinks on his breast once more, but his hand remains extended.]

Milada [lays down her ladle, goes to the door of the house, calls]. Stanka, Stanka! Bring the other cauldron. [returns to her former place.]

Police Officer. Steady there! What are you doing! No pushing there's another pot coming!

[Two maids bring in a second cauldron, place it on the stool, and carry away the empty one.]

Kozluhoff [to Dragolyub]. How long are you going to go on reading?

Dragolyub [without moving]. Leave me alone! It is so long since I had news from home! And how it all interests me! Every little detail! [raising his head slightly, gratefully, to Kozluhoff] It was good of you to bring me the Serbian newspapers!

Kozluhoff [dryly]. Oh, rot! I got them at the

Russian Legation don't mention it ! And if you're pleased [*short silence*]. They're not in my line. Newspapers are poison venom ! [*quotes*] "Behold these superfluous ones ! They are always sick. They vomit their bile, and call it a newspaper ! They devour one another and cannot even digest one another." [*Silence*] D'you know who said that ?

Dragolyub [*without interrupting himself in his reading, curtly*]. No.

Kozluboff. Nietzsche ! A German ! [*short silence*] I can't stick 'em.

Dragolyub [*as before*]. Can't stick whom ?

Kozluboff. The Germans ! They're always in the right ! Their philosophers are the embodiment of the truths of life, and their newspapers are

Dragolyub [*interrupts*]. Venom !

Kozluboff. Whose poison we Slavs feel rather too often and yet they were right !

Dragolyub. Who d'you mean ?

Kozluboff. The whole boiling ! The Frankfurters, and the Hamburgers, the Leipzigers, the Newfreipresslers, and the rest of 'em they all told us so.

Dragolyub. Told us what ?

Kozluboff. That you would first conquer the Balkans, and then cut each other's throats.

Dragolyub [*with a gesture of contempt*]. Oh, well, that is only their inborn malice.

Kozluboff. Well, it's your disgrace ! You've lost your moral credit.

Dragolyub [*contemptuously*]. In the eyes of Europe ?

Kozluboff. Europe, my dear fellow, is an old lady, who is very particular about good form in her drawing-room, and, moreover, like other old women she must always have the last word.

Milada [*when the second cauldron is empty*]. There is none left, children, the cauldron is empty !

Police Officer. Finished! Go along home now; that'll do for to-day. [*pushes the refugees, who are crowding in at the gate, back into the street, locks the gate, and takes out the key. For a moment the noise in the street increases.*]

Milada [*to Police Officer*]. Come into the house; Katya will give you a glass of vodky.

[*Re-enter the maids from the house, and carry both the cauldron and the stool into the house.*]

Police Officer. Thank you, madam!

[*Exit into the house with the maids; Milada sits down wearily on the steps before the house.*]

Kozluboff. Feeding-time's over! Well, granny [*to Milada*]. I suppose you're pretty well tired out?

Milada. What can one do?

Katya [*enters from the house*]. Won't you go in, granny?

Milada. No, my dear. I want to rest a little first.

Katya [*bending over her; in an undertone*]. Are you still angry with me, granny?

Milada [*calmly, wearily*]. Why should I be, my dear? We are all in the Lord's hands. Your happiness should not be sacrificed to my troubles. I myself asked him to stay

Katya [*affectionately*]. Granny dear

Milada [*stroking her hair*]. That will do, child, that will do

Kozluboff. They told me at the Legation, that there was a chance of negotiations.

Milada [*with sudden interest*]. They said that? They really told you

Kozluboff. The envoys have already left for Nish . . .

Milada [*with nervous distrust*]. You're sure it's true, my boy?

Dragolyub. Our papers have it that the negotiations will be carried on at Bukarest.

Kozluboff [*takes a position C. between Milada and Dragolyub ; thrusts his hands in his pockets*]. What'll you give me for letting you into a secret ?

Milada. What secret ?

Kozluboff. Negotiations are already in progress.

Dragolyub. What are you saying ?

Kozluboff. The first sitting was at Bukarest to-day !

Dragolyub [*joyfully*]. Petya, is it really true ?

Katya [*joyfully*]. Thank heaven !

Milada [*childishly*]. Then Lyuben will come home, our Lyuben will come home !

Kozluboff. We may expect news at any minute.

[*At this moment a dull rumbling is heard, like a distant thunderstorm.*]

Milada. Surely that is thunder.

Dragolyub. I daresay we shall have a storm.

Kozluboff [*looks up*]. But the sky is quite clear.

Stoyanoff [*without altering his position*]. Those are guns. [*All start.*]

Milada. What did you say ?

Stoyanoff. Those are guns.

Milada [*nervously*]. Are you mad, Ivantcho ? How could they be guns, now when negotiations

Stoyanoff. Those are guns. How well I know their music ! To this song they heralded my doom with peals of thunder. For they roared louder and louder till they split my ears with their voice, and shattered my arms with their steel. Can't you hear them ? Hark at them ! They are death's own band, chosen by him to play his wedding-march !

[*As the bombardment draws nearer, the cries of the crowd become louder and more desperate ; they hurry to and fro in aimless, terror-stricken confusion ; finally all fly towards one side, till the street is practically empty.*]

Kozluhoff [*wrathfully*]. Stuff! That's nothing. They'll stop in a minute.

Dragolyub. It's not possible that they are just outside Sofia.

Stoyanoff. When the arm of the Lord is stretched forth to punish, it reaches all to destroy them!

Milada [*distractedly*]. But—but it can't be

Katya [*coaxing her*]. Granny! Do let's go indoors please, granny, come in!

Kozluhoff. Yes, granny, you go in. You are tired out and over-wrought. All this now amounts to nothing. I assure you, it's really nothing. [*approaches her*] Come in, our dear old granny. [*takes her on one arm and Katya on the other.*]

Milada [*bursts into tears*]. Merciful God! Why all this misery on my grey head?

Kozluhoff. What misery? All will be well in the end. Gold must pass through fire—a little firing hurts nobody Come away, granny, come in!

[*Exit Kozluhoff with Milada and Katya.*]

Stoyanoff. No one suffers as much as our mothers.

Dragolyub. My mother is dead!

Stoyanoff. Is it not better so? What would she say if she could see you—now?

Dragolyub [*in a low voice*]. She would weep, like your mother.

Stoyanoff. As if tears were the worst.

[*Loud, continuous bombardment.*]

Georgi. Ilya, Ilyushka! Make haste, daddy's own darling! Don't you hear the thunder? You will be frightened up there all by yourself! It is lovely at home ever so fine! [*looks up into the chestnut-tree*]. Where have you hidden, you rascal? Czrr, Czrr, Czrr! Look here! Good millet! Beautiful

millet ! Ilya ! Ilya ! Ilya . . . Ilyushka ! [*yearningly, with a long-drawn wail*] Ilyushka !

Kozluboff [*re-entering from the house*]. Devil's own job with the women ! [*listens to the cannonade*] By Jove, those chaps are jolly well in earnest !

Stoyanoff. When have guns been anything else ?

Georgi [*wailing*]. Ilyushka !

Kozluboff [*goes to Georgi*]. Daddy !

Georgi [*looks at him foolishly*]. Eh ?

Kozluboff. What are you howling for ? Go home !

Georgi. Why won't he come ?

Kozluboff. He does not feel like it to-day ; he'll come to-morrow.

Georgi. And if he won't ?

Kozluboff. Then he'll come the day after he must come some day !

Georgi [*stubbornly*]. But if he won't ?

Kozluboff. Oh, but he'll come ! The others have come all right, why shouldn't he ?

Georgi. You don't know my Ilya. He's an awful rascal ! he always had a mind of his own but he was good, good and kind ! [*looking up into the tree*] Ilyushka ! [*distractedly*] Ilyushka, my lamb !

Kozluboff [*taking Georgi by the arm, with unaccustomed gentleness*]. Come away now, Georgi—you can call him again to-morrow. It is late, and you have far to go. [*as if to a child*] And if you'll be good, I'll stay here, and call him for you

Georgi [*stares at him*]. You !

Kozluboff. Yes, daddy, that I will ! He might come for me, you know. I am young, and I can be his pal [*taps Georgi on the shoulder confidentially*] I'll tell him, we'll go courting together !

Georgi [*laughs*]. That'll fetch him, that'll make him come he was a great boy for the girls

Kozlubhoff. There, you see, now be good, and go home, have a good sleep and be quiet!

Georgi [*looks at him distrustfully*]. And you'll, you'll really call him?

Kozlubhoff. If I promise you—you may be sure I'll do it.

Georgi. Well! that's all right then I'll go. [*goes with Kozlubhoff*] Wait a bit. [*scatters the millet*] He might be hungry. [*goes a few steps, then stops; again takes a handful of millet from the linen bag he wears over his shoulder and scatters it beside the path on the lawn.*]

Kozlubhoff. Come, that'll do now!

Georgi [*mechanically*]. Come, that'll do now! [*He goes on a few steps, then turns and looks towards the tree.*] Ilyushka! [*louder*] Ilyushka!

[*The Police-Officer re-enters from the house, goes to the gate and opens.*]

Kozlubhoff [*to the Police Officer*]. Friend! Will you see our daddy home? It's weary for him alone these days!

Police Officer. Come along, daddy!

Georgi [*sullenly*]. I won't go with you—you'll beat me.

Kozlubhoff. Why should he beat you? He is a hero himself!

Georgi. And Ilyushka are you sure I left enough millet

Kozlubhoff. O, dear, yes plenty!

[*Police Officer takes Georgi by the arm and leads him away.*]

Georgi [*from the street calling*]. Ilyushka! Ilya!

Kozlubhoff [*who has seen Georgi as far as the gate, comes down stage*]. That's War; nice cheery business, eh!

Stoyanoff. War is red laughter.

Kozlubhoff. Yonder is an old woman whose heart is broken; there an old man crazed with grief; and here

before me two men with one hand between them, two half-used energies turned into burdens from henceforth ; and all this is just a sample of the general calamity—the endless consequences of egregious folly, the tragedy of civilization. [*thrusts his hands in his pockets, paces up and down*] War ! When I left Russia to volunteer for your cause, I imagined war was an evidence of power, a measure of national self-respect ! [*with sudden fury, shaking his fist at Stoyanoff and Dragolyub*] That is War ! War is bestial . . . sordid and bestial, and a vulgar crime ! It's always hungry, never satisfied—and utterly unjust ! What did you get out of it ? For the sake of a few thousand starving, half-witted beggars, you gave the strength of the nation, your youth and your hopes. Thousands of pampered idiots will grow fat in your land and grin like jackals at your thousands of cripples, halt and maimed, parading themselves for twopence as advertisements of heroism at your circuses and music-halls !

Dragolyub. You forget that war is waged for the sake of the future, not for to-day or to-morrow.

Kozluboff. Delightful future, reared on human blood.

Dragolyub. Can't be done any other way, old fellow !

Kozluboff [*vehemently*]. It can ! It must ! And it's going to. One day mankind will discover that their weakness lies here [*strikes his forehead*], not here [*stretches his arms*].

Dragolyub. It's a far cry to that day—a far cry.

Kozluboff. But we must strive to meet it. We should look towards the sunshine of the summits . . . not go down upon the slippery paths that lead to murder—the sordid slaughter of our fellow-creatures. War became unnecessary from the moment your brothers were free and their oppressors vanquished. Then the sun smiled upon you, the sun of a new life that might have pointed the way to the heights. You were the heroes, the strong ones, and the world looked up to you as the universal

liberators, who had set them free from an ancient peril. You lanced a poisonous ulcer ; you opened new channels towards wide-spread peace and concord among the nations, and for a moment you were the apostles of the peace that is to be ! But that was only for a moment. *Then* you became infected with the evil you had combated, and it transformed you into the very opposite of what you had just been. *Now* you have darkened and lost the future until the day when a new knowledge of the light will make it possible for you to look again towards the sun.

Stoyanoff. The conditions are lacking—the conditions are lacking—above all things man must become human.

Kozluboff. You're right there—he's no more than a beast so far.

Stoyanoff. Yes—and presently the beast becomes a brute !

Katya [*re-enters from the house*]. Granny has gone to sleep.

Kozluboff. Come and sit here Katya. We are discoursing upon a heavenly theme, the development of man.

Katya [*listens to the bombardment*]. What is to become of us ? What will be the end of it all ?

Kozluboff. Nothing one step further in the devolution of the man to the brute.

Dragolyub [*to Katya*]. My poor Katya !

Katya. There's one consolation, it can't go on for ever—

Dragolyub [*kindly*]. Of course it *must* soon be over.

Katya. Granny says death ends everything

Dragolyub. Katya !

Stoyanoff. Yes—death—because then the beast ends and man begins !

Kozluboff [*sarcastically*]. “Here resteth in the Lord Petya Petrovitch KOZLUHOFF, beast by birth, brute by profession, and by the grace of death a man” !

Katya [*reproachfully*]. Petya !

Kozlubhoff. Of course ! Pardon my arrogance, not man but mannikin—dwarf !

Katya [*pressing her hand to her head ; nervously*]. Oh dear,—what are you saying—what is it all about ?

Kozlubhoff. Just like a mad-house ; Kings, Ambassadors, Field Marshals, Heroes and Refugees, Megalomaniacs and Invalids.

Katya. Yes, really like a mad-house.

Kozlubhoff [*wildly*]. And isn't the world just a mad-house ? [*Suddenly he raises his head, looks towards the top of the tree, and calls in mournful long drawn-out tones, but with perfect sincerity*] Ilya, Ilyushka, Ilyushka !

Katya. Petya.

Kozlubhoff [*absently, as in a dream*]. I promised and—who knows ? perhaps—[*suddenly furious*] Oh, how I hate you ! How I hate you all !

Katya [*amazed*]. Why ?

Kozlubhoff [*with the fury of a child*]. Because I love you ! [*sinks into an arm-chair, covers his face with his hands, and weeps*] Because I love you !

Stoyanoff. Love grows upon all the ways of the Lord !

Kozlubhoff [*sobbing*]. Oh, you brood of Cain !

Katya [*crosses over to him, lays her hand on his head ; in a low voice*]. Petya I love him. [*no answer, silence*] Do you hear, Petya, I love him ! I told him so myself I, the daughter of down-trodden, vanquished Bulgaria—the nation its brothers have destroyed !

Dragolyub [*deeply moved, crosses to her*]. Dearest Katya !

Stoyanoff [*with a happy smile*]. You told him so ?

Katya [*takes Dragolyub's hand*]. Look at us, Ivantcho, are we not a proof of a better future ?—and you, Petya ?

Kozlubhoff [*jumping up*]. Oh stuff ! leave me alone—can't think why I'm howling. [*wipes his eyes and goes from the table.*]

Dragolyub [*reproachfully*]. But, Petya!

Kozlubhoff. Get out with your Petya—I'm not your Petya—I'm a beast, a brute, a dwarf! [*suddenly he clenches his fist at the chestnut-tree angrily*] Ilya, Ilya, why the devil don't you come down? What d'ye mean by it! Come down at once or I'll [*stoops to pick up a stone. Katya, who has turned towards the gate, at this moment gives a startled, piercing cry.*]

Karastoyanoff [*age 52, strong, vigorous, energetic. Bulgarian Officer's uniform; short, iron-grey beard, strong, sunburnt face. He has opened the gate and enters quickly*].
Katya!

[*All are startled and surprised.*]

Katya [*stands for a moment, staggers as if she had seen a ghost, then hastens to Karastoyanoff and throws herself into his arms*]. Father, oh father!

Karastoyanoff [*kissing her*]. My dear child!

Katya [*overjoyed*]. You have come home! Father, darling father, you have come home! [*with sudden anxiety*]
But Lyuben? Where is Lyuben?

Karastoyanoff. He will be home presently.

Katya [*with a cry of joy*]. Lyuben is coming home!

Dragolyub [*joyfully*]. Lyuben coming?

Karastoyanoff [*embracing Katya with one arm; he offers his other hand to Dragolyub: with uncertain voice*]. Yes—he's coming!

Dragolyub. How is he? Safe and sound?

Karastoyanoff [*uncertainly*]. Yes he is quite safe that is

Dragolyub, Katya [*together*]. What?

Karastoyanoff. He is a hero

Katya [*with a cry*]. Wounded?

Karastoyanoff [*as before*]. Yes—wounded—

Katya [*presses her hand to her heart*]. Merciful Heaven!

Dragolyub. Severely? [*Karastoyanoff nods assent, unnoticed by Katya.*]

Katya. And where is he—where is he now?

Karastoyanoff. In the Hospital—they're putting on fresh dressings.

Katya [*hastens towards the house*]. I'll fetch my hat I must go to him!

Karastoyanoff [*stops her*]. Don't, *Katya*: what's the use? They will be here directly.

Katya [*her hand to her head*]. What will granny say? Oh dear—what will granny say?

Karastoyanoff [*quickly*]. Where is your grandmother?

Katya. In the house; she has gone to sleep, poor dear. She is quite worn out with sorrow!

Karastoyanoff. Let her sleep—she will need all her strength—

Kozlubhoff [*places himself in front of Karastoyanoff*]. What's going to happen now?

Karastoyanoff. What *can* happen! A complete collapse.

Dragolyub. And the negotiations?

Karastoyanoff. No good either, I'm afraid!

Dragolyub. But they must make peace in the end.

Karastoyanoff [*suddenly frigid*]. What do you call—peace—Lieutenant Bayalovitch?

Stoyanoff. Peace is love—and where there is no love there can be no peace—

Dragolyub. But—but after all this bloodshed

Karastoyanoff. There can be no peace in bloodshed—only revenge!

Katya. Father!

Kozlubhoff [*sarcastically*]. The *perpetuum mobile* called butchery!

Karastoyanoff [*loses his self-possession, quivering with rage to Kozlubhoff*]. *We* have been butchered, young man, *we* have been butchered!

Stoyanoff. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors!—

Kozluhoff [*with crushing irony*]. You are mad, Ivantcho — prating about forgiveness — why should brothers forgive !

Katya [*with vehemence*]. They must !

Kozluhoff [*with emphasis*]. They won't !

Karastoyanoff [*distractedly, straight at Kozluhoff*].
Give me back my son !

Katya [*horrified ; gets out her words with difficulty*].
Father what are you saying ?

Karastoyanoff [*louder*]. Give me back my son !

Kozluhoff [*deeply moved, but calm and collected*]. That is not the point just now we must be given back our human soul out of all we have lost, recklessly lost, man must be born again. We must stretch our hands far towards the clear unclouded eternities where dwells the untroubled human soul where there are no wars, where there is no crimson but the dawn—and no weapon but love.

Katya. It is true, father, only too true !

Dragolyub [*has noticed two soldiers approaching the gate with a stretcher ; quickly to Katya*]. *Katya*, come indoors I beg of you do go in—quick ! [*takes her hand*]

[*Karastoyanoff, who has also noticed the soldiers, hastens to the gate.*]

Katya [*guessing, clasps her hands over her heart but does not turn*]. They are here

Dragolyub. I implore you, *Katya*, don't stay out here—

[*Katya shakes her head ; remains standing, motionless.*]

Karastoyanoff [*has rapidly opened the gates, and admits the two soldiers. Lyuben is brought in lying on the stretcher, covered up to his chest with a dark rug. Dr. Markoff walks beside the stretcher*]. This way, this way. [*bends over the stretcher*] *Lyuben*, my boy, are you feeling easier ?

[The soldiers deposit the stretcher in front of the house. Katya turns when the stretcher is set down, runs to it and without a word falls on her knees beside it and weeps noiselessly.]

Lyuben [pale, haggard, weak, raises his hand with difficulty, and lays it on Katya's head]. Katya! dear little sister! Don't cry! I am so glad to see you again!

[Dragolyub, who has withdrawn a little, sits on the bench under the chestnut and weeps silently.]

Katya [takes Lyuben's hand from her head and covers it with passionate kisses]. Lyuben, dearest brother!

Karastoyanoff [furtively dries his eyes]. We'll carry you in, Lyuben

Dr. Markoff. Yes, Lyubentcho, you will be better in bed.

Lyuben. One moment! The sun is still there. [in a low voice] When it goes down who knows? [sees Petya] Petya! Oh, Petya! [gives him his hand] How are you?

Kozluboff [repressing his emotion]. Oh—so so—better than bad, and worse than well Prophet in the wilderness, don't you know? Or rather—an—ass—

Lyuben [with a faint smile]. Asses are philosophers, Petya—

Kozluboff. I am not one of that sort.

Lyuben [to Katya]. And grandmother? Where is she? [suddenly very excited] And Drago, where is he?

Dragolyub [hastens to Lyuben on hearing his name, and kneels beside the stretcher]. Forgive me, brother, for the love of the Lord, forgive me!

Lyuben [takes Dragolyub's hand and presses it to his forehead]. Now we are equal, Drago—no one can keep us from loving each other as brothers.

[At this moment Milada appears on the threshold. She perceives the General and the stretcher, totters,

tries to scream, but cannot ; she only clutches at her heart and stands rigid like a statue. Then she suddenly hurries down the steps ; in proudly concealed despair.]

Milada. Lyuben ! Oh, my darling, my hero, my falcon ! [*throws herself over the stretcher and kisses Lyuben's eyes, forehead, lips and hands*] Oh, my joy ! The pride and glory of us all !

Karastoyanoff. Yes, mother, he is our hero !

Milada. Are you wounded, my child—are you wounded ? Where ? Where ? Tell your granny ! Where ? [*feels him all over, chest, hands, shoulders, etc.*] Is it a bad wound ? It isn't bad, is it ? Where is it, my pet ? Do say ? [*she has reached the place where the thighs ought to be, gives a terrible cry ; all stand aghast.*]

Katya. Grandmother ! For Heaven's sake, grandmother !

Milada [*almost suffocating, gasps out her words with difficulty.*] Your feet—your feet—your—where are—where ? [*in frantic despair*] God, thou art unjust ! [*breaks down beside the stretcher.*]

Dragolyub [*seizing Markoff's hand, shocked*]. Doctor ?

Dr. Markoff [*nods ; in an undertone*]. Both.

Dragolyub [*covers his face with his hands and moans*]. Oh !

Lyuben. Granny, dear old granny, don't cry for me—weep for our country . . . it is in a worse plight than I.

Dragolyub [*with decision*]. No ! it must not be ! It will rise again !

Lyuben [*with a bitter smile*]. As I shall !

Dragolyub. Lyuben ! friend ! brother ! Don't lose heart. Your arms are sound, and my feet are sound—and my one arm ; and I will take you on my arm and hold you up so that your hands may build the Bulgaria that is to be.

[*At this moment one hears the cries of news-vendors*

from the street in the distance "Den," "Special Edition Five days armistice concluded Peace in sight" "Vetcherna poshta," "Armistice concluded peace assured!"]

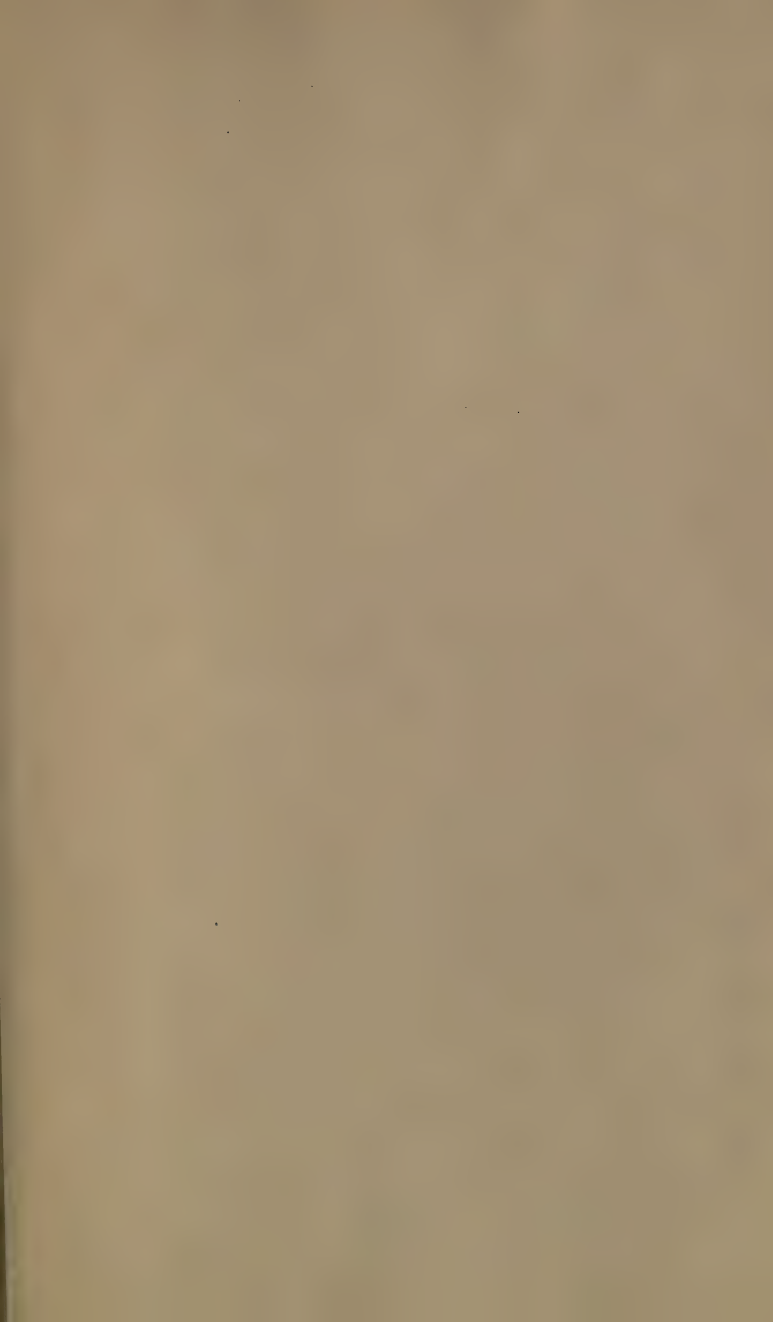
Stoyanoff. Katya! Katya!

[Katya crosses to him with tottering steps.]

Make the sign of the cross for me, Katya, please . . .
I will pray—I will pray and I will have faith
once more!

[Katya makes the sign of the cross after the orthodox fashion; he murmurs a prayer, the words of which are lost in the cries of the news-vendors.]

CURTAIN.



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