

**VERA, OR, THE NIHILISTS:
A
DRAMA IN A PROLOGUE
AND FOUR ACTS**

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Vera, or, The nihilists: a drama in a prologue and four acts by Oscar Wilde

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OSCAR WILDE

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A
DRAMA IN A PROLOGUE
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VERA;
OR, THE NIHILISTS.

A Drama
IN A PROLOGUE, AND FOUR ACTS.

BY
OSCAR WILDE.

Now first published.



PRIVATELY PRINTED,
1902.

THIS Play was written in 1881, and is now published from the author's own copy, showing his corrections of and additions to the original text.

PERSONS IN THE PROLOGUE.

PETER SABOUROFF (an Innkeeper).
VERA SABOUROFF (his Daughter).
MICHAEL (a Peasant).
COLONEL KOTEMKIN.

Scene, Russia. Time, 1795.

PERSONS IN THE PLAY.

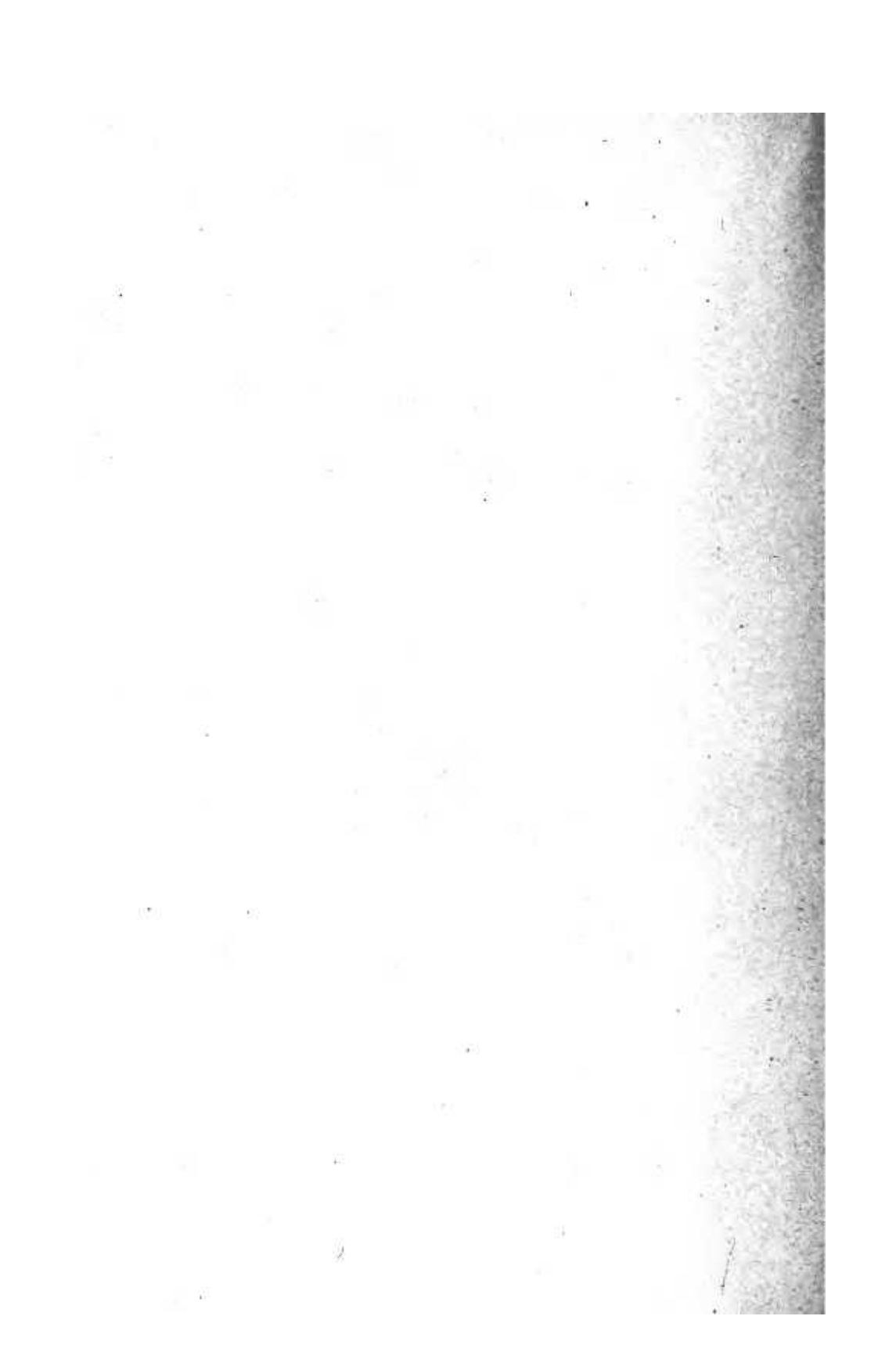
IVAN THE CZAR,
PRINCE PAUL MARALOFFSKI (Prime Minister
of Russia).
PRINCE PETROVITCH.
COUNT ROUVALOFF.
MARQUIS DE POIVRARD.
BARON RAFF.
GENERAL KOTEMKIN.
A PAGE.

Nihilists.

PETER TCHERNAVITCH, President of the Nihilists.
MICHAEL.
ALEXIS IVANACIEVITCH, known as a Student of
Medicine.
PROFESSOR MARFA.
VERA SABOUROFF.

Soldiers, Conspirators, &c.

Scene, Moscow. Time, 1800.



PROLOGUE.

SCENE.—*A Russian Inn.*

Large door opening on snowy landscape at back of stage.

PETER SABOUROFF and MICHAEL.

PETER (*warming his hands at a stove*). Has Vera not come back yet, Michael?

MICH. No, Father Peter, not yet; 'tis a good three miles to the post office, and she has to milk the cows besides, and that dun one is a rare plaguery creature for a wench to handle.

PETER. Why didn't you go with her, you young fool? she'll never love you unless you are always at her heels; women like to be bothered.

MICH. She says I bother her too much already, Father Peter, and I fear she'll never love me after all.

PETER. Tut, tut, boy, why shouldn't she? you're young and wouldn't be ill-favoured either, had God or thy mother given thee another face. Aren't you one of Prince Maraloffski's game-keepers; and haven't you got a good grass farm, and the best cow in the village? What more does a girl want?

MICH. But Vera, Father Peter—

PETER. Vera, my lad, has got too many ideas; I don't think much of ideas myself; I've got on well enough in life without 'em; why shouldn't my children? There's Dmitri! could have stayed here and kept the inn; many a young lad would have jumped at the offer in these hard times; but he, scatter-brained featherhead of a boy, must needs go off to Moscow to study the law! What does he want knowing about the law! let a man do his duty, say I, and no one will trouble him.

MICH. Ay! but Father Peter, they say a good lawyer can break the law as often as he likes, and no one can say him nay.

PETER. That is about all they are good for; and there he stays, and has not written a line to us for four months now—a good son that, eh?

MICH. Come, come, Father Peter, Dmitri's letters must have gone astray—perhaps the new postman can't read; he looks stupid enough, and Dmitri, why, he was the best fellow in the village. Do you remember how he shot the bear at the barn in the great winter?

PETER. Ay, it was a good shot; I never did a better myself.

MICH. And as for dancing, he tired out three fiddlers Christmas come two years.

PETER. Ay, ay, he was a merry lad. It is the girl that has the seriousness—she goes about as solemn as a priest for days at a time.

MICH. Vera is always thinking of others.

PETER. There is her mistake, boy. Let God and our Little Father look to the world. It is none of my work to mend my neighbour's thatch. Why, last winter old Michael was frozen to death in his sleigh in the snowstorm, and his wife and children starved afterwards when the hard times came; but what business was it of mine? I didn't make the world. Let God and the Czar look to it. And then the blight came, and the black plague with it, and the priests couldn't bury the people fast enough, and they lay dead on the roads—men and women both. But what business was it of mine? I didn't make the world. Let God and the Czar look to it. Or two autumns ago, when the river overflowed on a sudden, and the children's school was carried away and drowned every girl and boy in it. I didn't make the world—let God and the Czar look to it.

MICH. But, Father Peter—

PETER. No, no, boy; no man could live if he

took his neighbour's pack on his shoulders. (*Enter VERA in peasant's dress.*) Well, my girl, you've been long enough away—where is the letter?

VERA. There is none to-day, Father.

PETER. I knew it.

VERA. But there will be one to-morrow, Father.

PETER. Curse him, for an ungrateful son.

VERA. Oh, Father, don't say that; he must be sick.

PETER. Ay! sick of profligacy, perhaps.

VERA. How dare you say that of him, Father? You know that is not true.

PETER. Where does the money go, then? Michael, listen. I gave Dmitri half his mother's fortune to bring with him to pay the lawyer folk of Moscow. He has only written three times, and every time for more money. He got it, not at my wish, but at hers (*pointing to VERA*), and now for five months, close on six almost, we have heard nothing from him.

VERA. Father, he will come back.

PETER. Ay! the prodigals always return; but let him never darken my doors again.

VERA (*sitting down pensive*). Some evil has come on him; he must be dead! Oh! Michael, I am so wretched about Dmitri.

MICH. Will you never love any one but him, Vera?

VERA (*smiling*). I don't know; there is so much else to do in the world but love.

MICH. Nothing else worth doing, Vera.

PETER. What noise is that, Vera? (*A metallic clink is heard.*)

VERA (*rising and going to the door*). I don't know, Father; it is not like the cattle bells, or I would think Nicholas had come from the fair. Oh! Father! it is soldiers!—coming down the hill—there is one of them on horseback. How pretty they look! But there are some men with them with