

THE SCOUNDREL

Alexandra Ostrovsky

KLEOPATRA: There's no need for a great brain when you're as handsome as Yegor. What does he want a brain for? He's not going to be a professor. A good-looking young man can always find somebody who'll help him, simply out of sympathy. Either to make a career or just with money so that he can live comfortably. With a clever man it's different. Nobody minds if they see a clever man shabbily dressed, living in a cheap apartment and dining off a cold sausage and a piece of bread - that doesn't bring a lump to your throat and make you feel you must do something for him. You expect a clever man to live like that. But when you see a poor boy who's young and handsome, shabbily dressed, it's unbearable. It mustn't be allowed, no, and it won't be. I'll see that it isn't! The women of Moscow must band together! We must insist that our friends, our husbands, all the authorities rise to their feet to help him. We simply cannot allow a handsome young man to be spoiled by poverty. There are so few of them nowadays. Of course, we should sympathise with all poor people, it's our duty, that goes without saying - but to see a handsome young man with sleeves too short, or frayed shirt collars, that's what touches the heart! And besides, a man can't be bold and dashing when he's poor, he can't have that conquering expression, that air of jauntiness which is so pardonable in a handsome young man.