

UNDER SEALED ORDERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE RED COTTAGE.

ALL these fine things were to be seen in Sacha's studio.

Now Sacha's studio was allowed to be the prettiest room in all the house. Sacha said so herself, indeed, and she was an authority on decoration. And she said the truth. Such a queer little lopsided, five-cornered, irregular nook of a room you never saw in all your life. It was built out from one angle of the external wall, and lighted up from the north side by a big square bay-window, which projected cornerwise, anyhow, into the lawn and orchard. It was quaint, because it never aimed at quaintness; it achieved it unconsciously. And the outlook was charming, too, over the brook and the hillside: no more satisfying view, Sacha held, among the Surrey Hills than the larches above and the pear-trees below as seen across the foreground of lavender and poppies from her studio window-seat at the