

CASCADA (*brushing him aside*): Then may I ask for your programme? — and enter my name for the next dance?

ANNA (*giving it to him*): With pleasure.

CASCADA *scribbles his name*. ST. BRIOCHE *snatches the programme from his hand, and does likewise*.

ST. BRIOCHE: And I!

*The other MEN exclaim 'And I' one after the other and snatch and scribble in turn.*

VALENCIENNE *hurries on, followed by ZETA and CAMILLE*.

VAL: Madame Glawari, it's a privilege to have you with us tonight.

ZETA: Indeed you do us a signal honour, ma'am.

*He bows and turns to speak to the men.*

ANNA (*knowingly*): How kind you are.

A MAN *from the extreme right returns her programme to her*.

MAN (*bowing*): Your programme, madam.

ANNA *turns and talks to him*.

VAL (*to Camille*): Well, is this the one you've chosen to marry?

CAMILLE *makes a gesture of flat denial*.

CAMILLE: Valenciennne!

VAL: Very suitable, I'm sure. After all, everything between us is over. Here's the solution. (*aloud*) Madame Glawari, may I present my friend, M. Camille de Rosillon? He begs the favour of your programme.

CAMILLE *bows*.

ANNA: How d'you do (*handing him the programme*). It looks as though the Intermission is still free.

VAL: Oh (*to Camille*). Look here, you're not going to sit it out with her.

CAMILLE (*puzzled*): But I thought you said — ?

VAL: That's *too* quick.

ANNA (*turning to the men*): Listen, everyone. Tomorrow you must come to my house. I'll give a party, a real Pontevedrian party for the Duke's birthday. What do you say to that? (*cries of bravo*). The whole Pontevedrian Colony in Paris shall be invited. Then I'll dance with you all till you drop.

ZETA: Splendid, my dear. Your irrepressible high spirits remind me of our Attaché—the esteemed Count Danilovitch—

ANNA (*suddenly serious*): Danilovitch?

ZETA: Still quite unspoiled, still just a child of nature, as they say.

ANNA: But your Excellency — (*a pause*) — why do you think of him in connection with me?

ZETA (*at a loss*): Well now—I mean—it's natural enough. He's a Pontevedrian and—

ANNA (*almost sadly*): The Count and I — yes, you may be right. (*walks past him and turns*). It was nothing anyway.

ZETA: Was it? What was nothing?

ANNA (*embarrassed*): How could it have come to anything?

ZETA: Upon my word, madam, I've no idea (*aside*). I see. So there was something.

*The MUSIC off-stage strikes up. CAMILLE promptly offers his arm to ANNA.*

CAMILLE: Please madam —

VAL (*from behind him*): I won't have it!

CAMILLE, *struggling helplessly, bows to Anna and steps back*.

MEN (*trying to give her their arm*): Please . . . please.

ANNA: So many escorts! (*to Zeta*). Come, Baron, you look the most dangerous man of the lot.

*She goes off with the BARON, the others following. CASCADA and ST. BRIOCHE almost the last to go, stop at the exit.*

CASCADA: I—I shall marry her!

ST. BRIOCHE (*smoukering*): So shall I!

VAL (*to Camille*): So, Camille, will you.

CAMILLE (*protesting*): But really, Valenciennne—

VAL: I wish it, I order it. You'll be very happy. It's the only chance of my remaining respectable. (*tenderly*) Come, give me your arm.

CAMILLE (*lugubrious*): Very well. I'll do my best.

VAL: No immediate hurry.

*They go into the ball-room as NJEGUS ENTERS centre and glances round to see if the coast is clear.*