

VALEN. : Certainly I will! Don't worry.
 (At ZETA's mention of Madame Glavari, the others have exchanged excited glances.)
 They all advance towards ZETA.)

ST. B. : Did you say Madame Glavari?

CASCADA : The Banker's widow?

BOGDAN. : She's coming here to-night?

(During this VALENCIENNE, with a meaning look at CAMILLE, goes off up R.)

CAMILLE, after a cautious glance at ZETA, whose attention has been taken by the other men, follows her off stage—walking softly and with elaborate nonchalance.)

ZETA (replying to the others) : That's right—she's on a visit to Paris, so I invited her. Clever move on my part, don't you think?

(During the next few exchanges, a number of LADIES and GENTLEMEN stroll in from the Ballroom, among them OLGA and KROMOV. OLGA is obviously very fed up, and makes little effort to conceal her resentment of the fact that KROMOV has her arm firmly linked in his. He glances suspiciously at her every time her eye wanders.)

BOGDAN. (replying to ZETA) : I see what you mean. Your Excellency is keen on the widow's twenty millions.

CASCADA : Twenty millions! Sapsst!

ST. B. (with a sigh) : Twenty millions! How very nice.

ZETA : Also she's an unusually pretty woman.

ST. B. : A pretty woman with twenty millions! Sounds too good to be true!

ZETA : Furthermore, her money is in the Bank of Pontevetro—where it must remain. If she decided to marry a foreigner while she's here, we'd lose the lot. And that must be avoided at all costs!

(OLGA has shaken off KROMOV's arm and is moving forward with PRASKOVIA.)

OLGA (to PRASKOVIA) : Just fancy, my dear! The daughter of a poor tenant farmer—up to his eyes in debt! She marries an elderly banker, and he leaves her a widow in less than a week!

PRASKOVIA : That's what I call the act of a perfect gentleman. And now, I suppose, the simple country girl has become a smart society woman?

OLGA : But she still calls a spade a spade! And she isn't given to keeping her mouth shut, either.

ZETA : And a very pretty mouth too, if I may say so!

OLGA : Oh, Baron! (Giggling, she prods him with her fan in mock reproach.)

No. 2 . . . MELOS. (Ballroom Music)

(The Waltz begins mezzo-forte, and fades down as ZETA announces) :

ZETA : The interval's over, ladies and gentlemen! On with the dance!

(The music should be played twice through—softly but liltingly—under the continuing dialogue, fading down to a whisper during the second half of the repeat, and imperceptibly dying away.)

During this, the LADIES and GENTLEMEN disperse towards the Ballroom. As OLGA moves away, KROMOV once again grabs her arm. They exit, leaving ST. BRIOCHE and CASCADA alone together.)

ST. B. (Breathlessly) : Twenty millions . . .

CASCADA (sharply) : Monsieur St. Brioché!

ST. B. : Yes, my dear Vicomte?

CASCADA : Do you intend to marry the widow?

ST. B. : Most decidedly—if she will have me.

CASCADA : She won't.

ST. B. (indignantly) : Why not?

CASCADA : Because—most decidedly—she will have me.

ST. B. : We'll see about that!

CASCADA : We certainly will!

(They bow stiffly to each other, with a click of heels, and exit towards the ballroom in opposite directions—just as ZETA enters, followed by NJEGUS. ZETA looks significantly towards ST. BRIOCHE and CASCADA.)

ZETA (to NJEGUS) : Those two are up to something—and we've got to—(Illustrating with his hands)—nip it in the bud.

NJEGUS : What do you think it is, your Excellency?

ZETA : Don't be a fool, NJEGUS—the Widow, of course! Whatever happens, she mustn't marry anyone but a Pontevetroian—or we lose a cool twenty millions.

NJEGUS : May I remind your Excellency that I am a bachelor?

ZETA : I'm not surprised. (Irritably.) And don't make footling remarks when I'm trying to think.

NJEGUS (abashed) : No, your Excellency.

ZETA : We need somebody young, good-looking, experienced, attractive to women . . . If it weren't for the fact that I'm married already—(Breaks off and snaps his fingers.) I have it! Count Danilovitsch!

NJEGUS : Count Danilovitsch? What about him?

ZETA : He's the very man! The man to earn twenty millions for the Fatherland!

NJEGUS : Earn? He's never earned anything in his life!

ZETA : Then it's time he did! He starts to-night. Find him—get him here at once!

NJEGUS : I'll try, your Excellency—

ZETA : And be quick about it! Madame Glavari will be here any moment! (Exit to Ballroom.)

NJEGUS (raising his eyes to heaven) : Count Danilovitsch!—(Shrugs helplessly and exit R.)

(The music of No. 3—"A Highly Respectable Wife" begins.)

(VALENCIENNE appears L, on the first note of the music, and beckons to CAMILLE, who follows her on stage.)

VALEN. : Camille! I simply must talk to you—while there's no one about.