

PIETRO. Oh, you lucky people! Oh, you fortunate villagers! A perfectly remote and altogether obscure corner of Europe favoured with the presence of a company of artists whom all the crowned heads of Europe are quarrelling to possess! (*To BARTOLO.*) Solo, if you please, expressive of a general withdrawal of ambassadors from all the European Courts. (*Flourish.*) The Czar of Russia is no longer on terms with the Empress of New York because I visited her first. A lady, you know! As a man of gallantry I couldn't refuse. But, mum! I must be discreet. (*To BARTOLO.*) Solo, if you please, expressive of the honorable silence of a self-respecting man of gallantry. (*BARTOLO flourishes his drumsticks and pretends to play Pandean pipes, but without eliciting any sound.*) Now, what do you think we came for?

CHORUS. Gold!

PIETRO. Gold? Bah! Try again.

CHORUS. Silver!

PIETRO. Silver? Why, we're sick of gold and silver!

BARTOLO. Could you oblige me with my last week's salary?

PIETRO. Gold! (*Taking a handful from his pocket and looking at it in disgust.*) Ugh! (*Shuddering.*) Here — catch! (*About to throw it to them.*) Stop! On second thoughts it will only give you ideas above your station. But come — I will be frank with you. The greatest men have their weaknesses and I have mine. I have been cursed through life with a morbid craving for copper! I was cradled in copper. I have frequently been taken up by a copper. A bull once tossed me for a copper. "Heads!" I cried. I came down tails, and he won. I was hurt. I felt it very much. (*To BARTOLO.*) Solo, if you please, expressive of feelings that may be more easily imagined than described. (*Flourish.*) Now to business. At half-past five will be presented a dress rehearsal of the performance to be given before the Duke and Duchess of Pallavicini, comprising an exhibition of conjuring, necromancy, spirit manifestations, thought-reading, hypnotism, mesmeric psychology, psychography, sensory hallucination, dancing on the slack wire and ground, and lofty tumbling. Also will be exhibited the two world-renowned life-size clock-work automata, representing Hamlet and Ophelia (*unrolling two posters representing the figures*) as they appeared in the bosoms of their families before they disgraced their friends by taking to the stage for a livelihood. The price of admission will be one penny for the aristocracy, members of the upper middle classes half price. At half-past five. Be in time — be in time — be in time!

*During this speech PIETRO has frequently refreshed himself from a large wine-skin, which is also referred to by BARTOLO when PIETRO is not looking.*