

*Exeunt Girls — all but MINESTRA.*

ARROSTINO. Now then, to business. Anything to report?

GIORGIO. Yes. A traveling Englishman passed our encampment this morning.

ARROSTINO. Good. We have a vendetta against all traveling Englishmen. The relation of our ancestor's neighbour was arrested by a traveling Englishman. Well?

GIORGIO. No — very bad. The cowardly ruffian was armed.

ARROSTINO. What a lily-livered hound! That's so like these Englishman. This growing habit of carrying revolvers is the curse of our profession. Anything else?

LUIGI. Only an old market-woman on a mule.

ARROSTINO. Well, we have a vendetta against all old market-women on a mule. Did you arrest her?

LUIGI. We were about to do so, but she passed us in silent contempt.

ARROSTINO. Humph! This growing habit of passing us in silent contempt strikes at the very root of our little earnings. Of course you could do nothing?

GIORGIO. Nothing whatever. You see, as we are all to be married in the next three weeks, we are bound, as men of honour, to hand over our personal charms in the same condition of substantial and decorative repair that they were in when we captivated these confiding creatures.

ARROSTINO. Naturally. It is plain that a man who offers a girl his hand and comes to claim her with his arm amputated at the shoulder, is no longer in a position to fulfill his contract. A man who proposes with a Roman nose and turns up at the altar with a snub is guilty of flat dishonesty, on the face of it. At the same time, that's no reason why you shouldn't pick off the bits of cotton wool in which you are in the habit of putting yourselves away at night. (*Picking scraps of wool from the coats of LUIGI and GIORGIO.*) To people who are unacquainted with the circumstances it might look a little unmanly. I don't know — perhaps not. (*Replacing the scraps of wool on their coats.*) However, take heart. I have an enterprise in hand which promises the very maximum of profit with the very minimum of risk. The Duke and Duchess — I believe we have a vendetta against all Dukes and Duchesses.

GIORGIO. The judge who sentenced the relation of our ancestor's neighbour would have been a duke if they had created him one.

ARROSTINO. The scoundrel! Then I intend to secure this Duke and Duchess.

GIORGIO. Ah! But how? Remember the motto of our band — "Heroism without risk."

ARROSTINO. We shall do it diplomatically, of course. In the first place, we shall seize on yonder monastery —

LUIGI. When the monks are asleep?

ARROSTINO. Why, of course — and dress ourselves in their robes. In the mean time, Minestra, disguised as an old woman, will lure the Duke away from his escort and into our power.

MINESTRA. I think I could do it better as a *young* woman.

ARROSTINO. Nonsense, you little goose — you know nothing about it! Listen!