

TERESA. Now come and talk it over, like a sensible boy. (*They sit — he at her feet.*) Come, tell me all about it. You know you used always to confide your little troubles to me.

ALFREDO. I've nothing to say, except that I'm over head and ears in love with you.

TERESA. Now, first of all, you mustn't say "you"; it's too personal. Say, "I'm over head and ears in love with Teresa!"

ALFREDO. Well, so I am.

TERESA. Poor boy! Well, I can quite understand it, for, with all her faults, she's far and away the nicest girl hereabouts. Now, look at it sensibly. If you, a plain young man, married a conspicuous beauty (for, after all's said and done, that's what it comes to), you would be under a perpetual disadvantage from sheer force of contrast; and as for jealousy — well, I've known Teresa since she was quite a little girl, and take my word for it, she would keep you on chronic tenterhooks. Now, if you married a thoroughly plain girl — like Elvino's niece Ultrice, for instance — (*ULTRICE enters and overhears what follows.*) who couldn't possibly, under any circumstances, give you the least uneasiness on the score of her personal attractions — you might count on being as happy as two thoroughly unattractive little birds could reasonably expect to be.

ALFREDO. Ultrice! What do I want with Ultrice? She follows me everywhere. She worries my life out.

TERESA. Ultrice is quite a good sort of girl; and as to her personal appearance, why, you'd get used even to that in a couple of years!

ULTRICE *comes forward.*