

Duke: At last we have arrived at our destination. This is the Ducal Palace, and it is here that the Grand Inquisitor resides. As a Castilian hidalgo of ninety-five quarterings, I regret that I am unable to pay my state visit on a horse. As a Castilian hidalgo of that description, I should have preferred to ride through the streets of Venice; but owing, I presume, to an unusually wet season, the streets are in such a condition that equestrian exercise is impracticable. No matter. Where is our suite?

X **Luiz:** (*coming forward*) Your Grace, I am here.

Duchess: Why do you not do yourself the honour to kneel when you address his Grace?

Duke: X My love, it is so small a matter! ^{turn} (*to Luiz*) Still, you may as well do it. (*Luiz kneels.*)

X **Casilda:** The young man seems to entertain but an imperfect appreciation of the respect due ^{to Luiz} from a menial to a Castilian hidalgo.

Duke: My child, you are hard upon our suite.

Casilda: Papa, I've no patience with the presumption of persons in his plebeian position. If he does not appreciate that position, let him be whipped until he does.

Duke: Let us hope the omission was not intended as a slight. I should be much hurt if I thought it was. So would he. (*To Luiz*) Where are the halberdiers who were to have had the honour of meeting us here, that our visit to the Grand Inquisitor might be made in becoming state?
Casilda to Duke

Luiz: Your Grace, the halberdiers are mercenary people who stipulated for a trifle on account.

Duke: How tiresome! Well, let us hope the Grand Inquisitor is a blind gentleman. And the band who were to have had the honour of escorting us? I see no band!

Luiz: Your Grace, the band are sordid persons who required to be paid in advance.

Duchess: That's so like a band! the pit

Duke: (*annoyed*) Insuperable difficulties meet me at every turn!

Duchess: But surely they know his Grace?

Luiz: Exactly—they know his Grace.

Duke: Well, let us hope that the Grand Inquisitor is a deaf gentleman. A cornet-à-piston would be something. You do not happen to possess the accomplishment of tootling like a cornet-à-piston?

Luiz: Alas, no, your Grace! But I can imitate a farmyard.

Duke: (*doubtfully*) I don't see how that would help us. I don't see how we could bring it in.

Casilda: It would not help us in the least. We are not a parcel of graziers come to market, dolt! (*Luiz rises.*)

Duke: My love, our suite's feelings! (*To Luiz*) Be so good as to ring the bell and inform the Grand Inquisitor that his Grace the Duke of Plaza-Toro, Count Matadoro, Baron Picadoro—

Duchess: And suite—

Duke: And suite— have arrived at Venice, and seek—

Casilda: Desire —

Duchess: Demand!

Duke: And demand an audience.

Luiz: Your Grace has but to command.

Duke: (*much moved*) I felt sure of it— I felt sure of it! (*Exit Luiz into Ducal Palace.*) And now, my love— (*aside to Duchess*) shall we tell her? I think so— (*aloud to Casilda*) and now, my love, prepare for a magnificent surprise. It is my agreeable duty to reveal to you a secret which should make you the happiest young lady in Venice!

Casilda: A secret?

Duchess: A secret which, for State reasons, it has been necessary to preserve for twenty years.

Duke: When you were a prattling babe of six months old you were married by proxy to no less a personage than the infant son and heir of His Majesty the immeasurably wealthy King of Barataria!

Casilda: Married to the infant son of the King of Barataria? Was I consulted? (*Duke shakes his head.*) Then it was a most unpardonable liberty!

Duke: Consider his extreme youth and forgive him. Shortly after the ceremony that misguided monarch abandoned the creed of his forefathers, ~~and became a Wesleyan Methodist of the most bigoted and persecuting type.~~ The Grand Inquisitor, determined that the innovation should not be perpetuated in Barataria, caused your smiling and unconscious husband to be stolen and conveyed to Venice. A fortnight since, ~~the Methodist monarch and all his Wesleyan Court were killed in an insurrection,~~ and we are here to ascertain the whereabouts of your husband, and to hail you, our daughter, as Her Majesty, the reigning Queen of Barataria! (*Kneels*)

(*During this speech Luiz re-enters.*)

Duchess: Your Majesty! (*Kneels*)

Duke: It is at such moments as these that one feels how necessary it is to travel with a full band.

Casilda: I, the Queen of Barataria! But I've nothing to wear! We are practically penniless!

Duke: That point has not escaped me. Although I am unhappily in straitened circumstances at present, my social influence is something enormous; and a company, to be called the Duke of Plaza-Toro, Limited, is in course of formation to work me. An influential directorate has been secured, and I shall myself join the Board after allotment.

Casilda: Am I to understand that the Queen of Barataria may be called upon at any time to witness her honoured sire in process of liquidation?

Duchess: The speculation is not exempt from that drawback. If your father should stop, it will, of course, be necessary to wind him up.

Casilda: But it's so undignified— it's so degrading! A Grandee of Spain turned into a public company! Such a thing was never heard of!

Duke: My child, the Duke of Plaza-Toro does not follow fashions— he leads them. He always leads everybody. When he was in the army he led his regiment. He occasionally led them into action. He invariably led them out of it.