

(Enter LADY BLANCHE.)

BLAN. Melissa!

MEL. (*returning*). Mother!

BLAN. Here – a word with you.

5 Those are the three new students?

MEL. (*confused*). Yes, they are.

They're charming girls.

BLAN. Particularly so.

So graceful, and so very womanly!

10 So skilled in all a girl's accomplishments!

MEL. (*confused*). Yes – very skilled.

BLAN. They sing so nicely too!

MEL. They *do* sing nicely!

BLAN. Humph! It's very odd.

15 Two are tenors, one's a baritone!

MEL. (*much agitated*) They've all got colds!

BLAN. Colds! Bah! D'ye think I'm blind?

These 'girls' are men disguised!

MEL. Oh no – indeed!

20 You wrong these gentlemen – I mean – why, see,  
Here is an *étui* dropped by one of them (*picking up an étui.*)  
Containing scissors, needles, and –

BLAN. (*opening it*) Cigars!

Why, these *are* men! And you knew this, you minx!

25 MEL. Oh, spare them – they are gentlemen indeed.

The Prince Hilarion (married years ago  
To Princess Ida) with two trusted friends!

Consider, mother, he's her husband now,

And has been, twenty years! Consider too,

30 You're only second here – you should be first.

Assist the Prince's plan, and when he gains

The Princess Ida, why, you *will* be first.

You will design the fashions – think of that –

And always serve out all the punishments!

35 The scheme is harmless, mother – wink at it!

BLAN. (*aside*) The prospect's tempting! Well, well, well, I'll try –

Though I've not winked at anything for years!

'Tis but one step towards my destiny –

The mighty Must! the inevitable Shall!