**Higgins/Pickering**

Mrs. Higgins. You silly boy, of course she’s not presentable. She’s a triumph of your art and of her dressmaker’s; but if you suppose for a moment that she doesn’t give herself away in every sentence she utters, you must be perfectly cracked about her.

Pickering. But don’t you think something might be done? I mean something to eliminate the sanguinary element from her conversation.

Mrs. Higgins. Not as long as she is in Henry’s hands.

Higgins [*aggrieved*] Do you mean that my language is improper?

Mrs. Higgins. No, dearest: it would be quite proper — say on a canal barge; but it would not be proper for her at a garden party.

Higgins [*deeply injured*] Well I must say —

Pickering [*interrupting him*] Come, Higgins: you must learn to know yourself. I haven’t heard such language as yours since we used to review the volunteers in Hyde Park twenty years ago.

Higgins [*sulkily*] Oh, well, if you say so, I suppose I don’t always talk like a bishop.

Mrs. Higgins [*quieting Henry with a touch*] Colonel Pickering: will you tell me what is the exact state of things in Wimpole Street?

Pickering [*cheerfully: as if this completely changed the subject*] Well, I have come to live there with Henry. We work together at my Indian Dialects; and we think it more convenient —

Mrs. Higgins. Quite so. I know all about that: it’s an excellent arrangement. But where does this girl live?

Higgins. With us, of course. Where would she live?

Mrs. Higgins. But on what terms? Is she a servant? If not, what is she?

Pickering [*slowly*] I think I know what you mean, Mrs. Higgins.

Higgins. Well, dash me if I do! I’ve had to work at the girl every day for months to get her to her present pitch. Besides, she’s useful. She knows where my things are, and remembers my appointments and so forth.

Mrs. Higgins. How does your housekeeper get on with her?

Higgins. Mrs. Pearce? Oh, she’s jolly glad to get so much taken off her hands; for before Eliza came, she had to have to find things and remind me of my appointments. But she’s got some silly bee in her bonnet about Eliza. She keeps saying “You don’t think, sir”: doesn’t she, Pick?

Pickering. Yes: that’s the formula. “You don’t think, sir.” That’s the end of every conversation about Eliza.

Higgins. As if I ever stop thinking about the girl and her confounded vowels and consonants. I’m worn out, thinking about her, and watching her lips and her teeth and her tongue, not to mention her soul, which is the quaintest of the lot.

Mrs. Higgins. You certainly are a pretty pair of babies, playing with your live doll.

Higgins. Playing! The hardest job I ever tackled: make no mistake about that, mother. But you have no idea how frightfully interesting it is to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her. It’s filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul.

Pickering [*drawing his chair closer to Mrs. Higgins and bending over to her eagerly*] Yes: it’s enormously interesting. I assure you, Mrs. Higgins, we take Eliza very seriously. Every week — every day almost — there is some new change. [*Closer again*] We keep recordings of every stage — and photographs —

Higgins [*assailing her at the other ear*] Yes, by George: it’s the most absorbing experiment I ever tackled. She regularly fills our lives up; doesn’t she, Pick?

Pickering. We’re always talking Eliza.

Higgins. Teaching Eliza.

Pickering. Dressing Eliza.

Mrs. Higgins. What!

Higgins. Inventing new Eliza’s.

*Higgins and Pickering, speaking together:*

Higgins. You know, she has the most extraordinary quickness of ear:

Pickering. I assure you, my dear Mrs. Higgins, that girl

Higgins. just like a parrot. I’ve tried her with every

Pickering. is a genius. She can play the piano quite beautifully

Higgins. possible sort of sound that a human being can make —

Pickering. We have taken her to classical concerts and to music

Higgins. Continental dialects, African dialects, Hottentot

Pickering. halls; and it’s all the same to her: she plays everything

Higgins. clicks, things it took me years to get hold of; and

Pickering. she hears right off when she comes home, whether it’s

Higgins. she picks them up like a shot, right away, as if she had

Pickering. Beethoven and Brahms or Lehar and Lionel Morickton;

Higgins. been at it all her life.

Pickering. though six months ago, she’d never as much as touched a piano.