Enter NOTARY TANNHÄUSER.

NOTARY. Hallo! Surely I'm not late?

(All chatter unintelligibly in reply.)

NOTARY. But, dear me, you're all at breakfast! Has the wedding taken place?

(All chatter unintelligibly in reply.)

NOTARY. My good girls, one at a time, I beg. Let me understand the situation. As solicitor to the conspiracy to dethrone the Grand Duke—a conspiracy in which the members of this company are deeply involved—I am invited to the marriage of two of its members. I present myself in due course, and I find, not only that the ceremony has taken place—which is not of the least consequence—but the wedding breakfast is half eaten—which is a consideration of the most serious importance.

(LUDWIG *and* LISA *come down.*)

LUDWIG. But the ceremony has *not* taken place. We can't get a parson.

NOTARY. Can't get a parson! Why, how's that? They're three a penny!

LUDWIG. Oh, it's the old story—the Grand Duke!

ALL. Ugh!

LUDWIG. It seems that the little imp has selected this, our wedding day, for a convocation of all the clergy in the town to settle the details of his approaching marriage with the enormously wealthy Baroness von Krakenfeldt, and there won't be a parson to be had for love or money until six o'clock this evening!

LISA. And as we produce our magnificent classical revival of *Troilus and Cressida* to-night at seven, we have no alternative but to eat our wedding-breakfast before we've earned it. So sit down, and make the best of it.

GRETCHEN. Oh, I should like to pull his Grand Ducal ears for him, that I should. He's the meanest, the cruellest, the most spiteful little ape in Christendom!

OLGA. Well, we shall soon be freed from his tyranny. To-morrow the Despot is to be dethroned.

LUDWIG. Hush, rash girl! You know not what you say.

OLGA. Don't be absurd! We're all in it—we're all tiled, here.

LUDWIG. That has nothing to do with it. Know ye not that in alluding to our conspiracy without having first given and received the secret sign, you are violating a fundamental principle of our Association?