

I'm a respectable girl; so help me, I never spoke to him except to ask him to buy a flower off me.

*[There is a general hubbub, mostly sympathetic to ELIZA, but deprecating her excessive sensibility.]*

ANOTHER BYSTANDER: What's the row?

A HOXTON MAN: What's all the bloomin' noise?

A SELSEY MAN: There's a tec takin' her down.

ELIZA *[crying wildly - to PICKERING]*: Oh, sir, don't let him charge me! You dunno what it means to me. They'll take away my character and drive me on the streets for speakin' to gentlemen.

*[PROFESSOR HIGGINS pivots around the post and into view.]*

HIGGINS: There! There! There! Who's hurting you, you silly girl! What do you take me for?

ELIZA *[to HIGGINS - still hysterical]*: On my Bible oath, I never said a word . . .

HIGGINS *[overbearing, but good-humored]*: Oh, shut up, shut up. Do I look like a policeman?

ELIZA: Then what did you take down my words for? How do I know whether you took me down right? You just show me what you wrote about me.

*[HIGGINS opens his book and holds it steadily under her nose, though the pressure of the mob trying to read it over his shoulders would upset a weaker man.]*

What's this? That ain't proper writing. I can't read that.

HIGGINS: I can. *[Reads, reproducing her pronunciation]* I say, Captain, buy a flower off a poor girl.

ELIZA: It's because I called him Captain! I meant no harm. *[To PICKERING]* Oh, sir, don't let him lay a charge agen me for a word like that. You . . .

PICKERING: Charge! I make no charge. *[To HIGGINS]* Really, sir, if you are a detective, you need not begin protecting me against molestation by young women until I ask you. Anybody could see the girl meant no harm.