

MY FAIR LADY

manner varies from genial bullying when he is in a good humour to stormy petulance when anything goes wrong; but he is so entirely frank and void of malice that he remains likeable even in his least reasonable moments.

PICKERING: I say, Higgins, couldn't we turn on the lights?

HIGGINS: Nonsense, you hear much better in the dark.

PICKERING: But it's a fearful strain listening to all these vowel sounds. I'm quite done up for this morning.

[MRS PEARCE enters. She is HIGGINS' housekeeper.]

MRS PEARCE: Mr Higgins, are you there?

HIGGINS: What is it, Mrs Pearce? [He turns down the volume of the machine.]

MRS PEARCE: A young woman wants to see you, sir.

HIGGINS [turning the machine off]: A young woman! What does she want? [He switches on the light.] Has she an interesting accent? [To PICKERING] Let's have her up. Show her up, Mrs Pearce.

MRS PEARCE: Very well, sir. It's for you to say. [She goes out into the hall.]

HIGGINS: This is rather a bit of luck. I'll show you how I make records. We'll set her talking; and I'll take her down in Bell's Visible Speech; then in Broad Romic; and then we'll get her on the phonograph so that you can turn her on as often as you like with the written transcript before you.

MRS PEARCE [returning]: This is the young woman, sir.

[ELIZA enters in state. She has a hat with three ostrich feathers, orange, sky-blue, and red. She has a nearly clean apron, and the shoddy coat has been tidied a little. The pathos of this deplorable figure, with its innocent vanity and consequential air, touches PICKERING, who has already straightened himself in the presence of MRS PEARCE. But as to HIGGINS, the only distinction he makes between men and women is that when he is neither bullying nor exclaiming to the heavens against some featherweight cross, he coaxes women as a child coaxes its nurse when it wants to get anything out of her.]

HIGGINS [brusquely, recognizing her with unconcealed disappointment,