

# PINK CHAMPAGNE

## The Story of the Play

On a Spring morning in the year 1875, Gabriel Eisenstein, pleasure-loving Viennese business man, arrives home from a costume ball with an eight-day prison sentence hanging over him ; during the night he has been arrested for throwing his friend Falke, dressed up as a bat, into a public fountain! Gabriel's pretty wife, Rosalinda, furious at his behaviour and at his having to go to prison on the evening of their wedding anniversary, decides to revenge herself, by inviting her admirer, Alfred, an opera singer, to take her husband's place at supper. Unfortunately she does not know that Gabriel, led astray by the apparently forgiving Falke, has gone *not* to prison but to Prince Orlovsky's pink champagne party, and when the prison governor and his men come to arrest the missing man, they find Alfred very much at home, take him for the husband and remove him into custody. Rosalinda dare not confess that the singer is *not* Gabriel.

The scene changes to the Orlovsky Ball, to which the impish Falke, as part of his revenge for the bat episode, has invited not only Gabriel but also Frank, the prison governor, and Rosalinda! Gaoler and gaol-bird come incognito as two French aristocrats; Rosalinda appears as a masked Hungarian beauty. A further, unforeseen, complication is provided by the presence of Rosalinda's pretty maid, Adele, playing truant for the night. Under the influence of pink champagne, Gabriel pays court to his own wife and loses to her the chiming watch with which he tried to tempt her to a rendezvous. Before he can recover this piece of evidence it is 6 a.m., time for him and the governor to make their (separate) ways to the gaol. Towards dawn the prison is the scene of many complications. The wretched Alfred, having called for a lawyer, is provided with a certain Dr. Blind - who happens to be Gabriel's attorney, too; Gabriel, disclosing his true identity to the Governor, finds out to his dismay that there is already an "Eisenstein" in the cells who had been caught *tete-a-tete* with Rosalinda. Adele comes to seek Gabriel's pardon for her truancy - and Rosalinda to arrange for Alfred's liberation before her husband can find out about their *souper à deux* !

Disguising himself as the lawyer, Gabriel upbraids his wife; when he reveals himself, Rosalinda counters by producing the watch. The couple are reconciled, and a *denouement* is provided by the appearance of Falke and the guests from the ball, who are able to blackmail the Governor into granting Gabriel's immediate release!