

CREATURES OF IMPULSE

WRITTEN BY W. S. GILBERT

A SHORT STORY, 1870

A MUSICAL FAIRY TALE, 1871

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Creatures of Impulse is a stage play by English dramatist W. S. Gilbert, adapted from his own short story. It is a “Musical Fairy Tale” with music by Alberto Randegger. Both the play and the short story concern an unwanted and ill-tempered old fairy who enchants people to behave in a manner opposite to their natures, with farcical results.

Gilbert first published *Creatures of Impulse* as a short story, under the title “A Strange Old Lady,” in the 1870 Christmas edition of *The Graphic*, an illustrated weekly newspaper. He later selected it for inclusion in the only collection of his short stories published during his lifetime, *Foggerty’s Fairy and Other Tales* (1890), at which point he renamed it to match the theatrical adaptation

He adapted the story into a play for the Royal Court Theatre in 1871. While the lyrics survive, the music was never published and is lost. Reviews of the play were mostly positive, though it was criticized for the lack of a significant plot to support its comic premise. Nonetheless, reviewers found it enjoyable, and it was a modest success, running for 91 performances and enjoying revivals into the early part of the 20th century.

Gilbert changed character names from the story into the play. In order to maintain reader continuity, Dorothy/Martha and Verditter/Booblehardt will be addressed in the play as Landlady and Miser. Jenny becomes Pipette in the play.

The underline items below are unique to the short story, the plain type items are unique to the play, *and the italic items are common to both.*

<u>SHORT STORY</u>	MUSICAL PLAY	<i>PART PLAYED</i>
<u>DOROTHY TRABBS</u>	MARTHA	<i>Landlady of the Three Pigeons</i>
<u>JENNY</u>	PIPETTE	<i><u>Landlady’s Daughter</u> / Niece</i>
<u>PETER</u>	PETER	<i><u>Nephew</u> / Young Farmer</i>
<u>SERGEANT BRICE</u>	SERGEANT KLOOQUE	<i>Sergeant in the <u>Queen’s Guard</u></i>
<u>VERDITTER</u>	BOOMBLEHARDT	<i>Miser</i>
<u>OLD LADY</u>	OLD LADY	<i>Strange old lady who is a Fairy</i>
	JACQUES	<i>Villager</i>

Mistress Dorothy Trabbs was the buxom landlady of the “Three Pigeons,” a pretty country inn on the road from London to Norwich, and Mistress Dorothy was held by competent judges to be the pleasantest landlady on that road, for she was very pretty, and very round, and very plump — too plump, some people said, but that was envy. She had a pretty daughter, Jenny, and a clumsy, cowardly, ill-conditioned, gawky nephew, named Peter; and these two, with a chamber-maid and a nondescript “odd-man,” constituted her staff of assistants.

Jenny was a very pretty little girl, but so absurdly shy that her prettiness went for nothing. I suppose it was this very shyness of hers that emboldened Peter to fall in love with her; for he was such a timid donkey that an ordinarily self-possessed woman frightened him into fits. At all events he *did* fall in love with her, and he told her so. And when he told her so, Jenny forgot, for the moment, her shyness and boxed his ears soundly. He felt this blow so much that he never opened the subject again. In fact, Jenny had a proper contempt for cowards, and like all women, shy or otherwise, adored manly courage. And Sergeant Brice, of Her Majesty Queen Anne’s Foot Guards, who had just returned from Malplaquet with a bullet in his right leg, but otherwise well and hearty, and who had received a billet on the “Three Pigeons,” was as brave as a man need be. So Jenny fell in love with him, but nobody knew anything about it.

At the time when my story opens, Mistress Dorothy was in a terrible state of perplexity. A strange Old Lady, who declined to give any name or any reference as to her respectability, and who had no luggage whatever, had taken up her abode at the “Three Pigeons,” and steadily refused to pay any rent at all. This state of things had continued for three months, and seemed likely to continue for three more months, or three years for that matter, for the Old Lady was a fairy of a malignant description, and had it in her power to inflict all sorts of punishment on anybody who displeased her. At first Mistress Dorothy declined to supply her with food, but the Old Lady explained that she could live quite comfortably without any food at all, and indeed would much prefer not to have any refreshment of any kind set before her. So, as I said before, Mistress Dorothy was in a terrible state of perplexity, and a council of war was held in the bar-parlour, in which council Sergeant Brice, Jenny, and the abject Peter assisted, together with a wealthy, but very disreputable, old miser named Verditter, who was collecting rents in the neighbourhood, and who had made the “Three Pigeons” his head-quarters because it was the cheapest as well as the best inn in the village.

Peter, abject coward as he was, had one redeeming virtue — he was not superstitious. He declined to believe in fairies at all, and especially in the particular fairy under discussion. He had, on one occasion, seen the Old Lady cleaning her teeth with a tooth-brush, and he argued, with some show of reason, that this proved she was not a fairy, as fairies did everything with a wand. So, as the Old Lady was a very weak and tottering old lady, he thought that he might venture to tackle her without incurring any serious risk. Moreover, as all the others most firmly believed in her super-natural character, he would no doubt acquire a cheap reputation for courage if he offered to undertake to get her out of the house. So he walked boldly into her room with the firm intention of bullying her out of it.

“Now, Old Lady,” said Peter, “we’ve put up with you long enough. Pack up your tooth-brush, and be off, for your room is wanted, and your company is not.”

“Take care, Peter,” said the Old Lady.

“Take care! What have I to take care of? Why, I could manage two old women like you any day in the week!” and he stalked about like a swashbuckler.

“Take care, Peter,” answered she, “or I shall give you a sound thrashing.”

But Peter didn’t care any longer, indeed he was so rude as to put out his tongue at her, and by his general demeanour he expressed the most marked contempt for her physical strength.

“Now, Old Lady, enough of this,” said he; “you talk of thrashing me. ME? Come on!” And Peter took off his coat, and squared-up to her with great bravery.

“Peter,” said she, “you have thought fit to square-up to me. You will continue to square-up at every-body you meet, until further notice,”

The Old Lady hobbled away into her bed-room, and Peter, to his extreme dismay, found himself compelled to be continually squaring-up, in an undaunted manner, at a roomful of invisible enemies. He retired in great confusion to his loft, shouting down to his friends in the bar-parlour, that he had altogether failed in his mission.

It was now Jenny’s turn to try her luck with the Old Lady. The poor little timid girl set about her work with great reluctance.

“Well, my dear,” said the Old Lady, “what do you want?”

Jenny, finding the Old Lady in an amiable mood, thought that she could not do better than endeavour to coax her out of the place.

“Dear Old Lady,” said she, “you are so kind, and so good, and so amiable, that I am sure it is only necessary to tell you that we want your room or your rent, and you will immediately humour our little wishes in this respect. Now do, there’s a dear, kind, pretty Old Lady.”

And Jenny began to kiss and coax the Old Lady, as no Old Lady was ever kissed and coaxed before.

“My dear,” said the Old Lady, “this show of affection for one you don’t care twopence about, is very disgusting, and, as a punishment, you will be so good as to kiss and coax everybody you meet until further notice.”

And Jenny retired in great confusion to her room, calling downstairs to her friends in the bar-parlour, that she had altogether failed in her mission.

The brave Sergeant Brice’s turn came next.

“Well, Old Lady,” said he.

“Go away, soldier,” said she. “I hate soldiers!”

“But—”

“Go away; you’re a bold, bad man!”

And she struck so hard at the brave Sergeant with her crutched stick, that he was obliged to dodge and duck all over the room in order to ward off her blows.

“As a punishment for your impertinence in entering my room without permission,” said the Old Lady, “you will be so obliging to dodge and duck, as you are dodging and ducking now, before everybody you meet.”

And the bold Sergeant retreated in great amazement to his room, dodging and ducking at an imaginary foe all the way, and shouting downstairs to his friends in the bar-parlour, that he had altogether failed in his mission.

Old Verditter, the miser, had, in the meantime, been getting on very well with plump Mistress Dorothy, and having looked round the comfortable bar-parlour, and noticed the silver spoons and the silver tea-pot, and the large silver salver on the sideboard, he had settled in his own mind that Dorothy would make him a very comfortable and remunerative wife. Indeed he had got so far as to make two or three very broad hints on the subject, when Mistress Dorothy cut him short by begging him to be so good as to try what he could do to get the tiresome Old Lady out of the house. Verditter had a firm faith in the power of gold to work out any social problem, and readily undertook to get rid of Mistress Dorothy’s unremunerative lodger.

So taking the big bag of gold, which he had collected from his tenants during the day, he walked fearlessly into the Old Lady’s room.

“Now, ma’am,” said he, “Mistress Dorothy wishes you to go, and I presume that you do not comply with her request, because you have no money with which to pay your travelling expenses to another town. Allow me to present you with this guinea, which I have no doubt will enable you to reach your destination.”

“You are an impertinent old scamp to dare to offer me money,” said the Old Lady; “and, as a punishment, you will be good enough to offer guineas out of that bag to everyone you meet, until further notice.”

And the wretched miser retreated in great amazement to the smoking-room (which he knew was empty), offering guineas right and left to imaginary applicants, and screaming downstairs to Mistress Dorothy in the bar-parlour, that he had altogether failed in his mission.

Peter was getting hungry in his cock-loft, so he ventured to descend, squaring at nobody, with a great show of valour. His only hope was that he should not meet the Sergeant, and this hope was gratified, for the only person he met was Jenny, who had ventured down-stairs in order to consult her mother as to the best means of breaking the very compromising spell that the Old Lady had thrown over her. But the mother had gone out to consult the village schoolmaster, who was a celebrated witch-finder, and a great authority on all matters connected with the Powers of Darkness.

The shy and prudish Jenny, as soon as she saw the abhorred Peter, ran up to him, and, to her extreme consternation, endeavoured to throw her arms round his neck and kiss him. Peter, who was delighted at this proof of affection from a girl who had hitherto detested him, would have offered her every encouragement if he had not felt himself unfortunately compelled to hit out right and left at her in unyielding compliance with the request of the mischievous Old Lady upstairs.

“Peter,” said the retiring girl, “I hate and detest you.” And so saying she once more threw her arms round his neck, and he, delighted at her change of manner towards him, and attributing her angry words to the disappointment she felt at his rebuffing her, hit out from his shoulder so violently that she had the greatest difficulty in escaping the blow.

“Peter, you brute,” said she, “I don’t want to kiss you, but somehow I can’t help it.”

And again she tried to embrace him, and again he struck out at her.

“Peter,” said she, “I tell you I am doing this because I can’t help it. Please don’t hit me, because I am only obeying an irresistible impulse.”

And as she made a third attempt to get at him, the Sergeant walked into the room, dodging and ducking, as he dodged and ducked when the Old Lady ran after him with her stick. Peter, hearing the Sergeant coming, ran out of the room as fast as his legs could carry him.

“What!” said the Sergeant, “do I see my shy and timid Jenny endeavouring to embrace that gawky nincompoop, and do I hear her excusing herself by attributing her behaviour to an irresistible impulse?”

And he dodged and ducked about the room in a wholly irrational and unaccountable manner.

“Sergeant, do not hastily condemn me,” said Jenny, rushing at the Sergeant, and endeavouring to embrace him as she before endeavoured to embrace Peter.

“Jenny, I’m ashamed of you — shocked, — disgusted!” said he, dodging and ducking, as she tried to throw her arms round his neck. “I loved you for your remarkable and unexampled modesty: but really — ”

“Don’t, don’t be hard on me. Sergeant,” said she; “indeed, I am as timid and modest as ever, but an irrepressible impulse compels me to kiss every man I meet.”

And she once more threw her arms around him and embraced him. The Sergeant (who had been very carefully brought up) was horrified, and rushed from the room into the street in utter disgust, dodging and ducking all the way, Jenny following him with a most demonstrative show of affection.

In the street the Sergeant met Peter. Peter was in a terrible state of mind, and encountering the Sergeant, would willingly have run away: but the spell the Old Lady had thrown over him compelled him to square up at the Sergeant in the most reckless manner imaginable.

The Sergeant, who was furious at having discovered Jenny’s apparent love for Peter, desired nothing better than to give Peter a sound thrashing, but to his own intense annoyance, and to Peter’s unspeakable surprise and relief, the fairy’s spell compelled the Sergeant to duck and dodge as Peter struck at him as if he (the Sergeant) were in a state of the most abject fear.

“Sergeant,” said Peter, “please don’t be angry; but indeed I can’t help it.”

And he hit the Sergeant straight between the eyes.

“I sincerely trust that this will not hurt you much!”

And he struck the Sergeant full upon his military nose.

“I earnestly hope that you will derive no inconvenience from this round-hander.”

And he planted a round-hander just on the Sergeant’s left ear, as that officer ducked and dodged about, apparently in a great state of terror, but really boiling with indignation and thirsting for his adversary’s blood.

“Well,” said Jenny, hugging the odd-man (who was the only other person within sight, and who did not resist as the Sergeant and Peter had resisted, but who, on the contrary, patiently allowed her to do what she pleased) — “Well,” said she, “I did think the Sergeant was a brave man; and see how Peter is giving it to him — Peter, who is such a coward!”

And she ran into the house, determined to have nothing to do with either of them.

In the house she met Verditter the miser, whom she heartily detested, the more so because there was every prospect that he would some day be her step-father; but nevertheless she ran up to him, and explaining that he was not to misinterpret the compliment as she was acting under an irresistible impulse, threw her arms round his neck and began to kiss him as she had kissed the others. Verditter was delighted (for he was a dreadful old Turk), but it was not on that account that he presented her with a succession of guineas from his long bag; he did that in compliance with the whim of the strange Old Lady.

Jenny was very much annoyed indeed, not only at having behaved in such a forward manner to old Verditter, but also because she considered his presenting her with guineas an act of extremely bad taste. However, she did not wish to offend him by refusing his guineas, for he was a vicious old man who always resented an insult, so she pocketed them with a very bad grace, and spent them the next day with extreme reluctance on a handsome brooch and earrings, which she wore ever afterwards as a kind of punishment upon herself for having taken the old man's money at all.

As old Verditter was handing over his guineas, with a most piteous expression of countenance, to Jenny, who could scarcely conceal her annoyance at having to take them, who should come in but Mistress Dorothy. Mistress Dorothy had been trying her hand to get rid of the Old Lady, and having fairly lost her temper, endeavoured to push the Old Lady by main force out of the house. So the Old Lady compelled her to go on pushing everybody away from her until further notice.

As soon as Mistress Dorothy entered, Jenny ran away in great confusion, so old Verditter turned his attention to the buxom landlady and began, to his intense dismay and to her intense delight and astonishment, to offer her guineas from his long bag. But to *her* intense dismay, and to *his* intense delight and astonishment, she felt herself compelled to push him and his guineas away, although she would have liked to have pocketed the whole bagful.

"Ma'am," said he, handing her a guinea, "do not misunderstand me. I give you this money under an irresistible impulse."

"Sir," said she, "you are extremely good, but an irresistible impulse compels me to reject it."

Here the Sergeant entered, dodging and ducking as before.

"Sir," said old Verditter, "do not be alarmed. I am not going to hurt you. I feel myself compelled to offer you a guinea."

"Sir," said the Sergeant, pocketing the money, "I never yet was alarmed in my life. I dodge and duck like this because I am acting under an irresistible impulse."

At this point Peter entered, squaring-up in the fiercest manner at everybody.

“Sir,” said old Verditter, “I hope you will not be offended, but an irresistible impulse compels me to offer you a guinea.”

“Sir,” said Peter, pocketing the money, “I am far from being offended, and I sincerely trust you will take this in good part.”

And he knocked old Verditter down to the great astonishment of everybody. Jenny, hearing Mistress Dorothy scream, ran in to see what was the matter. By this time the state of affairs was as follows:

The miserly old Verditter, with tears in his eyes and the worst of language on his lips, was handing guineas to everyone as fast as he could get them out of his bag.

The hospitable Mistress Dorothy was trying to turn him and everybody else out of her inn.

The cowardly Peter was squaring-up at everybody, and particularly at the Sergeant, in an utterly reckless manner.

The valiant Sergeant was ducking and dodging from Peter and everybody else who came near him, as if he had been the most timid soul on the face of the earth.

And Jenny — the shy, modest, prudish, bashful, blushing Jenny — was kissing everybody right and left, as if her life depended on it.

In short, there never was a more extraordinary scene in a bar-parlour since bar-parlours first became an institution in Great Britain and Ireland.

In the midst of this scene the Old Lady entered, for she was curious to see how the spell that she had thrown over the inmates of the “Three Pigeons” was working.

Directly she entered, the attention of everyone was directed to her:

The Miser gave her gold.

The Landlady tried to push her out.

The Sergeant ducked and dodged at her.

The bashful Jenny kissed her.

And the cowardly Peter squared-up to her in such a determined manner, if she had not been surrounded by the others, he would have done her a serious injury.

In short, the Old Lady, who was much more than a match for each of them taken singly, was overpowered by numbers. She never thought of this when she entered the room, which was stupid in the Old Lady.

So she at once withdrew the spell she had over them, and they all resumed their natural attributes. Then the Old Lady, who felt very foolish at the error she had committed, hobbled out of the inn for good and all.

The really curious part of this story is that, after everything had been explained, and all had been restored to their normal courses of action, none of the personages in it married each other. They were all so annoyed at having made such fools of themselves that they walked out of the inn in different directions, and were never seen or heard of again.

Except Peter, who, seeing nothing to be ashamed of in having shown such undaunted courage, remained and kept the "Three Pigeons," and prospered remarkably to the end of his days.

END OF STORY.

<u>SHORT STORY</u>	MUSICAL PLAY	PART PLAYED
<u>DOROTHY TRABBS</u>	MARTHA	<i>Landlady of the Three Pigeons</i>
<u>JENNY</u>	PIPETTE	<u>Landlady's Daughter</u> / Niece
<u>PETER</u>	PETER	<u>Nephew</u> / Young Farmer
<u>SERGEANT BRICE</u>	SERGEANT KLOOQUE	<i>Sergeant in the Queen's Guard</i>
<u>VERDITTER</u>	BOOMBLEHARDT	<i>Miser</i>
<u>OLD LADY</u>	OLD LADY	<i>Strange old lady who is a Fairy</i>
	JACQUES	Villager

(Scene.—*Exterior of "The Three Pigeons," a Country Inn in the Alsace region of France. Entrance to inn, R; entrance through gate, C. JACQUES and VILLAGERS discovered.*)

OPENING CHORUS.

Did you ever know a lady [OldLady]
 So particularly shady,
 Though a very nice old party she was thought to be?
 I could see upon my honour,
 When I first set eyes upon her,
 That she wasn't any better than she ought to be.
 I was certain from her manner
 That of mischief she's a planner,
 And her moneybag she'll never loose to pay.
 If she doesn't shortly pack up,
 She will put poor Martha's [Landlady] back up
 And there'll be the very deuce to pay!

(*Enter BOOMBLEHARDT [MISER], with a very large bag of gold — they shake hands with him.*)

MISER. I give you good morning, ladies. I give you good morning, Peter.

JACQUES. What, for nothing?

MISER. Yes, I don't charge for it.

1STVILLAGER. Why, Master Booblehardt, you're getting liberal in your old age.

MISER. Yes, my dear, yes — he's but a churl that keeps all his happiness to himself. It's a lovely day! The very trees are waving their arms in ecstasy at the bright blue sky above them, and the bright green fields below them; and the pretty little birds are carolling a hymn of gratitude from their very topmost branches. It is indeed a good morning, and I give it to you — I give it to you!

JACQUES. You've got some more happiness in that long bag of yours, if one may judge by the chink of it. Can't you spare some of that?

MISER. Ha, ha! Do you know what that is? It's go-o-o-old!

2NDVILLAGER. All gold?

MISER. Yes, my dear, all go-o-o-old! It's my pretty little rents that I've been collecting.

1STVILLAGER. And are you going to keep it all to yourself?

MISER. No, no, I'm not so bad as that! I'm going to give you a little treat with it — a little treat.

ALL. A treat!

MISER. Yes, my dears, a treat! Have you any money of your own?

2NDVILLAGER. Not a penny.

MISER. Not a penny? Very good. The greatest pleasure in this world is the possession of money. Now that is a pleasure you can't have, because you don't possess any. The next greatest pleasure is looking at other people's money, and it's in my power to give you that pleasure, and shall I grudge it to you? No! See! (*Handling gold.*) Isn't it pretty! It's all go-o-o-old! Real golden guineas!

SONG — MISER.

Some people love Spring
 With it's butterfly wing;
 Some swear by the Summer — what folly!
 And some have confessed
 That the Autumn is best;
 Some people think Winter most jolly.
 But the seasons I swear,
 Are all equally fair.
 Their beauties I willingly preach, my dear.
 I worship them all
 From the Spring to the fall;
 For a quarter day [rent day] happens in each, my dear.

ALL. Oh, shabby, shabby!

MISER. There's gratitude for you! Well, it's the way of the world; but, do what I will, I cannot please people. Where's Mistress Martha [LANDLADY]?

(Enter PETER.)

PETER. She's inside, trying to induce her strange old lady to go.

MISER. What strange old lady?

PETER. Why, a wicked old woman who has been staying at the "Three Pigeons" for the last six weeks. She won't pay any rent, and she won't go; but here comes Martha — she'll tell you all about it.

(Enter LANDLADY, from inn, very angry.)

LANDLADY. Well, it's no use, she won't budge.

MISER. How-de-do, Mistress Martha, I give you good morning. I've been collecting my rents, and I want a room at the "Three Pigeons" to-night.

LANDLADY. Do you? Then you can't have one. *(Sitting.)*

MISER. Can't have one?

LANDLADY. No. Unless my strange old lady turns out. And she won't.

1STVILLAGER. But why don't you seize her baggage?

LANDLADY. She hasn't got any.

2NDVILLAGER. Stop her food, then!

LANDLADY. I have, and she doesn't mind that. She's eaten nothing at all for three weeks.

3RDVILLAGER. Nothing at all for three weeks?

LANDLADY. Nothing whatever!

3RDVILLAGER. Why, she'll be starved!

LANDLADY. No; she says she never felt better in her life. She says that food always disagrees with her!

PETER. It disagrees with me sometimes, but I take it for all that!

1STVILLAGER. Why don't you turn her out neck and crop?

LANDLADY. Turn out a woman who can live on nothing for three weeks? Why, she's a fairy! She'd be in again through the keyhole in a twinkling!

PETER. I know how to prevent that.

LANDLADY. How?

PETER. Stuff up the key-hole.

LANDLADY. Peter, you're a goose.

(*Enter PIPETTE [LANDLADY'S NIECE], running.*)

PIPETTE. Oh, aunt, aunt! I've such news for you! (*Sees VILLAGERS.*) Oh, I didn't know anybody was here. Oh, I beg your pardon! Oh, gracious! Oh, how extremely awkward!

LANDLADY. Why, what's the matter with the girl?

PIPETTE. Oh, I'm so confused!

LANDLADY. Why, what has confused you?

PIPETTE. Oh, it's all these people! Oh, please go away! Oh, I can't bear people!

MISER. Why, bless the girl, how shy she is!

LANDLADY. Shy! There isn't a greater donkey in the country. Why, there's a portrait of her great grandfather in her bedroom, and she always turns its face to the wall before she does her hair.

PIPETTE. Well, I've been properly brought up. A young girl can't be too particular.

PETER. But what has happened?

PIPETTE. Oh, I can't tell you before all these people! Oh, please send them away!

1STVILLAGER. Oh, I'm sure, if we're in the way — (*Exit into inn.*)

2NDVILLAGER. If it's very improper, we wouldn't hear it for the world. But I dare say Mr. Booblehardt and Peter won't mind. (*Exit into inn.*)

3RDVILLAGER. Put it to them as delicately as you can, Pipette. A young girl can't be too particular. (*Exit into inn.*)

MISER. Well, now that they're gone, what is it? If it's impudence [impertinence], whisper!

PIPETTE. Oh, if you please it's a sergeant, and he's coming here!

LANDLADY. A sergeant! Well, and what is there to blush at in that?

PIPETTE. Oh, but he's such a long sergeant! You can't think what a long sergeant he is! And oh, if you please, he's got a moustache and all sorts of dreadful things.

LANDLADY. A sergeant? It must be the famous Sergeant Klooque, who distinguished himself at Johannesburg — he's the bravest soldier in His Majesty's service. This is his native village, and he wrote to me to say that he would be here in the course of the week — on furlough. He's going to make the "Three Pigeons" his headquarters.

PIPETTE. A live sergeant coming to stop with us?

LANDLADY. Certainly.

PIPETTE. Oh, then, if you please, and if it's quite convenient, I should like to retire from the world and go into a monastery.

LANDLADY. A monastery? So should I.

PIPETTE. Oh, if you please, I mean a nunnery.

PETER. A nunnery? So should I.

LANDLADY. Nonsense; stop here and welcome the brave gentleman, and if you don't do it well you shall marry Peter to-morrow. Now, Master Boomlehardt, if you'll step into the house we'll see what we can do for you.

MISER. By all means. Allow me to present you with —

LANDLADY. With what, for gracious sake?

MISER. My arm.

(Exeunt MISER and LANDLADY into the house.)

PIPETTE *(crying)*. Oh dear, oh dear, what shall I do? I don't know how to welcome a brave gentleman.

PETER. Don't welcome him.

PIPETTE. But if I don't I shall have to marry you to-morrow.

PETER. Never mind — it'll serve me right.

PIPETTE. But I hate brave gentlemen.

PETER. But I am not a brave gentleman.

PIPETTE. You? You're the greatest coward between this and Trent.

PETER. I am a coward.

PIPETTE. I hate a brave gentleman, but I detest a coward.

PETER. All men are cowards.

PIPETTE. What? Jacques Bonpré, who gave you that thrashing at Bontemps fair, and Pierre Pontois, who tied you on your horse wrong side before, for trotting over his turnips? And Jean Leroux, who dragged you through a horse pond for plundering his egg-roosts?

PETER. All cowards? — I've a theory about that. In danger, all men are equally frightened, but some men have the power of concealing their fears — others haven't. I'm one of those who haven't. Some men are afraid to own that they are frightened — other men are not. I'm one of those who are not.

PIPETTE. Well, at all events Sergeant Klooque is a brave man, and I advise you to be civil to him. Oh dear, oh dear, what shall I do? — How I do hate a man!

PETER. So do I.

PIPETTE. Oh, how I wish the world was full of women!

PETER. So do I.

PIPETTE. Now, I'm not at all afraid of women.

PETER. No more am I.

PIPETTE. I like women.

PETER. So do I!

PIPETTE. But men are so — so — so —

PETER. Oh, they are —

PIPETTE. What?

PETER. So — so. Very so — so.

PIPETTE. I mean they are so fond of staring at one, and putting their arms round one's waist, and squeezing one's hand.

PETER. Yes, it's their way; I've done it myself.

PIPETTE. They wink too.

PETER. Yes, they would.

PIPETTE. Now, women never wink at me. They let me alone.

PETER. They let me alone, too, worse luck.

PIPETTE. You can say what you like to a woman — at least I mean I can. But I can't even look at a man.

PETER. You can look at me.

PIPETTE. I don't call you a man.

PETER. Well, don't call *him* a man, and then you can say what you like to him. He won't mind it.

PIPETTE. That's impudent.

PETER. It's meant to be.

PIPETTE. If you want to be impudent, why don't you be impudent to a man?

PETER. Oh, I should be a fool! Why, he'd box my ears!

PIPETTE. And you pretend to love me!

PETER. Exactly — I pretend to love you. That's all. It amuses you and gratifies me. (*Aside.*) I'll show her that she's not going to ride rough-shod over me! (*Aloud.*) You've got my snug little farm in your eye.

PIPETTE. Peter!

PETER. Well?

PIPETTE. Peter, you're a pig!

PETER. A pig?

PIPETTE. A pig!

PETER. Then you've got my snug little sty in your eye!

(Enter SERGEANT KLOOQUE.)

SONG — SERGEANT.

At home at last
 All danger past
 I hail my native village.
 Farewell awhile
 To warlike style
 To battle and to pillage.
 Although no doubt
 In battle's rout
 My life, I'd rather spend it,
 When battles cease,
 A state of peace
 Has much to recommend it.
 No parade and no drill,
 I can do as I will.
 I can eat, I can drink all the day.
 I can sing, I can dance
 With the daughters of France,
 While her sons are at work, far away!

SERGEANT. Young lady, I salute you! The hero of Johannesburg salutes you!

PIPETTE. Oh, my goodness, he's going to salute me! Peter, if he salutes me, I'll scream!

SERGEANT. The young lady appears alarmed?

PETER. The young lady is very shy.

SERGEANT. Shy?

PETER. Yes. You soldiers are such disreputable dogs.

PIPETTE. Oh yes, if you please, sir, you soldiers are such disreputable dogs! Oh, if you please, I didn't mean that! Oh, my! what a dreadful thing to have said!

SERGEANT. Some soldiers are — but not the Hussars [light cavalry horsemen] of the King's Body Guard. Our Colonel is extremely particular.

SONG — SERGEANT, PETER, PIPETTE.

SERGEANT.

A soldier of the King's Hussars,
Although a gallant son of Mars;
To no one may he be *gallant*,
Except his mother and his aunt!

ALL.

Except his mother and his aunt!

PIPETTE.

A very proper rule indeed,
And one that surely should succeed.

PETER.

But don't you find it rather slow —
Monotonous, in fact?

SERGEANT.

Oh no!

Each warrior who joins our corps,
Can count his mothers by the score;
And as for aunts — as I'm alive —
Each grenadier has thirty-five!

ALL.

Each grenadier has thirty-five!

PETER.

I shouldn't like to serve with him;
One's aunts are elderly and grim.

PIPETTE.

One's mothers too, as facts will show,
Are always aged dames.

SERGEANT.

Oh no!

The grimmest aunt in all our corps,
Is seventeen — or little more;
The oldest mother's age may be,
A little short of twenty-three!

PETER *and* PIPETTE.

Oh, Sergeant, I begin to take!

I'm much afraid that you're a rake!

SERGEANT.

My meaning they begin to take,
It's pretty clear that I'm a rake!

(*Enter LANDLADY from inn.*)

LANDLADY. Sergeant Klooque, as I'm alive.

SERGEANT. Mistress Martha! Why, how pretty you've grown!

LANDLADY. This is indeed a distinction you have conferred on us!

PIPETTE. Oh!

LANDLADY. Well, what's the matter with the girl?

PIPETTE. Oh, if you please, I was thinking that the sergeant has had so many distinctions conferred on him, that he can afford to spare us one. Oh, if you please, I didn't mean that! Oh, dear, what have I said?

LANDLADY. And what a big man you've grown! Why, you were a little drummer boy when you left us, and now you're a gigantic sergeant!

SERGEANT. Yes, I've risen in the service.

PETER. And some day, I suppose, you'll be an officer?

SERGEANT. Yes — but that will be a long time first.

PIPETTE. Oh!

ALL. Well?

PIPETTE. Oh, if you please, I was thinking, if you're six foot long as a sergeant, how long will you be before you're a captain? Oh, if you please, I didn't mean that! Oh, my! I wish I hadn't spoken.

LANDLADY. Pipette, you're a goose. (*To SERGEANT.*) But we're very glad to see you, and I hope you will make the "Three Pigeons" your home as long as your furlough lasts.

SERGEANT. With pleasure, Martha. I've been roughing for the last six months, and it's no little treat to look forward to six weeks' holiday in a pretty inn, in a pretty village, with a pretty landlady to look after one's wants. (*Puts his arm round her waist.*)

PIPETTE. Oh, if you please, aunt, perhaps your son would like to see his room.

LANDLADY. My son?

PIPETTE. Your nephew, then?

LANDLADY. My nephew?

PIPETTE. Oh, if you please, I thought he must be one or the other, as his Colonel is very strict, and only allows his soldiers to kiss their mothers, or their aunts. Oh, dear, I wish I hadn't said that! Oh my! what a dreadful thing to have said!

SERGEANT. When a soldier is on furlough, discipline is relaxed. (*Kisses LANDLADY.*) But why are you sighing?

LANDLADY. I'm thinking of my old lady. She won't pay my rent, and she's eaten nothing and drunk nothing for a fortnight, and she looks as plump as ever! (*Mysteriously.*) She's a fairy!

PETER. Bah!

LANDLADY. Eh?

PETER. Stuff! I don't believe it.

LANDLADY. And why?

PETER. Fairies do everything with a wand, don't they?

LANDLADY. Well?

PETER. Well, she cleans her teeth with a toothbrush, I've seen her.

LANDLADY. Peter, you're a goose!

PIPETTE. I say, Peter.

PETER. Well?

PIPETTE. It'll be a bad look-out for you and me about Michaelmas!

SERGEANT. Suppose we tackle the old lady by turns.

LANDLADY. Ah, but who'll begin?

PETER (*boldly*). I will.

ALL. You.

PETER. I. She's no more a fairy than I am — she's an ugly old woman, and I'd rather tackle one ugly old woman than a dozen handsome men. Afraid of an old woman! Why, the older they are the less I fear 'em!

SONG — PETER, SERGEANT, PIPETTE, LANDLADY.

PETER	With furious blow Delivered so I'll start her in a canter. This mighty arm Will cause alarm And she'll depart, instanter.
SERGEANT	With squeeze and wink I'll make her think I worship her completely. For soldiers sing That sort of thing Particularly neatly.
PIPETTE	With kiss and smile I'll her beguile, The joke will much amuse me. I'll praise her face With so much grace I'm sure she can't refuse me.
LANDLADY	If you should fail With rustics hale I've servants, three or four too. We'll try and rout The fairy out, And then we'll bang the door to!

(*Exeunt* PIPETTE, LANDLADY, and SERGEANT, *to inn*, R. *Enter* OLDLADY, C.)

PETER (*aside*). Now for it. (*Aloud.*) I say, old lady!

OLDLADY. Well, young man?

PETER. I've a bone to pick with you.

OLDLADY. Can't stop, my time's valuable.

PETER. Oh, but you must!

OLDLADY. Must, eh?

PETER. Do you see that? (*Showing his arm.*) Feel it.

OLDLADY. Mercy, what a ridiculous little arm!

PETER (*pointing to biceps*). Do you know what that is?

OLDLADY. Well, I can guess!

PETER. What is it?

OLDLADY. I suppose it's the bone you're going to pick with me. We may spare ourselves the trouble — there's very little on it.

PETER (*in a rage*). I say, I'm not accustomed to stand that sort of thing from a woman of your age, you know.

OLDLADY. Do you know my age?

PETER. About eighty, I should say. (*Aside.*) That'll put her back up!

OLDLADY. Eighty! Nonsense, I'm eight hundred and forty-two.

PETER. Well, you don't look it.

OLDLADY. Peter, you're a dangerous little man!

PETER. I'm a dangerous little man as you'll discover. Now, look here ma'am.

OLDLADY. I'm all attention, Peter!

PETER. You've been here six weeks.

OLDLADY. True.

PETER. You've paid no rent.

OLDLADY. None.

PETER. You don't mean to pay any.

OLDLADY. Not a penny.

PETER. You don't eat anything.

OLDLADY. Nothing.

PETER. You don't drink anything.

OLDLADY. Not a drop.

PETER. And if you did you wouldn't pay for it.

OLDLADY. Not a penny.

PETER. Now, hasn't it occurred to you that on the whole you're not a profitable customer?

OLDLADY. Yes, that reflection has occurred to me. But look at it from my point of view. If you could get all you wanted from a first-rate inn without paying for it, how long would you stop there?

PETER. I should stop there until somebody did to me what I'm going to do to you.

OLDLADY. What's that?

PETER. Turn you out. Come — toddle — trundle — vanish!

(He squares up to her as if about to strike her.)

OLDLADY. Why, Peter, would you strike an old woman?

PETER. Why not? you're as big as I am. Besides you've less to lose. You are very ugly, and no amount of thrashing would make you uglier than you are. Now I am very beautiful, and a tap on the nose would play the very deuce with me! Come — toddle!

(Squares up at her.)

OLDLADY. Very well, Peter, you're a coward to square up at an old woman, and as a punishment you will be so good as to go on squaring up to every one you meet telling them to "Come on!" until further notice.

PETER. What, squaring up like this? *(Squaring.)* Come on!

OLDLADY. Yes, just like that.

PETER. What, at everybody I come across? *(Squaring.)* Come on!

OLDLADY. Yes, at everybody you come across.

PETER. Big and little? *(Squaring.)* Come on!

OLDLADY. Yes, big and little.

PETER *(howling.)* But they won't like it! *(Squaring.)* Come on!

OLDLADY. Not a bit.

PETER. They'll hit me back! Come on!

OLDLADY. I hope so.

PETER *(squaring very fiercely and hitting out right and left, and howling all the time).*
Oh, Please don't make me go on squaring at every one like this. Come on!

OLDLADY. Must be done, Peter!

PETER. But here's the sergeant coming. Must I square up to him? He's six feet high.
Come on!

OLDLADY. That's unlucky; but it must be done.

PETER. I think I'll go. Come on!

OLDLADY. I think you'd better.

(PETER goes off, squaring, hitting out violently, and crying out, "Come on!")

(Enter SERGEANT, from inn, and stares at him in astonishment.)

SERGEANT. Is the young man unwell?

OLDLADY. No, he's quite well. He's practising his boxing.

SERGEANT. What for?

OLDLADY. He says you flirt with Pipette, and he's going to give you a thrashing.

SERGEANT. Ho, ho, ho! Now, my dear little old lady, I'm going to beg a favour of you.

OLDLADY. Go away, soldier chap, I hate soldier chaps! Do you know what effect a red coat has on me? It drives me mad.

SERGEANT. You're not the only lady it affects that way. I've brought you a message from Mistress Martha. She wants you to go.

OLDLADY. Go?

SERGEANT. Go! Come, old lady *(puts his arm round her waist)*, be reasonable.

OLDLADY. Go away, soldier! I hate soldiers. Go away! *(Strikes at him with her crutch.)*

SERGEANT. I say — gently, old lady! *(Ducking to avoid crutch.)*

OLDLADY. Go away, I say! You're a dissipated fellow to dare put your arms round an unprotected woman's waist! You wouldn't do it if my papa were here! *(Thrashes him with crutch.)*

SERGEANT. Confound it ma'am; your stick hurts! *(Ducking.)* Don't, ma'am, don't! *(Ducks.)* Don't, I say! *(Ducks.)*

OLDLADY. And as a punishment for your impertinence, you will be so good as to go on ducking and dodging, and saying "Don't!" to every one you meet, until further notice.

SERGEANT. What, like this? *(Ducking.)* Don't!

OLDLADY. Yes, like that.

SERGEANT. But they'll think I'm afraid of 'em! *(Ducking.)* Don't!

OLDLADY. Sure to!

SERGEANT. But I'm not afraid of any one! Don't!

OLDLADY. No, you are the bravest man in the army!

SERGEANT. I shall lose my reputation! I shall be branded as a coward! Don't!

(Enter PIPETTE from inn; she stares at SERGEANT in astonishment.)

PIPETTE. Oh, if you please, Mistress Martha's compliments, and have you been successful?

SERGEANT. No, she won't go! *(Ducking.)* Don't!

PIPETTE. I wasn't going to. Oh, if you please, what's the matter?

SERGEANT. Oh, it's nothing! it'll pass off. *(Ducking.)* Don't!

PIPETTE. Wouldn't you like to lie down? I'm not going to hurt you.

SERGEANT. No, no, my dear, I'm quite well. (*Ducking.*) Don't! don't!

PIPETTE. It's your fun, I suppose?

SERGEANT. Exactly. It's my fun! (*Ducking.*)

OLDLADY. He's showing you how he fought the enemy at Johannesburg.

SERGEANT. No, my dear! I'm showing you how the enemy fought us. This is the way they retreated. Don't! don't! don't!

(*Exit SERGEANT, ducking and backing.*)

PIPETTE. What a strange young man!

OLDLADY. He's a very rude young man.

PIPETTE. Rude?

OLDLADY. Yes. He put his arm round my waist.

PIPETTE. Are you his mother?

OLDLADY. No, my dear, I'm not.

PIPETTE. Nor his aunt?

OLDLADY. No.

PIPETTE. Then I'll tell his Colonel, and he'll be flogged!

OLDLADY. I should like to see him flogged.

PIPETTE. So should I! Oh my, what am I saying? Oh, dear, I didn't mean that!

OLDLADY. Well, my dear, and what do you want?

PIPETTE. I want to ask you a great — great favour.

OLDLADY. Yes?

PIPETTE. You're such a dear old lady, that I'm sure you'll grant it.

OLDLADY. Yes, I'm a pleasant old person.

PIPETTE. Although you're past your prime, you've such bright eyes, and such red cheeks, and such a happy expression of countenance, that you're prettier than many a young girl I know.

OLDLADY. Yes, I'm attractive — attractive, nothing more.

PIPETTE. Well, you're such a dear old lady, and I'm so fond of you, and you've made yourself so pleasant and so agreeable, that what I want you to do is to — is to —

OLDLADY. Yes, is to — is to?

PIPETTE. Is to go.

OLDLADY. Go?

PIPETTE. Go. You see, they don't appreciate you as much as I do. I think you're a dear old lady — perhaps the dearest old lady I ever saw, but they don't.

OLDLADY. Oh, they don't?

PIPETTE. No, I can't understand it, but it is so. Now, I'm sure you're too proud — too noble — too high-spirited to remain where you're not wanted. Aren't you, you dear — dear old lady? (*Kisses her.*) Oh, I declare I could kiss those cherry cheeks all day long.

OLDLADY. All day long?

PIPETTE. All day long! (*Kisses her.*)

OLDLADY. Very good — you're telling stories, my dear, and must be punished. As a punishment you will be so good as to go about offering to kiss and fondle every one you meet, until further notice.

PIPETTE. What, like that? (*Makes kissing noise.*) Kiss me!

OLDLADY. Yes, like that!

PIPETTE. But people will think it so odd. Kiss me!

OLDLADY. Yes, they'll be surprised at first.

PIPETTE. But I say — gentlemen and all? Kiss me!

OLDLADY. Yes, gentlemen and all.

PIPETTE. But they won't like it!

OLDLADY. Oh no, they won't mind it.

PIPETTE. But I'm so shy! I can't look at gentlemen without blushing. Kiss me!

OLDLADY. Oh, you'll get over your shyness after a year or two of that sort of thing.

PIPETTE. Kiss me! Oh dear, oh dear, I don't know what people will say! Kiss me!

OLDLADY. I do. They'll say you quiet ones are always the worst. And so you are.

(*Enter MISER from inn.*)

PIPETTE. Oh dear, here's that disgusting old wretch, Boomlehardt. I hate the sight of him! (*To MISER.*) Kiss me.

MISER. Certainly, my dear. (*Kisses her.*)

PIPETTE. How dare you take such a liberty! You insolent old man! Kiss me.

MISER. Again! Why, of course. (*Kisses her.*)

PIPETTE. Oh, you disgusting old man! (*Boxes his ears.*) I'll tell my aunt, and she'll turn you out of doors, and you shall be hooted through the village. Kiss me.

MISER (*puzzled*). Thank you — no more this morning.

PIPETTE. Thank you, I'm sure! Oh dear, oh dear! What shall I do?

(*Exit PIPETTE crying, into house.*)

MISER. What a very strange girl.

OLDLADY (*seated*). I am a very strange girl.

MISER. Ah — I was not referring to you. But I want a word with you. I want to make a bargain with you.

OLDLADY. Well, get on.

MISER. Well, Mistress Martha has sent me to induce you to go; but I don't want to do anything of the kind. I want you to stay. So if you'll fall in with my views, I'll do all I can to prevent their turning you out.

OLDLADY. Well, what are your views?

MISER. You have the wonderful gift of living without food.

OLDLADY. Yes — I have that gift.

MISER. For the last fifty years I've been trying to master that wonderful secret, but in vain. It's true I've brought myself down to one hard-boiled egg and a tea-cup full of soup *per diem*, but I find even that a great drain on my resources. Now, if you'll teach me how to live comfortably — I don't say luxuriously, but comfortably — on nothing at all, I'll give you — yes, I'll give you a guinea!

OLDLADY. You'll give me a guinea?

MISER. Yes — half down and half by a bill at six months. Well, come — say a guinea down. There, look at it! A whole guinea! Weigh it! Taste it! Look at the milling. Oh, it's a beautiful guinea! (*OLDLADY takes it and tests it.*)

OLDLADY. You're a very mean old man, and you must be punished for it. You'll have the goodness to go on offering guineas from your long bag to every one you meet until further notice.

MISER. What, like this — Allow me to offer you a guinea?

OLDLADY. Thank you. (*Takes it.*) Yes, like that.

MISER. To every one I meet?

OLDLADY. Yes, to every one you meet.

MISER. Allow me to offer you a guinea!

OLDLADY. With pleasure, Mr. Booblehardt! (*Takes it.*)

MISER (*in dismay*). But people who know me will think I'm making them a present!

OLDLADY. No doubt of it.

MISER. But I never made a present in my life!

OLDLADY. Then it's high time you began. (*Going.*)

MISER. Are you going?

OLDLADY. Yes. I have some charms to work.

MISER. I don't see them. Allow me to offer you a guinea.

OLDLADY. Thank you — don't go that way or you'll meet Peter. Now to have a word or two with Mistress Martha.

(Exit OLDLADY into inn.)

MISER. Here's a pretty state of things! Ruin stares me in the face!

(Enter SERGEANT.)

SERGEANT. I must see the old lady — I can't stand this any longer. *(Sees MISER and begins to duck and back.)* Don't! Don't!

MISER. Allow me sir, to offer you a guinea.

SERGEANT. You're very good, but — Don't, don't!

MISER. I can't help it — I must! An irresistible impulse compels me to keep on going like this. Allow me to offer you a guinea.

SERGEANT *(taking it)*. Please understand that when I say don't, I don't mean don't; I say don't because an irresistible impulse compels me to say don't! don't! don't!

MISER. Don't be frightened, young man, I am not going to hurt you.

SERGEANT. Don't! don't!

MISER. Not for worlds.

SERGEANT. I tell you I say "don't," in compliance with an irresistible impulse. It's a spell.

MISER. Dear me, this is extremely curious. *(Sitting and examining SERGEANT critically through eye-glass, as he bobs and ducks all over the stage.)* A purely reflex action of the muscles of the neck and shoulders. Allow me to offer you a guinea.

SERGEANT. Don't, don't! I wish you'd go.

MISER. My dear sir, I may as well hand my guineas to you as to anybody else; and you amuse me very much, you make me laugh. Ha! ha!

SERGEANT. Hang the fellow, how shall I get rid of him? Stop, here's Pipette — I have it! I'll back from Pipette on to him!

(Enter PIPETTE from the house, SERGEANT turns to her and backs from her on to MISER'S toes.)

MISER. Here, I say, sir, look where you're coming to!

(SERGEANT backs him off the stage. Exit MISER.)

SERGEANT. Thank heaven he's gone at last!

PIPETTE (*to SERGEANT.*) Kiss me!

SERGEANT. Eh? (*Ducking.*) Don't!

PIPETTE. I can't help it. Kiss me!

SERGEANT. Don't, don't!

PIPETTE. Don't be angry, sergeant, but it's an irresistible impulse. Kiss me!

SERGEANT. I'm not angry — I like it. Don't, don't!

(*Enter PETER, squaring.*)

PETER. Hallo, Pipette, kissing Sergeant Klooque! Come on!

PIPETTE. Please, Peter, I can't help it. It's an irresistible impulse. Kiss me! (*to PETER.*)

PETER. Come on! Come on! (*Squaring — he squares at SERGEANT who ducks.*)

PIPETTE. Oh dear, oh dear, they're going to fight about me. My character will be gone in no time!

PETER. Come on! Come on!

SERGEANT. Don't, don't!

PETER. Please don't be angry, sergeant, but I'm compelled to hit you. I am acting under an irresistible impulse.

SERGEANT. And don't you suppose I'm ducking and dodging because I'm afraid of you. I, too, am acting under an irresistible impulse. (*Enter MISER.*)

MISER (*to SERGEANT.*) Allow me to offer you a guinea.

SERGEANT. Sir, I have great pleasure in taking it. (*PETER hits MISER on the back.*)

MISER (*to PETER.*) Allow me to offer you a guinea.

PETER. A guinea? Thank you! Come on!

MISER (*to PIPETTE.*) Pipette, allow me to offer you a guinea.

PIPETTE. You're a disreputable old scamp! Kiss me, kiss me!

(*Enter LANDLADY and VILLAGERS from inn.*)

LANDLADY (*to VILLAGERS, pushing them all away.*) Go away! go away! Get out of this — get out of this!

SERGEANT (*ducking.*) Why, Martha, what's the matter?

LANDLADY. Don't be frightened, Sergeant — I don't mean it. I tried with my three servants just now to make the old lady go, and she compels us to turn everybody out of my inn until further notice! Why I shall be ruined! Go away — get out of this! (*To one and all in succession.*)

VILLAGERS. Go away — go away — get out of this — get out of this!

MISER (*to LANDLADY*). Allow me, ma'am, to offer you a guinea.

LANDLADY. Certainly; thank you — go away!

MISER. Another.

LANDLADY. Thank you — go away. (*To the others.*) Go away — get out of this — go away.

VILLAGERS. Go away — get out of this — go away!

PIPETTE (*to SERGEANT*). Kiss me, kiss me!

PETER (*to SERGEANT*). Come on, come on!

SERGEANT. Don't, don't, don't!

LANDLADY. Go away! go away — get out of this — go away!

MISER. Allow me to offer you a guinea. (*To all in succession.*)

(*Enter OLDLADY from inn — they all rush to her.*)

LANDLADY (*pushing her*). Go away — go away!

VILLAGERS. Get out of this — go away!

PETER. Come on, come on!

SERGEANT (*apart from the others*). Don't, don't!

PIPETTE. Kiss me, kiss me! (*Trying to kiss OLDLADY.*)

MISER. Allow me to offer you a guinea.

(*They hustle her about the stage.*)

OLDLADY. Stop! stop! stop! (*They all desist.*) I release you all. (*All relapse.*) I can manage you separately, but altogether you're too many for me! The spell is removed!

LANDLADY. Then you'll go?

OLDLADY (*sulkily*). Yes — I'll go.

PIPETTE (*to SERGEANT*). Then you're not a coward?

SERGEANT. A coward? No! And you don't want to kiss everybody?

PIPETTE. Kiss everybody? No! (*To PETER.*) And you're not a brave man?

PETER. A brave man? No! (*To LANDLADY.*) And you don't want to turn everybody out of your inn?

LANDLADY. Out of my inn? No! (*To MISER.*) And you don't want to give everybody a guinea?

MISER. Give everybody a guinea? No, I'll be hanged if I do!

SONG — FINALE.

ALL. Go away, ma'am; go away, ma'am,
Go away, ma'am; good day, ma'am!

OLDLADY. Defeated
 And ill-treated,
I'm vindictive as you'll find,
 So prepare you,
 For to spare you
I am not at all inclined!

ALL. Go away, ma'am; go away, ma'am,
Go away, ma'am; good day, ma'am!
 You may start
 And depart!
Quickly, pray, make up your mind.
 Don't return,
 For we burn
Every witch that we can find!

END OF PLAY.

CURTAIN.