

Creatures of Impulse

A MUSICAL FAIRY TALE

in One Act.

Written by W.S. Gilbert

Music composed by Alberto Randegger

First produced at the Royal Court Theatre (under the management of Miss M. Litton)

on April 2nd, 1871.

CREATURES OF IMPULSE

The reasons for the disappearance of **CREATURES OF IMPULSE** are by no means clear. The initial run lasted for some 91 performances at the Court Theatre between 15th April and 29th July 1871, during which time it partnered five other works (two of which were full length Gilbert plays). This was by no means the end of the piece's career. A revival took place, again at the Court, during October-November 1872, and again at the Vaudeville Theatre from 6th July to 30th October 1874.

The reason may lie in the fact that the libretto never seems to have been the same at any production. The second Court Theatre production being described as 'a shortened version', and the Vaudeville production as 'an altered version'. Some version of the libretto was still retained in French's Amateur Catalogue as late as 1971, although how near this adhered to the original I am unable to say, having not been able to obtain a copy.

The libretto as presented here is a combination from two sources.

- 1) The manuscript licence copy in the Lord Chamberlain's collection at the British Library. It is from this source that the second stanza of the Opening Chorus, and the lyrics of No's 2, 3, 5 and the final section of the Finale have been obtained.
- 2) The libretto as printed in Chatto and Windus', "Original Plays by W.S. Gilbert - Series Four".

Not only did the licence copy supply missing lyrics, but it also revealed that in some productions the characters were named differently.

Sergeant Klooque = Sergeant Brice
Boomlehardt = Verditter
Martha = Dorothy
Pipette = Jenny

Indeed, at certain points in the Chatto and Windus version, Pipette is erroneously named Jenny. This has been corrected in this version.

The other reason for the lack of performance of course, is the apparent disappearance of Randegger's score. This was never published, and presumably those productions that used the musical numbers (it would appear that some didn't), must have coped with hand-copied parts. The original cast was as follows:

Peter - Maggie Brennan
Pipette - Kate Bishop
The Strange Old Lady - Lucy Franklein
Sergeant Klooque - W. M. Terrott
Boomblehardt - Edward Righton
Jacques - Charles Parry
Martha - Miss L. Harris

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Sergeant Klooque

Boomblehardt, a Miser

Peter, a Young Farmer

Jacques, a Villager

Martha, Landlady of the Three Pigeons

Pipette, her Niece

A Strange Old Lady

Villagers, &c.

COSTUMES - ALSATIAN

SCENE. - Exterior of "The Three Pigeons," a Country Inn; entrance to inn, R.; entrance through gate, C.

Jacques and Villagers discovered.

No. 1. - Opening Chorus

Did you ever know a lady
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 lose to pay.
If she doesn't shortly pack up,
She will put poor Martha's back up
And there'll be the very deuce to pay!

Enter Booblehardt, L., with a very large bag of gold - they shake hands with him.

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

Jacq. What, for nothing?

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

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

Boom. 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!

Jacq. 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?

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

2nd. V. All gold?

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

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

Boom. 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!

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

2nd. V. Not a penny.

Boom. 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-old! Real golden guineas!

No. 2. - SONG - Booblehardt.

Some people love Spring
With it's butterfly wing;
Some swear by the Summer -
What folly - 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 happens in each, my dear.

Boom. Quarter day - how I love Quarter day!

All. Oh, shabby, shabby!

Boom. 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?

Enter Peter

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

Boom. 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 Martha, from inn, very angry.

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

Boom. 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" tonight.

Martha. Do you? Then you can't have one. (*sitting.*)

Boom. Can't have one?

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

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

Martha. She hasn't got any.

2nd. V. Stop her food, then!

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

3rd. V. Nothing at all for three weeks?

Martha. Nothing whatever!

3rd. V. Why, she'll be starved!

Martha. 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!

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

Martha. 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.

Martha. How?

Peter. Stuff up the key-hole.

Martha. Peter, you're a goose.

Enter Pipette, running from L. U. E.

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!

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

Pipette. Oh, I'm so confused!

Martha. Why, what has confused you?

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

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

Martha. 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!

1st. V. Oh, I'm sure, if we're in the way - *(exit into inn.)*

2nd. V. If it's very improper, we wouldn't bear to hear it for the world. But I dare say Mr. Boumblehardt and Peter won't mind. *(exit into inn.)*

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

Boom. Well, now that they've gone, what is it? If it's impertinence, whisper!

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

Martha. 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.

Martha. 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?

Martha. 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.

Martha. A monastery? So should I.

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

Peter. A nunnery? So should I.

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

Boom. By all means. Allow me to present you with -

Martha. With what, for gracious sake?

Boom. My arm.

Exeunt Boumblehardt and Martha 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

No. 3. - SONG - Sergeant Klooque.

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!

Serg. 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!

Serg. The young lady appears alarmed?

Peter. The young lady is very shy.

Serg. 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!

Serg. Some soldiers are - but not the Hussars of the King's Body Guard. Our Colonel is extremely particular.

No. 4. - SONG - Sergeant Klooque (with Pipette and Peter)

Serg. A soldier in 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?

Serg. 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.

Serg. 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!

Ensemble

Enter Martha from inn.

Martha. Sergeant Klooque, as I'm alive.

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

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

Pipette. Oh!

Martha. 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 one. Oh, if you please, I didn't mean that! Oh, dear, what have I said?

Martha. 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!

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

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

Serg. 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.

Martha. 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.

Serg. With pleasure, Martha. I've been roughing it 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.

Martha. My son?

Pipette. Your nephew, then?

Martha. 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!

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

Martha. 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!

Martha. Eh?

Peter. Stuff! I don't believe it.

Martha. And why?

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

Martha. Well?

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

Martha. 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!

Serg. Suppose we tackle the old lady by turns.

Martha. 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!

No. 5. - QUARTET - Peter, Pipette, Klooque and Martha.

Peter. With furious blow
Delivered so
I'll start her in a canter
This mighty arm
Will cause alarm
And she'll depart, instanter.

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.

Serg. With squeeze and wink
I'll make her think
I worship her completely;
For soldiers sing
That sort of thing
Particularly neatly.

Martha. 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, Martha and Sergeant, to house, R. Enter Old Lady, C.

Peter. Now for it. I say, old lady!

O. Lady Well, young man?

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

O. Lady Can't stop, my time's valuable.

Peter. Oh, but you must!

O. Lady Must, eh?

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

O. Lady Mercy, what a ridiculous little arm!

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

O. Lady Well, I can guess!

Peter. What is it?

O. Lady 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.

O. Lady Do you know my age?

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

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

Peter. Well, you don't look it.

O. Lady Peter, you're a dangerous little man!

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

O. Lady I'm all attention , Peter!

Peter. You've been here six weeks.

O. Lady True.

Peter. You've paid no rent.

O. Lady None.

Peter. You don't mean to pay any.

O. Lady. Not a penny.

Peter. You don't eat anything.

O. Lady Nothing.

Peter. You don't drink anything.

O. Lady. Not a drop.

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

O. Lady Not a penny.

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

O. Lady 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.

O. Lady What's that?

Peter. Turn you out. Come - toddle - trundle - vanish!

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

O. Lady 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.)*

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

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

O. Lady Yes, just like that.

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

O. Lady Yes, at everybody you come across.

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

O. Lady Yes, big and little.

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

O. Lady Not a bit.

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

O. Lady 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 everyone like this. Come on!

O. Lady Must be done, Peter!

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

O. Lady That's unlucky; but it must be done.

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

O. Lady 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.

Serg. In the young man unwell?

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

Serg. What for?

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

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

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

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

O. Lady Go?

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

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

Serg. I say - gently, old lady! *(Ducking to avoid crutch.)*

O. Lady 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.)*

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

O. Lady As a punishment for your impertinence, you will be so good as to go on ducking and dodging, and saying "Don't!" to everyone you meet, until further notice.

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

O. Lady Yes, like that.

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

O. Lady Sure to!

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

O. Lady No, you are the bravest man in the army!

Serg. 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?

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

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

Serg. 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.

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

Pipette. It's your fun, I suppose?

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

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

Serg. 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!

O. Lady He's a very rude young man.

Pipette. Rude?

O. Lady Yes. He put his arm round my waist.

Pipette. Are you his mother?

O. Lady No, my dear, I'm not.

Pipette. Nor his aunt?

O. Lady No.

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

O. Lady I should like to see him flogged.

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

O. Lady Well, my dear, and what do you want?

Pipette. I want to ask you a great - great favour.

O. Lady Yes?

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

O. Lady 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.

O. Lady 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 -

O. Lady Yes, is to - is to?

Pipette. Is to go.

O. Lady 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.

O. Lady 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.

O. Lady All day long?

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

O. Lady 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!

O. Lady. Yes, like that!

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

O. Lady Yes, they'll be surprised at first.

Pipette. But I say - gentlemen and all? Kiss me!

O. Lady Yes, gentlemen and all.

Pipette. But they won't like it!

O. Lady Oh no, they won't mind it.

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

O. Lady 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!

O. Lady They'll say you quiet ones are always the worst. And so you are.

Enter Boomlehardt from inn.

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

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

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

Boom. 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.

Boom. *(puzzled.)* Thank you - no more this morning.

Pipette. Thank you, I'm sure! Oh dear, oh dear! What shall I do? *(Exit crying into house.)*

Boom. What a strange girl.

O. Lady *(seated.)* I am a very strange girl.

Boom. Ah - I was not referring to you. But I want a word with you. I want to make a bargain with you.

O. Lady Well, get on.

Boom. 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.

O. Lady Well, what are your views?

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

O. Lady Yes - I have that gift.

Boom. 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!

O. Lady You'll give me a guinea?

Boom. 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!

(She takes it and tests it.)

O. Lady 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.

Boom. What, like this - Allow me to offer you a guinea?

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

Boom. To every one I meet?

O. Lady Yes, to every one you meet.

Boom. Allow me to offer you a guinea!

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

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

O. Lady No doubt of it.

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

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

Boom. Are you going?

O. Lady Yes. I have some charms to work.

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

O. Lady Thank you - don't go that way or you'll meet Peter. Now to have a word or two with Mistress Martha. *(Exit into inn.)*

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

Enter Sergeant Klooque.

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

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

Serg. You're very good, but - Don't, don't!

Boom. 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.

Serg. *(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!

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

Serg. Don't! don't!

Boom. Not for worlds.

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

Boom. Dear me, this is extremely curious. *(Sitting and examining Sergeant Klooque critically through an 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.

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

Boom. 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!

Serg. 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 Boomlehardt's toes.

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

(Sergeant backs him off the stage.)

Serg. Thank heaven he's gone at last!

Pipette. *(to Sergeant.)* Kiss me!

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

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

Serg. Don't, don't!

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

Serg. 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! *(He squares at Sergeant Klooque 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!

Serg. 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.

Serg. 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 Boomlehardt.

Boom. *(to Sergeant.)* Allow me to offer you a guinea.

Serg. Sir, I have great pleasure in taking it.

(Peter hits Boomlehardt on the back.)

Boom. *(to Peter.)* Allow me to offer you a guinea.

Peter. A guinea? Thank you! Come on!

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

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

Enter Martha and Villagers from inn.

Martha. *(to Villagers, pushing them all away.)* Go away! go away! Get out of this - get out of this!

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

Martha. 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.)*

Boom. Allow me, ma'am, to offer you a guinea.

Martha. Certainly; thank you - go away!

Boom. Another.

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

Pipette. *(to Sergeant.)* Kiss me, kiss me!

Peter. *(to Sergeant.)* Come on, come on!

Serg. Don't, don't, don't!

Martha. Go away! go away - get out of this - go away!

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

Enter Old Lady from inn - they all rush to her.

Martha. *(pushing her.)* Go away - go away!

Villagers. Get out of this - go away!

Peter. Come on, come on!

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

Pipette. Kiss me, kiss me! *(Trying to kiss Old Lady.)*

Boom. Allow me to offer you a guinea.

(They hustle her about the stage.)

O. Lady 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!

Martha. Then you'll go?

O. Lady *(Sulkily.)* Yes - I'll go.

Pipette. *(To Sergeant.)* Then you're not a coward?

Serg. 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 Martha.)* And you don't want to turn everybody out of your inn?

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

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

No. 6. - FINALE.

All. Go away, ma'am, go away, ma'am,
Go away, ma'am, good day!

O. Lady 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!

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!

(They hustle her out of the gate.)

CURTAIN.