

Ages Ago

A Play By

W.S.Gilbert

Characters

SIR EBENEZER TARE *of the firm of Tare and Tret, Alderman and Tallow Chandler, later LORD
CARNABY POPPYTOP*

ROSA *(his niece), later LADY MAUD*

MRS. MACMOTHERLY *later DAME CHERRY MAYBUD*

MR. COLUMBUS HEBBLETHWAITE
later SIR CECIL BLOUNT

STEWARD *later BROWN*

LADY MAUD DE BOHUN	was born		1445
	came into possession	1469	Edward IV
	painted by Leonardo da Vinci	1472	Aged 17
	died	1473	Louis XI

SIR CECIL BLOUNT	was born		1540 Elizabeth I
	painted by Michael Angelo		1560 Aged 20
	came into possession	1569	Henry II to IV
	died	1579	

LORD CARNABY POPPYTOP	was born		1648
	came into possession	1669	Queen Anne
	painted by Godfrey Kneller		1713 Aged 65
	died	1720	

DAME CHERRY MAYBUD	was born		1730
	came into possession	1769	George III
	was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds		1785 Aged 55

ROSA	Picture Costume tenth year of Edward IV
SIR CECIL	Picture Costume second year of Elizabeth I
LORD CARNABY	Last year of Queen Anne's reign
DAME CHERRY	Twenty-fifth year of George III
BROWN	Late 19th century Cockney Dress.

SCENE : Picture Gallery in Glen-Cockaleekie Castle.

Ages Ago

SCENE: *A Picture Gallery. Oriel window R. The walls are covered with pictures, but five full-length portraits are veiled.* MRS. MACMOTHERLY (*an old housekeeper*) and ROSA, MR. ALDERMAN TARE'S *pretty niece, discovered.*

No. 1. - PRELUDE.

No. 2. - TRIO.

Rosa

Good bye, good bye, good bye, he's gone,
He's running along in the rain, he's gone,
Good bye, good bye, good bye, he's gone,
He's running along in the rain.

Tis not so clear, dear Mrs. Mac.
For listen here, for listen here,
the clock's put back, the clock's put back,
It's half an hour too slow, it's half an hour
too slow!

He's gone.
He's gone.

Good bye, good bye, good bye, he's gone,
He's running along in the rain, he's gone.
Good bye, good bye, good bye, good bye,
Ah! He is gone.
Good bye, good bye, good bye, good bye,
Ah! He is gone.
Good bye, Good bye,
He's gone

Mrs. Mac.

Good bye, good bye, good bye, he's gone,
He's running along in the rain, he's gone,
Good bye, good bye, good bye, he's gone,
He's running along in the rain.
He's off at last, he's off at last,
He won't come back, the train is fast.

He's gone.
He's gone.

You sigh, and cry, for why? he's gone,
He's running along in the rain, ha, ha!
Good bye, you sigh, and cry, for why?
Ah! He is gone.
Good bye, you sigh, and cry, for why?
Ah! He is gone.
Good bye, Good bye,
He's gone.

Steward

Good bye, good bye, good bye, he's gone,
He's running along in the rain, he's gone,
Good bye, good bye, good bye, he's gone,
He's running along in the rain.
He's off at last, he's off at last,
He won't come back, the train is fast.
The night is black, the night is black.
He'll catch, he'll catch the train I know.

He's running along, along in the rain,
No danger of missing, of missing his train.
He's gone,
He's gone, he's gone.

Oh fie, come dry your eye, he's gone,
He's running along in the rain, ha, ha!
Good bye, good bye, come dry your eye,
Ah! He is gone.
Good bye, good bye, come dry your eye,
Ah! He is gone.
Good bye, Good bye, Good bye,
He's gone.

No. 3. - DUET.

Rosa

When nature sleeps and slumber creeps o'er mortal eyes,
then witches play.
When nature sleeps and slumber creeps o'er mortal eyes,
then witches play.
An elf in ev'ry shadow hides!

To hold his tryst in mountain mist.
To hold his tryst in mountain mist.

On ev'ry cloud a warlock rides.
The moon supplants the light of day,

The moon supplants the light of day,

The moon supplants the light of day, the light of day.
When nature sleeps and slumber creeps o'er mortal eyes,
then witches play.
When nature sleeps and slumber creeps o'er mortal eyes,
o'er mortal eyes, then witches play, then witches play.
When nature sleeps, then nature sleeps, then witches play,
Then witches play.

Mrs. Mac.

When nature sleeps and slumber creeps o'er mortal eyes,
then witches play.
When nature sleeps and slumber creeps o'er mortal eyes,
then witches play.

On ev'ry cloud a warlock rides,
To hold his tryst in mountain mist.
To hold his tryst in mountain mist.
An elf in ev'ry shadow hides.

To light the warlocks on their way.

To light the warlocks on their way.
The moon supplants the light of day, the light of day.
When nature sleeps and slumber creeps o'er mortal eyes,
then witches play.
When nature sleeps and slumber creeps o'er mortal eyes,
o'er mortal eyes, then witches play, then witches play.
When nature sleeps, then nature sleeps, then witches play,
Then witches play.

No. 4. - SONG.

MRS. MAC. Eh! what is that ye say, Ye maun to let her have her way,
She's a varra puir auld body, and she thinks like that?
Well possibly it's true, I am poor and aged too,
But my talking's nae matter to be sneering at!

You may smirk and you may twirl, You're a varra saucy girl,
And you'll have to buy experience with sighs and tears,
But there's nae excuse for you, you're an ancient body too.
You've been forty-three for rather more than fifteen years.
There's nae excuse for you, You're an ancient body too,
Oh there's nae excuse for you, You're an ancient body too.
You may smirk, you may twirl, You're a varra saucy girl,
You may smirk, you may twirl, You're a varra saucy girl.

I'm blind enough, I know, But I wasn't always so,
Though you treat your puir auld Maggie as a jesting butt.
Ye'd have had an ugly throw, Mony, mony years ago,
If she'd totter'd through her duty with her eyelids shut.

You may smirk and you may twirl, You're a varra saucy girl,
And you'll have to buy experience with sighs and tears,
But there's nae excuse for you, you're an ancient body too.
You've been forty-three for rather more than fifteen years.
There's nae excuse for you, You're an ancient body too,
Oh there's nae excuse for you, You're an ancient body too.
You may smirk, you may twirl, You're a varra saucy girl,
You may smirk, you may twirl, You're a varra saucy girl.

You may smirk, you may twirl, You're a varra saucy girl,
You may smirk, you may twirl, You're a varra saucy girl,
But there is nae excuse for you, but there is nae excuse for you!

with ROSA+ She's a poor old body and thinks like that!
TARE She's a poor old body and thinks like that!
Ah, she's a very, very poor old body and she thinks like that!

ROSA. Mrs. MacMotherly, I'm a dreadful little goose, I know, but it's a great many years since I believed a ghost story - Haunted! Why, if the place had the ghost of a ghost in it, Uncle Tare would have ferreted it out long ago. He has already been three weeks in uninterrupted possession, and I should like to see the ghost that would escape Uncle Tare's vigilance for that space of time.

MRS. MAC. Eh weel - it may be sae, I hae naething to say anent it - either the tae way or the tother. But this I ken weel. Your true hieland ghostie is just a pairfect gentleman, and wadna dream of intrudin' himself upon ye until ye'd settled down comfortably in your new habitation.

ROSA. But why should these goblins choose our castle of all others ?

MRS. MAC. Yours? Why it's nae more yours than ilka ither body's, the auld castle has been uninhabited for the last four score and seven years (save by ghosties and sic like) since the death of Dame Cherry Maybud, whose portrait hangs there.

ROSA. I know - the last on the left.

MRS. MAC. Like ilka ither possessor of the auld castle, when she died there was ne'er a will or a title deed to be found, and the ghosties stepped in and folk wadna hae anything to do wi' sic an uncanny place. So it

remained uninhabited until your Uncle, Sir Ebenezer Tare, of the firm or Tare and Tret, Alderman and tallow-chandler, tuk it into his head to try the value of the auld maxim that possession is nine points of the law, and walked in one braw morning three weeks since, wi' ne'er a "wi' yer leave," or "by yer leave," wi' nae mair right to the place than the Sultan o' Morocco himself.

ROSA. But nobody is likely to disturb him.

MRS. MAC. Eh! but I'm nae sa sure about that, if there's any truth in the auld legend about the wicked Sir Roger Bohun, how he sold himself to an awful uncanny apparition on the 13th day of July, 1369, for right and title to the castle for a hundred years. Sir Roger de Bohun was a prodigal knight who had just a life interest in this castle, and nae mair than a life interest. Being sairly pressed for siller and wishing to mortgage the castle, he entered into a compact with the fiend on the 13th July, 1369, that on Sir Roger's death nae heir should be found to the auld castle until a century had slippet by. Well, Sir Roger mortgaged the castle and spent the siller like a graceless loon as he was, and then he died and left ne'er an heir or a title deed, and ne'er a title deed was found, and the castle remained empty until the 13th July, 1469, when the Lady Maud de Bohun, whose portrait hangs there, found them quite unexpectedly in the drawer of her work-table. Well, she took possession, died and left ne'er an heir or a title deed, and ne'er a title deed was found till Sir Cecil Blount - who hangs there - a collateral descendant of the auld Barons, found them in a disused portmanteau on the 13th of July, 1569. Well, he died and left ne'er an heir or a title deed, and ne'er a title deed was found until Lord Carnaby Poppytop - there he hangs - hit upon them, wrapped up in an old disused periwig, on the 13th July, 1669. Well he died and left ne'er an heir or a title deed, and ne'er a title deed was found until Dame Cherry Maybud came upon them in the stuffing of an auld farthingale on the 13th July, 1769. Well she died in 1782*, and from that moment till three weeks sin, the castle has just been handed over the machinations of the de'il and his evil hobgoblins.

ROSA. Then the next century will expire to-morrow!

MRS. MAC. If there's any truth in legends, the weird maun be fulfilled, and the legal descendant of Dame Cherry Maybud will come tomorrow morn and cockcrae wi' the title deeds in his grif, and just turn ye a' out bag and baggage, neck and crop. I've just a notion that I can speer some awfu' misfortune hanging over the House o' Tare, and I've nae manner o' doubt that it's associated wi' the dreadful legend of the wicked Sir Roger de Bohun.

Enter SIR EBENEZER TARE.

TARE. I am only acquainted with one misfortune with which the House of Tare is threatened - the probable loss of it's housekeeper, Mistress MacMotherly, if she continues to fill my niece's ears with her abominable superstitions. It's a misfortune, ma'am, which the House of Tare will bear with Christian fortitude. Now, go - I mean, "gang awa' wi' ye."

MRS. MAC. Eh, Sir! but ye ken weel I'm just telling her naught but what ye ken yoursel' to be true. Wha was it prophesied ye'd lose two braw ships by fire and tempest this year? Why, Mistress MacMotherly! Wha was it prophesied ye'd be down wi' the measles last fall? Why, Mistress MacMotherly! Wha was it prophesied that a bonny young callant wad come a-courting Miss Rosa this week? Why, Mistress MacMotherly! And, mark me! Sir Ebenezer; if I'm to be burnt alive for a warlock, I'll say it: there's just an unco' bad misfortune hangin' over ye; and it's no associated wi' the dismissal of your auld housekeeper, Maggie MacMotherly.

(Exit.)

TARE. My dear Rosa, if ever you go into housekeeping -

ROSA. If!

TARE. Well, *when* you go into housekeeping, take care to ascertain that none of your domestics are gifted with the curse of second sight. That women has been in my service for thirty years, and she has done nothing but prophesy misfortune from the day she entered it until now. And what is worse, her predictions all come true. What was she said about "a bonnie young callant coming a-courting Miss Rosa"?

* This is 3 years before she was painted. Has Gilbert slipped up here, or is it a mistake made in printing the libretto. Note that no year of death is given in the character list.

ROSA. (*frightened*). Oh, I can't imagine what she could have referred to.

TARE. No one has been here except Mr. Columbus Hebblethwaite. (*ROSA starts.*) Eh? It's my belief, Miss, she referred to him.

ROSA. I'm sure I don't know why, Uncle. He's always very agreeable, but nothing more.

TARE. Now, Rosa, it's as well we should have a distinct understanding on this point - I've noticed that that impoverished young man is unpleasantly marked in his attentions to you, and I've noticed that, far from discouraging his penniless addresses, you have afforded him fifty means of persecuting them during his week's residence with us in this castle. He quartered himself upon us without invitation - but, thank goodness, I've got rid of him at last.

ROSA. Uncle, how can you be so unkind!

TARE. Cry away, my dear, it's satisfaction enough to know that at this moment he's careering away at the rate of 60 miles an hour on his road to his native London. Let's see the express started at 10.15, and it's now half past eleven, so he's exactly 75 miles away from his beloved Rosa. And by a remarkable coincidence his beloved Rosa is precisely the same distance from him. Ha! ha! ha!

(*Loud knocking at outer gate.*)

No. 5. - RECIT.

TARE. Ha! what was that? It shook me to the core!
What was it, Rosa? tell me I implore!

ROSA. I rather think, but mind I won't be sure,
I think it's someone knocking at the door.

ARIA.

(*aside*) Columbus dear, thy knock I hear with mingled hopes and fears.
Its murmur laves with eddying waves the portals of my ears.

TARE. You tremble so, I am sure you know
Who's knocking at my gate.

MRS. MAC. (*entering*). Tis Mister Hebblethwaite!

ALL. Tis Mister Hebblethwaite!

Enter MR. HEBBLETHWAITE with carpet bag, etc. [and STEWARD]

HEBBLE. Permit me a short explanation,
I left you to go to the station,
And thought not to see you again;
The time was so short that I hurried,
I really felt terribly flurried
At the idea of missing my train.

ALL. He really felt terribly flurried
At the idea of missing his train.

HEBBLE. This modern edition of coaching,
I heard like a rocket approaching,
I had not a moment to look;
So forward in agony springing,
I ran to the place where they book.

ALL. So forward in terrible agony springing,
He ran to the place where they book!

HEBBLE. I eagerly ran to the small office door,
I well knew the way, for I'd been there before;
I tapped at the wicket,
I asked for a ticket,
And laid down the price of the journey, and more,
"Give me," quoth I, "to my home I fly,
Where the violet sighs to the evening skies,
And the skies of eve receive the sigh of the violet."

ALL. Where the violet sighs to the evening skies,
And the skies of eve receive the sigh of the violet.

HEBBLE. Come with me, clerk (if excuse you can trump any),
Bother the station and bother the company.
Come to my thatchery, semi-detachery,
Roses and posies shall flower the way.
My ticket I seized, I rushed to the station,
The clerk had refused my polite invitation,
Oh, horror! oh, horror! I fell to the earth;
For I noticed the train, it was only too plain,
It was moving off to the land of my birth!

ALL. Oh, horror! he fell to the earth,
Seeing the train, only too plain,
Twas moving off to the land of his birth!

ROSA. We'll do out best to make your rest as pleasant as can be, Sir.

STEW. Your cheery face, in such a place, we're very glad to see, Sir.

TARE. But stop, I say, you went away, and spoke not of returning.

MRS. MAC. It's very clear, he's come back here, for Mistress Rosa burning.

No. 6. - COUPLETS AND QUINTETT.

HEBBLE. It does perplex, annoy and vex, forgive the observation,
When just too late, in breathless state, you see with irritation,
The starting train, while you remain in dreadful perturbation,
To spend the night, till morning light, at some unheard of station.

ROSA. Your room is old, and damp and cold, unworthy habitation,
The spider crawls about the walls and fills you with vexation,
Had I but known you would have flown, you'll judge by this narration,
To make it good, this morning would have been my occupation.
(TARE is standing apart in a great rage.)

ROSA. (aside to TARE). Uncle, you must say something to him, poor fellow.

TARE. Say? Why, what can I say?

ROSA. Oh, a few words of course - that you are glad to see him back again and so on.

TARE. But I'm not.

ROSA. Never mind, pretend you are - leave it to me. (*Goes up to HEBBLETHWAITE.*) Mr. Hebblethwaite, Uncle tells me to say that he is delighted at the fortunate accident that has procured him the pleasure of seeing you again.

HEBBLE. My dear Sir (*shaking hands with TARE*).

ROSA. That he hopes you will consider his house your home until to-morrow evening.

HEBBLE. Until to-morrow? until to-morrow week if you like!

TARE. But I say, Rosa -

ROSA. He also wishes me to say that he would have told you this himself, but he thought it would come more prettily from my mouth.

HEBBLE. It does, it does. My dear Sire Ebenezer, the warmth of this welcome overpowers me.

TARE. But, Sir, I say - (*sharply to ROSA*) Rosa, go to bed!

ROSA. But, Uncle -

TARE. Go to bed, Miss. (*aside to ROSA*) I'll talk to you about this to-morrow.

(*Exit ROSA.*)

TARE. Well, Sir, as it seems my niece has given you to understand that I'm extremely glad to see you back again...

HEBBLE. Thank you, thank you, I know you are.

TARE. I said nothing of the kind, Sir; I say, as my niece has expressed as much, I am put to the disagreeable necessity of echoing her opinion. So, Sir, if you will take your candlestick, Mistress MacMotherly shall show you to your room. The room is in the roof, Mistress MacMotherly, where the rats are. Good-night, Sir, and pleasant dreams to you.

(*Ensemble TARE, HEBBLETHWAITE, [STEWART] and MRS. MACMOTHERLY.*)

No. 7. - QUARTETT.

ALL FOUR. We fly to fields of fancy,
Achieve our mystic flight,
By Nature's necromancy,
Good night, by gentle Luna's light.

MRS. MAC. No passing breath of sorrow
HEBBLE. Shall cloud our visions bright;
ALL FOUR. We meet again to-morrow.
Good-night! good-night.

(*Exeunt.*)

(The stage is darkened; moonlight streams through oriel window. The clock strikes twelve, and the veil before LADY MAUD's picture is withdrawn. LADY MAUD is discovered full length in the frame. She sings the following recitative.)

No. 8. - RECIT.

LADY MAUD. I breathe! I live! Since last I saw the day
Five tardy centuries have passed away.
No longer o'er my grave let chaplets wreath,
My bosom throbs with life! I live! I breathe!

(LADY MAUD descends from the frame.)

No. 9. - SONG.

LADY MAUD. Moments so fleeting stern spirits give,
My heart is beating, I breathe! I live!
For three short hours, while darkness lowers,
My mystic powers I breathe! I live!

Night's sombre awning has set me free;
The daylight's dawning brings night to me.
My heart is aching, the daylight's breaking,
All other waking, brings night to me.

LADY MAUD. Am I in the world? And if so, where in the world am I? *(Looking round.)* A picture gallery! oh, of course, *our* picture gallery. But the pictures. I don't know them. What extraordinary costumes. They are all strangers to me. They were not there when I died. Died? Then I'm dead! I'm sure I died. But here I am walking about in my own picture gallery. Then I suppose I'm a ghost! My own ghost! I wonder if I ought to be frightened? But who has the castle now? The title deeds disappeared the day before I died in accordance with the wicked compact by which Sir Roger de Bohun obtained possession of this castle a hundred and fifty years ago, and by the terms of the compact it would remain unoccupied for about eighty years after my death. But evidently it *is* occupied. Then at least eighty years have elapsed. I wonder how my portrait has kept? It was painted many years before I died by Leonardo da Vinci. A rather clever young artist. He sent it to the Royal Academy, but he didn't know anybody on the Hanging Committee, so he didn't get it in. Let me see, where did it hang? *(Walks up to frame.)* Why, the picture's gone. Faded away. Nothing left but the background. Oh, it's too bad. I paid I don't know how much for it. These modern painters seem quite to have lost the art of mixing colours. Now a Cimabue or a Giotto would be as fresh as if it had been painted yesterday. Oh, it's too bad! *(Looks at her dress.)* Why, this is the very dress I was painted in! and all my jewels exactly as I wore them. What an extraordinary coincidence! *(She has a rose in her hand.)* And here is the very rose that Messer Leonardo make me carry because he wanted a bit of colour down here. But I came from there just now! I remember distinctly coming down from that frame. Then I'm only a picture. Well, I'm glad I'm not a ghost. Then I've done Messer Leonardo da Vinci a very serious injustice. *(Takes up a hand mirror.)* Oh, there's another picture of me here and it moves. Stop - I remember - it's a mirror. I saw one when I was quite a little girl. It was sent over from Venice and cost a mint of money. How exceedingly foolish to leave a valuable object like this about. Now I suppose this is worth about four or five hundred pounds *(looking at herself in it)*. Yes, I'm looking very well - I'm very like - quite a speaking likeness. I wonder whose portraits these are. *(Reads tablets on frames.)* Dame Cherry Maybud. Lord Poppytop. *(Then seeing SIR CECIL.)* Oh, how perfectly charming! What a noble face! What magnificent colour! There's a flesh tint! and then such dignity! such expression! I wonder who painted it! *(Reads.)* Michael Angelo - I never heard of the gentleman. Quite an unknown man. After all, on looking at it again it's very tricky, quite a fourth or fifth-rate production. Date 1602 - Oh, some mistake. They must mean 1502. I died in 1500. I should really like to know whose portrait it is, for with all its faults, there is really a manly dignity about it which must have been strongly impressed on the original. *(Apostrophising picture.)* You are very handsome - very, very handsome. I'm glad you're only a picture. If you were a real living man, I should be obliged to be rather particular, but as it is I may say what I like to you.

No. 10. - SONG.

LADY MAUD. So please you, Sir, to hear my story while I tell
The happiness awaiting you: a maiden loves you well.
She dares not to declare the love that makes her sigh,
And would you know that maiden, so please you, Sir, tis I.

She would a saint beguile, her hair is soft and bright,
A happy laugh, a pleasant smile, and eyes that dance with light,
A dimple here and there, a pretty, touching sigh,
And would you know that maiden, so please you, Sir, tis I.

SIR C. A sweeter fate I never heard, my gratitude you've earned.

LADY M. (*aside*). (My goodness me, he's talking!)

SIR C. The compliment, upon my word, was very neatly turned.

LADY M. (My goodness me, he's walking!)

SIR C. Her goodness she, I'm walking!

LADY M. To laugh it off I can't contrive, with fright I'm nearly fainting,
I never thought you were alive, I thought you were a painting!

BOTH. To laugh it off I/she can't contrive, with fright I'm/she's nearly fainting.
I never thought you were/I was alive, I thought you were/I was a painting.

SIR C. I am indeed, so are you.

LADY M. How do you know that?

SIR C. How do I know it? Why, didn't you hang up there during the ten years I occupied this castle?

LADY M. Did you occupy this castle for ten years?

SIR C. I did indeed.

LADY M. But how do you know I'm not the original of whom that picture is a portrait?

SIR C. Because there's a limit to the beauties of Nature, there's no limit to the beauties of Art. In other words, you're a great deal too good to be true. Angels are not half as bright as they are painted, and the famous Leonardo da Vinci was a terrible flatterer.

LADY M. Famous! Why he was a mere nobody who painted me for a few pounds.

SIR C. Ah! but after your melancholy decease, pardon my alluding to that distressing topic, he grew in fame and fortune, and before he died, Europe rang with his fame. Now (*looking at LADY M. critically*), I should say you are worth at least £2,000.

LADY M. Is it possible? And you?

SIR C. I'm a Michael Angelo. A very fine example, painted by him five years before I came, quite unexpectedly, into possession of this castle, and six years before his death. I'm worth at least as much as you. Indeed, I'm a much finer picture.

LADY M. Sir!

SIR C. I am indeed - look here (*showing legs*). Here's drawing! You are the work of an artist - I am the work of an accomplished anatomist.

LADY M. How can you say so? Look at that hand; look at its colour; look at its drawing!

(*One of SIR CECIL's hands is painted a queer flesh colour.*)

SIR C. Yes - ah - that's rather a sore point with me, but it's susceptible of explanation. The fact is that this hand of mine has been recently restored by a Royal Academician. In point of fact I've only one hand - this is not mine.

LADY M. (*with great tenderness*). Oh Sir Cecil, forgive my thoughtless remark. Indeed I had not intention of paining you. Believe me that I sympathise deeply with your terrible misfortune.

SIR C. That sympathy more than reconciles me to it. Besides, although it's certainly deformed, after all I can use it freely enough. It was awkward at first but I've become quite used to it.

LADY M. So I've spent years in this castle with Sir Cecil Blount without ever knowing it.

SIR C. Yes, that soft melting gaze of yours has been continually turned on me for ten delicious years.

LADY M. (*aside*). I wonder if he's married! (*Aloud.*) I'm surprised that Lady Blount allowed it. If I had been Lady Blount -

SIR C. Lady Blount? My mother?

LADY M. No, your wife.

SIR C. Oh, I never had a wife.

LADY M. (*aside*). I though not.

SIR C. Shall I tell you a secret? I never married because I had fallen desperately in love with you.

LADY M. With me? oh, nonsense!

SIR C. I'm perfectly serious. I used to sit opposite you all day long smoking and vowing to myself that I would never take a wife until I found your counterpart. "Maud," I used to say, "my own Maud." (*LADY MAUD looks indignant.*) You were mine you know together with everything else in the Castle. "My own Maud" (*take LADY MAUD's hand*) with all my heart and soul I love you. I love you with the devotion of a lover who knows his happiness is on the eve of being crowned and with the desperation of a lover who feels that there is not the remotest chance of anything of the kind.

LADY M. Sir, you are too bold.

(*Struggling to free herself.*)

SIR C. Oh, one may say what one likes to a picture, you know. I gazed all day at those eyes, those cheeks, those lips, and dreamt them all night.

LADY M. (*looking in mirror*). I was just remarking before you - revived - that my lips seem to have lost their colour. Indeed, I almost fancy I can see the canvas through them.

SIR C. Ah that's not Leonardo da Vinci's fault, it's mine. For ten years, night and morning, I was in the habit of covering them with kisses.

LADY M. Sir !

(*Indignantly.*)

SIR C. One may do what one likes to a picture, you know, but if I had had the least idea that we should ever meet under these peculiar circumstances, I need hardly say that I should not have ventured on such a liberty.

LADY M. Well, I suppose I must pocket my indignation.

SIR C. Besides, remember after all, the offender was not I, but my prototype.

LADY M. That's true, you can't be responsible for everything that he did, so say no more about it. Let us shake hands.

SIR C. With pleasure. (*Offers LADY MAUD the restored hand.*)

LADY M. No, the other.

SIR C. I beg you pardon. (*Takes LADY MAUD's hand and kisses it, and retains it in his.*) So I am quite forgiven?

LADY M. Quite. A portrait after all is not like its original.

SIR C. Very often it is not.

LADY M. One may say what one likes to a picture.

SIR C. You allow that?

LADY M. Yes. (*Blushing.*)

No. 11. - DUET.

SIR C. In pity tell, oh lady mine!
The fate that waits me, my life is thine!
Tis thine to spare, tis thine to kill,
Tis thine to fashion to thy fair will.

LADY M. If this is so, what can I do?
The word that kills thee would kill me too!
My hand and heart to thee I give,
The word that save thee, now bids me live.

SIR C. A life of death, a life of life
With joy abounding, with sorrow rife.

LADY M. They should be one, my life and thine,
Oh give it then, if it be mine.

BOTH. A term of joy, a term of grief,
So long without thee, with thee too brief.

(SIR CECIL and LADY MAUD embrace.)

(*During the Duet the veil before LORD CARNABY POPPYTOP's portrait has been silently drawn back. At the end of Duet LORD CARNABY coughs.*)

LORD C. Ahem! (SIR C. and LADY MAUD start and look round.) Ahem!

LADY M. (*looking into SIR CECIL's face*). Eh?

SIR C. I didn't speak.

LADY M. You said "Ahem!"

LORD C. (*from picture*). I said "Ahem!"

LADY M. Gracious, who are you?

LORD C. I'm Lord Carnaby Poppytop. How-de-do? (*Comes down from picture and embraces LADY MAUD.*)

SIR C. Sir! what is the meaning of the outrage?

LORD C. Outrage?

SIR C. Yes, Sir, outrage. You kissed this lady.

LORD C. I did.

SIR C. And by what right, Sir, did you take such a liberty?

LORD C. Liberty? Why she's my great, great, great, great, great-grandmother.

SIR C. Nonsense, Sir, you are old enough to be her father.

LORD C. Because I was painted at the age of sixty-five; Lady Maud was painted at the age of twenty-two. I was not born until a hundred and seventy years after Lady Maud's death. And talking of liberties, may I ask by what right my Michael Angelo puts his arm round the waist of my Leonardo da Vinci?

SIR C. We are companion portraits, Sir. Besides, don't it strike you that it is hardly dutiful on your part to interfere with the proceedings of your great, great, great, great great-grandmother?

LORD C. She's my picture, Sir, and I may do what I like with her.

SIR C. She's your great-grandmother, Sir, and she claims the respect due to her extraordinary old age. Besides, who *are* you? I don't know you.

LORD C. I'm Lord Carnaby Poppytop, painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller, in 1713, at the age of sixty-five, and forty-four years after coming into possession of this castle.

SIR C. Sir Godfrey Kneller! Nobody ever heard of the man!

LORD C. No one would have heard of you if you hadn't been painted by an old master.

LADY M. Gentlemen, pray don't quarrel on my account. (*To LORD CARNABY, with authority.*) My dear, your grandmama is quite old enough to take care of herself.

No. 12. - TRIO - LADY MAUD, SIR CECIL, *and* LORD CARNABY.

LADY M. I stand on my authority,
And wonder what you mean.

LORD C. You're still in your minority,
You're hardly seventeen.

LADY M. Lord Carnaby, in verity,
Your rudeness pains me much.

SIR C. You're Lady Maud's posterity,
Behave yourself as such.

LADY M.+ Your grandmama, in charity,
SIR C. Concludes you must be mad.
 Now be that moral rarity,
 A good, obedient lad!

LORD C. My grandmama, in charity,
 Concludes I must be mad.
 My grandmama, in charity,
 Concludes I must be mad.

LADY M.+ I stand on my authority,
LORD C. And wonder what you mean.
 I stand on my authority,
 And wonder what you mean.

SIR C. She stands on her authority,
 And wonders what you mean.
 She stands on her authority,
 And wonders what you mean.

LADY M. So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
 For sure as I'm alive,
 His grandmama is seventeen,
 And he is sixty-five.

LADY M.
Why, sure as I'm alive; why, sure as I'm alive,
His grandmama is seventeen and he is sixty-five,
She is seventeen and he is sixty-five!
Should he respectful homage pay,
Should he respectful homage pay!

Should he make me his will obey!

Should he make me his will obey!

Should he make me his will obey,
As my proprietor,
Should he make me his will obey, his will obey
Should he respectful homage pay,
Should he respectful homage pay,
To me, to me; No!
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
For sure as I'm alive,
His grandmama is seventeen
And he is sixty-five! He is sixty-five.
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
For sure his Grandmama is seventeen,
And he is sixty-five.

SIR C.
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
For she is seventeen and he is sixty-five!
Should he respectful homage pay,
Should he respectful homage pay!

Should he make her his will obey!
As her proprietor, as her proprietor!

As her proprietor!

So strange a meeting ne'er was seen
Should she respect-
ful homage pay
To him, to him; No!
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
For sure as I'm alive,
His grandmama is seventeen
And he is sixty-five!
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
For sure his Grandmama is seventeen,
And he is sixty-five.

LORD C.
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
For she is seventeen and he is sixty-five!
Should I respectful homage pay,

Should I respectful homage pay,
Should she make me her will obey!
As her proprietor, as her proprietor!

As her proprietor!

Should she make me her will obey, her will obey
Should I respectful homage pay
Respectful homage pay,
To her, to her; No!
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
For sure as I'm alive,
My grandmama is seventeen
And I am sixty-five!
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
So strange a meeting ne'er was seen,
For sure my Grandmama is seventeen,
And I am sixty-five.

(DAME CHERRY'S *picture has gradually uncovered at end of Music.*)

DAME C. (*from frame*). If there's any question as to whom you all belong, I think I can set it at rest, Lord Carnaby.

LORD C. You know me then?

DAME C. Perfectly, you are Lord Carnaby Poppytop who came quite unexpectedly into possession of this castle on the 13th July, 1669; you died in 1716, and the castle remained uninhabited and unclaimed until the 13th July, 1769, when I, Dame Cherry Maybud, quite as unexpectedly found the title deeds in my possession and entered on the property accordingly. (*Comes down from picture.*) Now, allow me to settle the question that you were discussing when I interfered. You will abide by my decision?

ALL. With pleasure.

DAME C. Very well then. You, Lady Maud de Bohun are clearly the property of Sir Cecil Blount, the gentleman who succeeded to the property after your death. Have you any objection to that?

LADY M. None whatever. Cecil, I am yours.

DAME C. By the same rule, Sir Cecil, and you, Lady Maud, are both of you the property of Lord Carnaby Poppytop, who after Sir Cecil's death succeeded to the castle and all that it contained.

SIR C. But allow me to protest.

LORD C. It is useless, Sir, both of you are clearly my property, and a man may do what he likes with his own. Lady Maud, come here; Sir Cecil, go there. (*Separates LADY MAUD and SIR CECIL, placing himself between them. They are much annoyed and make signs to each other behind his back.*) Lady Maud, I think I shall marry you.

SIR C. You! But Lord Carnaby Poppytop -

LADY M. Oh! I protest against anything of the kind. Dame Cherry Maybud, please be careful how you make your award.

LORD C. My valued Leonardo da Vinci, expostulation is useless.

LADY M. This marriage is out of the question, Sir.

SIR C. It's out of the question, Sir.

LADY M. It's impossible, Sir.

LORD C. Why? Why?

LADY M. Because a man may not marry his grandmother.

DAME C. I think it is unnecessary to discuss that at present. Let me go on. We have decided that Lady Maud belongs to Sir Cecil; that Lady Maud and Sir Cecil belong to Lord Carnaby Poppytop. It follow, therefore, that Lady Maud, Sir Cecil and Lord Carnaby Poppytop all belong to me.

ALL. To you?

DAME C. To me. You are all mine, and as Lord Carnaby Poppytop says, I can do what I like with my own. Now I'm going to dispose of my property. Lord Carnaby, let the young people alone. Sir Cecil, take Lady Maud.

LORD C. And if I refuse?

DAME C. If you refuse, my Lord, my course is clear. I shall sell you to the Nation. You will be hung up in the National Gallery, where nobody will go to see you, and you will spend an ignominious existence in the society of sham Rubenses, fictitious Raphaels, and other impostors of every degree.

LORD C. But they won't buy me - I'm genuine.

DAME C. Won't they? Don't be too sure of that. If you don't take care I'll have you so restored that there won't be a trace of the original work left. They'll snap you up directly.

(The veil before BROWN's portrait is withdrawn.)

BROWN. You're settling all this very coolly and comfortably, but don't it occur to you that it is a matter in which *I* am entitled to be consulted?

ALL. You?

DAME C. And who in the world are you, Sir?

BROWN. I'm no other than the maternal grandfather of the present possessor of this castle, Mr. Alderman Tare.

DAME C. Who are you by?

BROWN. I don't know.

LORD C. When were you painted?

BROWN. I was finished yesterday and hung up yesterday afternoon.

DAME C. You're a dreadful daub.

BROWN. I'm afraid I am, but that's my misfortune, not my fault, you know. We don't paint ourselves.

LORD C. Are you considered like?

BROWN. Like, like whom?

LORD C. Like whom? Why like Mr. Alderman Tare's maternal grandfather, of course.

BROWN. Ho! ho! ho! ho!

DAME C. What is the man laughing at?

BROWN. Ho! ho! ho! ho! ho!

LORD C. How dare you laugh in my face, Sir! Explain yourself. I insist upon it.

BROWN. My dear fellow, don't excite yourself, but the question is really so absurd that you must excuse my merriment. Like his maternal grandfather! Ho! ho! ho! Why, my dear friend, old Tare never had a maternal grandfather.

DAME C. Never had a maternal grandfather!

BROWN. Never had a grandfather of any kind whatever. And what is more, he never *will* have.

LORD C. Oh, this is too absurd. Then who are you?

BROWN. I tell you, I'm the portrait of old Tare's maternal grandfather.

DAME C. But bless the man, you say he never had a maternal grandfather.

BROWN. Never, but what has that to do with it?

LORD C. You're an impostor, Sir!

BROWN. Not at all; or if I am we're all impostors.

LORD C. Explain yourself, Sir!

BROWN. With pleasure. Tare says I'm his maternal grandfather.

DAME C. But you know you're not?

BROWN. Of course.

LORD C. Then you're lending yourself to an imposture. A picture with any sense of decency would have rubbed himself out rather than be party to such an imposition.

BROWN. But Tare's assurance don't stop there; he says that you're his great, great-grandmother, and you his great, great, great, great-grandfather!

LORD C. He does? Oh, it's monstrous!

DAME C. What an infamous fabrication!

LORD C. I never had any family at all.

DAME C. And I died a spinster.

BROWN. But Tare declares it's true.

DAME C. But we know that it's impossible.

BROWN. Then rub yourselves out without loss of time. A picture with any sense of decency would take steps rather than be a party to such an imposition.

LORD C. (*in a great rage*). Come down, Sir, and I'll teach you to bandy words with me. Come down!

BROWN. I can't!

LORD C. Why not?

BROWN. Because I'm only a half-length, besides I'm not dry, and I might rub.

LORD C. Coward! But who could expect nobility of soul in such a misshapen frame!

BROWN. (*Looking at frame of his picture.*) Oh, my frame is very good - very good indeed. Well-made, and solid. A good piece of work.

LORD C. I'm alluding to your body, Sir, not your setting.

DAME C. There now, Lord Carnaby, let the poor man alone. He's a wretched daub, but he can't help that, you know. Besides, you mustn't quarrel in the presence of a lady - you won't, I know.

LORD C. Oh, won't I -

DAME C. No, I'm sure you won't - if I ask prettily (*making eyes at LORD CARNABY*). You won't, you won't, you won't, now will you?

LORD C. (*gradually relaxing*). No, I won't, indeed. (*To BROWN.*) Miserable signboard, your life is spared.
(*Coquets with DAME CHERRY.*)

LORD C. But, I say; where have they gone?

DAME C. Who?

LORD C. Sir Cecil and Lady Maud. This won't do, you know.

DAME C. There they are, in the next corridor.

LORD C. It's very disgusting. So young, and yet so lost to all sense of propriety. I shall go and call them back.

DAME C. Stop! - reflect one moment. They are two or three hundred years older than we are. Would it be delicate to interfere?

LORD C. It's rather a difficult point. Are we to judge of their age by their years or their personal appearance?

DAME C. Oh, my dear Lord Carnaby! If you judge a lady's age by her personal appearance, there'll be no end to the mistakes you'll make. Be content with the fact that they are our ancestors, and let well alone.

LORD C. I suppose there's no alternative. I say, he's kissing her!

DAME C. Well, let him kiss her. Young people will be young people.

LORD C. But you just said they were old!

DAME C. Well, then, there are no fools like old ones. If they are young, we've been young too; if they are old, we've no right to interfere. Anyway, it's no business of ours.

LORD C. Yes, we've been young; but we haven't been young together. If we had -

DAME C. If we had, we should have make ourselves very ridiculous, I dare say. Now, sit down and leave them alone, do.

LORD C. Do you think we should have made ourselves *very* ridiculous? Very - *very* ridiculous?

DAME C. I don't know. I was very thoughtless, and extremely pretty.

LORD C. And I was very thoughtless and remarkably handsome.

DAME C. Ah! time works wonders! Now, there (*pointing to picture of a pretty young girl*) is myself at the age of nineteen.

LORD C. Exquisite! And there (*pointing to picture of young man*) am I at the age of twenty-three.

No. 13. - DUET.

LORD C. At twenty-three, Lord Carnaby, tho' anything but plain,
 Was quite a coxcomb as you see, so empty-headed, vain!
 I rather think he us'd to drink, no greater rake alive!
 How different to Carnaby at sober sixty-five.
 Oh! not a bit like to Carnaby at sober sixty-five.

BOTH. Not a bit like, &c.

DAME C. Dame Cherry too, at seventeen was such a sad coquette,
 She flirted here, she flirted there with ev'ry beau she met,
 She sent a dart into each heart, and play'd such thoughtless tricks,
 But oh, how different is she at sober fifty-six.
 But not a bit like, in truth, is she at sober fifty-six.

BOTH. Not a bit like, &c.

DAME C. Perfect! (*They gaze in rapture on each other's pictures.*)

LORD C. I say, I don't want to be rude, but wouldn't it have made it pleasanter for all parties if *that* portrait of Dame Cherry Maybud had come to life instead of *this* one (*indicating* HER).

DAME C. Oh, you think so? Very good. Shall I go back to my frame and send her down instead?

LORD C. Do! do! You won't be offended, I'm sure - it's still you, you know, only younger and - ahem! - prettier!

DAME C. Offended! not a bit - only -

LORD C. Yes.

DAME C. I was going to say that if Dame Cherry at the age of eighteen is to take the place of Dame Cherry at the age of fifty-six, it is only fair that Lord Carnaby at the age of twenty-one should take the place of Lord Carnaby at the age of sixty-five.

LORD C. Ah! Do you insist upon that?

DAME C. Oh yes, I insist upon that. Dame Cherry at eighteen would have nothing to say to an old gentleman like you, you know.

LORD C. Don't you think she would?

DAME C. I'm quite sure she wouldn't. She wouldn't hear of it.

LORD C. Am I to gather from that that Dame Cherry at the age of -

DAME C. Fifty-six.

LORD C. Oh, impossible - say thirty-five - that Dame Cherry, at the age of thirty-five, would hear of it?

DAME C. (*coquettishly*). Oh, Lord Carnaby.

(LORD CARNABY *places his arm around* DAME CHERRY's *waist*.)

BROWN. (*from frame*). I say, ahem! I don't want to interfere - but really you know - before a third party - you shouldn't; you shouldn't indeed.

LORD C. Be quiet, Sir, and look the other way.

BROWN. By all means. (*Turns his back to them*.) Will that do?

LORD C. Capitally. Stop like that until I tell you to turn round, or I'll rub you out. (*To DAME CHERRY*.) Then there is only one thing to be done - to ask the sanction of our respected ancestors to our union. Ah! they come!

Enter LADY MAUD *and* SIR CECIL.

SIR C. There is, however, one duty we owe to our venerable relations - we must obtain their consent to our marriage. Ah! they are here!

(SIR CECIL *and* LADY MAUD *kneel at the feet of the elder couple, who at the same moment kneel at the feet of* SIR CECIL *and* LADY MAUD.)

LORD C. (*kneeling*) Eh! What's this?

SIR C. (*kneeling*) We were about to ask your consent -

LORD C. To what?

SIR C. To my marriage with Lady Maud.

LORD C. But why ask our consent?

SIR C. Because you are our oldest relatives.

LORD C. But we were going to ask your consent.

SIR C. To what?

LORD C. To my marriage with Dame Cherry.

SIR C. But why?

LORD C. Because you are my great, great, great, great-grandfather. You are our ancestors.

SIR C. But we are your property.

BROWN. (*from picture*). Allow me to arrange this - you are all Alderman Tare's property - whose representative I am. Allow me to act for him, and bestow the necessary blessing.

ALL. With pleasure.

BROWN. Then, bless you, my ancestors.

(*All rise.*)

DAME C. Well, that's comfortably settled. But bless me, the sun will rise in a few moments, when we shall all have to retire to our respective frames for a hundred years, and I declare we've been forgetting the very purpose for which we have been revived! The title deeds! (*Taking deeds from pocket.*)

LORD C. Of course, they must be given over to our next lineal descendant of the wicked Sir Roger do Bohun.

DAME C. I declare that lineal descendant to be Mr. Columbus Hebblethwaite, who is now stopping in this very house. We will leave the deeds on this table, where he will find them as soon as he descends to breakfast. (*Places deeds on table.*) There, the spell is broken and may not be revived for a hundred years.

(*All kneel. Crash. Cock crows. Daylight dawns. The lights go out.*)

No. 14. - QUINTETT.

ALL. Tis done, the spell is broken.
We must away!

The herald rays betoken
The coming day.

Once more we die,
In slumber deep,
We soundly sleep
A century!

(*All retire to their pictures, the veils fall over them. Day breaks. Lights up.*)

Enter STEWARD rubbing his eyes and carrying portmanteau.

STEW. Half past five in the morning and Mr. Hebblethwaite starts at six. It's little of Miss Rosa he'll see this morning. Why, what's this? (*Sees deeds.*) "Abstract of title of Columbus Hebblethwaite to Glen-Cockaleekie Castle." Why, what does it mean? And here are the original deeds sure enough. Mr. Columbus Hebblethwaite, the owner of Glen-Cockaleekie Castle! Why, Sir Ebenezer can't know of this sure-lie! He ordered me last night to have everything ready for Mr. Hebblethwaite's departure by the 6.30 train, as he wouldn't have him in the house five minutes longer than it was necessary. Here! (*calling*) Sir Ebenezer! Mistress MacMotherly! Miss Rosa! Mr. Hebblethwaite! Here's news for you!

Enter MRS. MACMOTHERLY, ROSA, and MR. HEBBLETHWAITE.

MRS. MAC. Eh, ye noisy loon, what are ye making a' that noise about, is the house a' fire, or have ye found yer senses. Which is it?

STEW. My senses! I've found something more than my senses, look here! "Abstract of title of Columbus Hebblethwaite to Glen-Cockaleekie Castle." I found it on the table just this minute.

MRS. MAC. Eh! then the legend's come true! The hundred years expire this very day; and the auld castle passes into the hands of its legitimate owner, who turns out to be nae ither than Miss Rosa's Mr. Columbus.

Enter TARE, who seizes the deeds.

TARE. But I protest against this, Sir. It's absurd - it's impossible! I'll dispute it, Sir!

HEBBLE. Stop a bit. Don't let us go to law about it. I'll make a bargain with you. If you'll consent to my marriage with Rosa, you shall stop here as long as you like. Come, what do you say? Shall we all live together?

TARE. Well, Sir, if - mind, *if* - the deeds turn out to be authentic, and there is no doubt whatever of your title to this castle. Why, in that case - I say, in that case - I have no objection to entertain your proposal. Rosa, on that condition, he is yours.

No. 15. - FINALE.

HEBBLE. The subject drop, no need to stop to make a long oration,
 To make all sure I will endure her elderly relation.

ROSA. He goes not yet, so breakfast get, he needs no invitation,
 There'll be no need, to-day indeed, to hurry to the station.

TARE. The subject drop, no need to stop to make a long oration,

MRS. MAC. There'll be no need, to-day indeed, to hurry to the station
 There'll be no need,

TARE. There won't indeed.

ALL. There won't, there won't, there won't.
 The subject drop, no need to stop to make a long oration,
 He'll endure (to make all sure) his elderly relation.

CURTAIN