

NO CARDS

**A MUSICAL PIECE IN ONE ACT
for four characters**

Written by W.S. GILBERT

Composed by THOMAS GERMAN-REED

*First produced at the Royal Gallery of Illustration, Lower Regent Street, London
under the management of Mr. Thomas German-Reed, on 29th March 1869.*

Music Publisher, Joseph Williams & Co: reissued "NO CARDS" in 1895 with a new score by L. Elliott.

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NO CARDS

Considering the lengthy initial run of NO CARDS (29th March - 21st November 1869), it seems amazing that the work did not become a part of the regular repertoire of companies, professional or amateur, that needed short curtain raisers to 'fill the bill'.

Although further performances seem to have been mounted at St. George's Hall in 1873, (a programme exists for this venue dated March 29th), the only major revival appears to have taken place at St. George's Hall, London during March 1902.

Part of the reason for this could be the very fluid state of both libretto and score. The current libretto is a compilation from three sources:-

- 1) The manuscript licence copy in the Lord Chamberlain's collection at the British Library.
- 2) The libretto published by J. Mallett, London, during the original run at the Gallery. These libretti, although regularly updated with changes of lyric, contained only a synopsis of the dialogue scenes. Hence the note on page 10 regarding the discussion of the piano, for which no actual dialogue appears to survive.
- 3) The final version of the libretto published by Joseph Williams, Limited in 1895.

The original score appears to have been 'arranged' by Thomas German-Reed. Evidence that this was not an original composition appears in the licensing copy, where Dee's verse of No.2. is clearly annotated 'Yankee Doodle', and indeed, the last section of the same number is obviously intended to have been sung to the tune of 'Pretty Polly Perkins of Paddington Green'. Of the other numbers, Annabella's 'Thady O'Flinn' seems to have slipped in and out of performance at will (mainly as a vehicle for the voice of Rosa D'Erina). The number had been published on October 7, 1868 by Boosey and Co., the music having been composed by James L. Molloy. No.3. - 'An elderly person' - had already appeared as a 'Bab Ballad' in the comic paper 'Fun' on 23rd November 1867, and subsequently in the various collections of the 'Ballads'. In all cases it is specified 'To be sung to the air of the "Whistling Oyster"'. To date, this piece of music has not been traced.

A new vocal score was prepared by Lionel Elliott and this was published by Joseph Williams, again in 1895, although on the evidence of the programme dated 29th March 1873, it was already in use at that time.

The original cast was as follows:

Miss Annabella Penrose - Rosa D'Erina
Mrs Pennythorne - Mrs German Reed
Mr Ellis Dee - Thomas German Reed
Mr Churchmouse - Arthur Cecil

CHARACTERS

MISS ANNABELLA PENROSE...An Heiress, Niece of Mrs. Pennythorne.

**MRS. PENNYTHORNE.....A lady of considerable matrimonial
experiences, with strong opinions and
convictions on "Women's Rights."**

MR. ELLIS DEE.....A wealthy old bachelor.

MR. CHURCHMOUSE.....A poor young bachelor.

SCENE: Interior of Mrs. Pennythorne's boudoir. MRS. PENNYTHORNE discovered at table, working. MISS ANNABELLA at piano.

- Mrs. P. My dear Annabella, I've lived much longer in the world than you have. I've seen a great deal more of it. And believe an experienced old woman when she says, that for one unhappy marriage there are at least a hundred happy ones. It's the fast fashion of the day, my dear, to sneer at married life; and fast fashions are always wrong in principle. When people ridicule the idea of marriage they forget how much they owe to that institution. No girl who places any value upon her existence should turn up her nose at the institution to which she is indebted for it.
- Miss P. No, Aunt, I don't sneer at marriage in the abstract. I sneer at marriage with an old bachelor like Mr. Ellis Dee.
- Mrs. P. Bachelor! Why, what in the world does a girl want to marry but a bachelor?
- Miss P. I said an *old* bachelor, Aunt.
- Mrs. P. Old? A boy! Fifty at the very outside. But rich as he is, I don't press Mr. Ellis Dee upon you. Marry whomsoever you like (so that you do like him), but for goodness sake marry someone. That's my advice to everybody - marry someone.
- Miss P. Do you know, Aunt, I often wonder how it is that you, whose personal experiences of married life have certainly not been fortunate, should nevertheless be so enthusiastic a matchmaker. You say that ninety-nine marriages out of a hundred turn out happily, but certainly in your case -
- Mrs. P. My dear, mine was the hundredth. Somebody's marriage must be the hundredth. Bless me, if I'm run over by a Pickford's van in Fleet Street, is that any reason why you should never go east of Charing Cross? Nonsense. My marriage was a miserable one - well, my misfortunes have made me more keenly alive to the happiness I should have enjoyed if I'd married anybody else. Mr. Coodle was a bad man - a thorough scamp, my dear. He ran away with all my money three weeks after we were married, and for twenty years I have neither seen nor heard anything of him, so I resumed my maiden name and washed my hands of him for ever.
- Miss P. It was too bad of Aunt Salamanca to make such a man my guardian. I can't marry without his consent, and as he hasn't called for twenty years, I suppose I shall have to remain single all my life.
- Mrs. P. Single? With £25,000? Nonsense. Why all we have to do is to tell the Lord Chancellor that Mr. Coodle, your guardian, is a bad character who has run away, and his Lordship will adopt you on the spot. That's what he's paid for. But why do you object to Mr. Dee? He's a very wealthy man.

- Miss P. But he is so old and so dreadfully rich, and such a terrible story-teller. It's impossible to believe a word he says. I don't pretend to be a Scotland Yard detective, but then, on the other hand, I'm not the Royal Regiment of Marines.
- Mrs. P. Well, there's Mr. Churchmouse. He doesn't tell stories, and he is poor enough in all conscience.
- Miss P. But he is so dreadfully shy, Aunt. He couldn't be more nervous in speaking to me if I were both Houses of Parliament rolled into one. I have my faults, but I'm not the House of Commons!
- Mrs. P. But that will wear off. Look at him when he plays in amateur performances - he's as self-possessed as possible then.
- Miss P. Yes - it's very curious - I don't know how it is, but whenever he is dressed for a part, his shyness seems to vanish immediately.
- Mrs. P. My dear, all that is attributable to an unnecessarily keen sense of his own personal defects. Mr. Churchmouse is so ashamed of Mr. Churchmouse, that he is delighted to appear as anybody else. It's a very good sign in a young man, my dear, and I only wish it were more common.

No. 1. - SONG. - Mrs. Pennythorne.

I

A great deal of experience in life I've had,
Remember, when you come across a bashful lad,
He's a rarity, so cultivate him, if you can,
I've a very high opinion of a shy young man:
A timid, and a bashful, and a shy young man -
A nervous, and an awkward, and a shy young man,
In lacking all precocity, a moral curiosity,
I'm very much in favour of a shy young man.

II

The regulation gentry at a croquet-crush
Are people who have never yet been known to blush,
I'll undertake to wager you that nine in ten
Are over-dressed, opinionated, vain young men -
Such very, very, very, very vain young men,
Such singularly silly and inane young men,
And, spite of all their vanity and simpering inanity,
Such very, very, very, very plain young men!

III

But beauty doesn't matter in a man - that's true -
When an eligible gentleman addresses you,
His type of physiognomy you need not scan,
Should he chance to be a modest and urbane young man,
A gentlemanly, sensible, urbane young man,
A quick and unquestionably sane young man -
No matter an economy of pretty physiognomy.
But marry that particularly plain young man!

After song, exit MRS. P.

BALLAD - Miss Penrose.¹

Thady O'Flinn, agin and agin
You said you loved me dearly,
And sorra a bit I doubted it,
I thought you loved sincerely;
You said when we should married be,
You'd make me quite a lady,
But now I find you've changed your mind,
It's ugly Norah Grady.

At Phelim's wake I saw ye take
Her hand with glances tender,
Tho' sorra a bit ye fancied it,
I saw you through the winder;
Your arm you placed around her waist,
It's little did she mind ye;
You call'd her dear right in her ear,
I wish I'd been behind ye.

Thady O'Flinn, you vowed it thin
You'd make me quite a lady,
But now I find you've changed your mind,
It's ugly Norah Grady.

At Goolah fair, I saw ye there
Along with Norah Grady,
It's sorra a bit ye fancied it,

¹ This is a prime example of a number that appears to have been included in some performances but not in others.

But I persuaived ye, Thady;
I pity your taste, your love to waste
On Norah so consaited;
Why! I declare you're muttherin' there,
As if you'd been ill treated.

There go your ways, yourself to plase
You only need be troublin',
Ye think there's few as fine as you,
From here away to Dublin.
There's Pat Malone, at least you'll own,
And Mike and Clanty Brady,
And Barney Bourke, and Terry O'Rourke,
I'm not in earnest, Thady.

Now, Thady, dear, come sit ye here,
And listen awhile to raisin,
It's sorra a bit I mind the chit,
Sure I was only tazin.
It's you're the one to throw your fun
At ugly Norah Grady;
But don't begin and do it agin,
Now there's a darlin' Thady!

Enter MR. ELLIS DEE. He believes that ANNABELLA² has been singing.

Dee. Bravo! Bravo! Very charming indeed! Miss Penrose, your fresh young voice is in splendid condition to-day, isn't it, Mrs. Pennythorne? Come, encore! No? Well, well, perhaps not. It don't do to over exert the voice, Miss Penrose. Talking of encores, I remember hearing the famous Russian singer, Mdlle. Shrieka, at the Scala many years ago. Enormous sensation she made. Encored in "Robert toi qui j'aime" fifty-seven times in one performance. It lasted two days and three nights. The band were carried out, one by one, as they dropped from their stools, until no one was left but the triangle, who held out like a man. She married him, ma'am. He founded the celebrated Euclid concerts.

Miss P. Euclid concerts?

Dee. Yes - nothing but triangles. Very popular in the provinces, especially with three-cornered constituencies. *(Looking off)* Hullo! Who's this?

Miss P. Oh - that's Mr. Churchmouse.

2 This stage direction again shows the very fluid state of the musical elements of NO CARDS. If 'Thaddy O'Flinn' had been included, then of course, he would have heard ANNABELLA. Otherwise he would have heard MRS. PENNYTHORNE.

Dee. Confound Mr. Churchmouse. He's always here.

Miss P. Yes. We are getting up some private theatricals, and Mr. Churchmouse is assisting us.

Dee. What! Churchmouse an actor! Ho! ho! ho!

Miss P. Oh, you may laugh, but I assure you that with all his timidity and nervousness he's a very capital actor. Here he is.

Enter Mr. Churchmouse.

Ch. Good morning, Miss Penrose. How-de-do today? Quite well? Thank you, yes, I'm quite well, I'm much obliged to you. Yes, I'm wonderfully well for me, Miss Penrose. How-de-do Mr. Dee?

Dee. I hope you're well, Sir - I hope you're well.

Ch. Well, no, I am so plagued with this terrible tooth of mine. I haven't had a wink of sleep this week. Oh, Miss Penrose, I have such a toothache!

Miss P. A toothache, Mr. Churchmouse? Why you said you were so well.

Ch. Quite well, thank you, Miss Penrose. It's a chilly day isn't it?

Dee. Chilly Sir? No, Sir, I call it warm - decidedly warm.

Ch. Well, it is warm - in the shade. Dreadfully warm. Gardening, Miss Penrose?

Miss P. Yes, Mr. Churchmouse, I'm planting double stocks.

Dee. Ah. Miss Penrose, I often wish I was a double stock.

Miss P. Indeed! Why?

Dee. (*tenderly*). To be born double instead of having to achieve doubleness - especially if one might choose one's partner beforehand.

Ch. Like the Siamese twins?

Dee. (*angrily*). No Sir! - not at all like the Siamese twins. I am referring, Sir, to marriage. I wish I was born married, that's what I mean.

Ch. So do I, Sir. Don't you, Miss Penrose?

Miss P. Don't I what?

Ch. Don't you wish Mr. Dee had been born married?

Dee. Sir!

Ch. Such an economy, Miss Penrose. One breakfast for the marriage and the christening - one announcement in the *Times* for both events. Something like this: "On the 1st of April, 1780, Mrs. Dee" - that's your mamma, you know - "of a son; at St. Pancras Church, to Julia, only daughter of Theophilus Brown, of Nova Scotia. No cards."

Miss P. There would be one advantage attached to being married, there would be no occasion for any guardians. Now I have a guardian who hasn't been heard of for twenty years, and I can't possibly marry without his consent.

Dee. And is it possible, Miss Penrose, that the disposal of such a prize is in the hands of a man who hasn't been heard of for twenty years? His name, ma'am, his name?

Miss P. Oh, he is Mrs. Pennythorne's husband.

Dee. Mrs. Pennythorne's husband? I pledge to discover Pennythorne within the next two hours.

Miss P. Oh, but his name isn't Pennythorne - it's Coodle.

Ch. Then, if you will allow me, I think I should like to undertake the discovery of Coodle.

Dee. Nonsense, Sir - I have already undertaken -

Ch. To discover Pennythorne. You shall find Pennythorne - I will find Coodle.

Miss P. And if a portrait of the gentleman will assist you to discover him, I think I can find you one.

Looks in work-basket.

Both. A portrait! The very thing.

Miss P. It's considered a wonderful likeness. Here it is.

Produces black profile.

Ch. Hum - ha! A negro gentleman, I presume?

Miss P. No - only a black character.

Dee. But not as black as he's painted, we'll hope. Well, Miss Penrose, don't allow the matter to worry you any further. In half-an-hour Coodle -

Ch. Pennythorne -

Dee. Coodle, Sir - Coodle. In half-an-hour Coodle shall be here. If I don't produce him, call me a blatant imposter.

Ch. I will - I will - with pleasure.

No. 2. - TRIO - Mr. Ellis Dee, Mr. Churchmouse, Miss Penrose

Dee. From this pretty bower hence
I depart instanter.
If I don't, an hour hence,
Beat him in a canter,
Rose, devoid of any thorn,
Christen me a noodle.

Ch. You discover Pennythorne,
I'll discover Coodle!

Dee. Pooh! pooh! Pennythorne!

Ch. Coodle-oodle-oodle!

Miss P. There's no Mr. Pennythorne,
It's Coodle-oodle-oodle!

Ensemble (*Yödel*). Coodle-oodle-oodle!

SOLO. - Miss Penrose

How they stand asunder,
Looking black as thunder,
'Pon my word I wonder
What their plan will be.
If you want to wive it,
Carefully contrive it,
Or you won't survive it,
Mr. Ellis Dee.

SOLO. - Mr. Dee (aside)

Listen - this is my receipt -
Take a manner brisker,
Take a suit of clothes complete,
Take a wig and whisker:
Take a comic voice: of course,
Heralding a noodle,

Dish it up with any sauce,
And call it Mr. Coodle!

Ensemble. Coodle-oodle-oodle, &c.

SOLO. - Mr. Churchmouse (aside)

Annabella is the goal
I would fain arrive at,
But I dare not tell a soul
(This is strictly private!).
If my artful plans succeed
Then the girl I've wooed'll
Soon be mine, and mine indeed,
Given me by Coodle.

Ensemble. Coodle-oodle-oodle, &c.

Ch. Mystic disguises
Of various sizes
Producing surprises
I have close at hand -
In manner elective
Defying invective,
Like any detective
In Pollaky's band!
Pretty, pretty, pretty Pollaky!

Dee. Pretty, pretty, pretty Pollaky!

Miss P. Pretty, pretty, pretty Pollaky!

All. Pretty, pretty, pretty Pollaky
On Paddington Green!
He's a chrysalis or a butterfly,
As he changes his mien,
Is pretty, pretty, pretty Pollaky
On Paddington Green.

At end of Trio, exit MR. DEE.

Ch. Charming man, Mr. Dee.

Miss P. Do you think so? He bores me terribly.

Ch. Well, yes; he is tiresome - sometimes.

Miss P. He has a certain amount of intelligence -

Ch. Oh, he's decidedly intelligent. With all his faults, he's a very well-informed man. I should call Mr. Dee clever - decidedly clever.

Miss P. Oh, come, Mr. Churchmouse; with all your good-nature, you must admit that his conversation is terribly vapid.

Ch. Well, do you know, it is - it really is. Almost idiotic, at times.

Miss P. For a man of his age, he is not at all bad looking.

Ch. Oh, he wears well. I call Dee a handsome man - a really handsome man.

Miss P. But his unfortunate nose.

Ch. Well, his nose is ugly, and an ugly nose is fatal to a face.

Miss P. *(aside)* He don't know his own mind for a minute together.

Ch. *(overhearing and thinking she refers to MR. DEE)* You're quite right - quite. I don't think I ever knew such a vacillating person.

A pause. He looks aside at a piece of paper.

Miss P. What are you looking at Mr. Churchmouse?

Ch. Oh, it's only my list.

Miss P. Your list?

Ch. Yes - my programme.

Miss P. Your programme?

Ch. Yes. Whenever I'm going to make calls, I always prepare a list of subjects of conversation. You see, by that means I am never at a loss.

Miss P. May I look?

Ch. Oh, certainly *(hands it to her)*.

Miss P. *(reads)* The return of the Jews to Palestine - Doctrines of Confucius - Manhood Suffrage - New rule for finding the parallax of fixed stars - The Talmud - Good cure for corns.

Ch. Yes, they are all subjects on which I feel very strongly - very strongly indeed. *(confidentially)* This, Miss Penrose, between ourselves, is the secret of my reputation as an agreeable rattle. They are the only subjects on which I may be said thoroughly to have made up my mind.

Miss P. And which of them is your favourite theme?

Ch. Well, perhaps manhood suffrage, Miss Penrose? Give every low-born vagabond who can prove he's a highly respectable man a voice in the representation, Miss Penrose? Ridiculous - absurd! Allow every bricklayer's labourer and jobbing plasterer to say how he'd like to be governed? Preposterous - out of the question. You'll excuse my warmth but it's a subject on which I feel very strongly - and yet somehow there's a good deal to be said on the other side. It does seem hard that a decent bricklayer with a respectable character should not be allowed to express his opinion on so important a topic and simply because he's poor. I often think that it would only be right to let such a man have a vote even if he sleeps under a hedge. Right? It's more than right - it is the duty of every man in every station in life to take his part in the government of his country. If I had my way I'd make every man in the kingdom vote whether he liked it or not. What? Refuse an honest man the opportunity of saying how he'd like to be governed because he's poor. It's infamous, disgraceful, abominable. You'll excuse my warmth but it's a topic on which I feel very strongly. Ah, a piano.

At this point it is indicated that the original dialogue contained a brief discussion of the piano before Mr. Churchmouse performed the song, "The Three Husbands" - words by James Safe Esq. The dialogue then continued.

Ch. Well, good-bye, Miss Penrose, I must be off now. I wanted to see Mrs. Pennythorne about those theatricals of ours.

Miss P. Oh, Aunt will be here directly.

Ch. Ah, but I can't wait - I ought to be at the Poppletopper's, half-a-mile away by this time, and I haven't a moment to lose. Good morning, Miss Penrose.

Exit R. Enter MRS. PENNYTHORNE, followed by SERVANT.

Mrs. P. A strange gentleman to see me, who refuses to send in his card? How very mysterious! Wants to see me alone, too! Well, let him come -

Exit SERVANT.

Miss P. My dear Aunt, you'll surely never admit a stranger who refuses to give any account of himself.

Mrs. P. My dear Anna, I've been married to the very worst man on the face of the earth, and after that I'm not easily terrified. I'm a poor weak defenceless woman, by law, but I'm quite equal to any man I ever met. Besides, perhaps his name's a comic name and he's ashamed of it. I'm sure, when I was Mrs. Coodle I never gave my name, except on compulsion. Ah! here he comes. A bad face, my dear. But, never mind; go away. I'm quite equal to the emergency.

Exit MISS P. Enter MR. DEE, disguised.

Mrs. P. Well, Sir; who are you, and what do you want?

Dee. *(melodramatically)*. Then it is as I said, and you don't know me! I go! *(Going.)*

Mrs. P. Bless the man, what's the matter? Know you - how should I know you?

Dee. True! How should you? Ah, ma'am. Many changes have taken place since we met!

Mrs. P. *(aside)*. One change, at least!

Dee. I, ma'am, have altered a great deal for the better - you have altered a great deal for the worse. I am comparatively younger than I was - you are positively older than you were. I have risen in the world - you have not. I have grown a beard - you have not -

Mrs. P. Bless the man, be more explicit, do. Who in the world are you?

Dee. Who am I? Pardon this tear - it's a passing weakness. Who am I? To explain this I must ask you to carry your memory back nearly a quarter of a century.

Mrs. P. A quarter of a century!

Dee. Yes, ma'am. Do you think you can charge your memory with events that took place so long ago?

Mrs. P. Well, really, my memory is a very good one, but a quarter of a century is a very long while.

Dee. True. So it is, that never occurred to me. It is a long while - you must have forgotten the circumstances to which I was going to allude. Forgive me ma'am. I go - *(Going.)*

Mrs. P. Stop, pray. What circumstance do you allude to?

Dee. A mere trifle, ma'am. Do you happen to remember a very cold January morning, nearly a quarter of a century ago, a quarter past eleven o'clock, at St. George's, Hanover Square - you - but no - impossible. It must have escaped you. I go -

Mrs. P. Now do stop - go on -

Dee. If I stop I can't go on - If I go on I can't stop. Well, ma'am, do you happen to remember that on that cold January morning, at a quarter past eleven o'clock, you were married to a gentleman named - but no! you must have forgotten it.

Mrs. P. To a person named Coodle? Perfectly!

Dee. You do? Is it possible? Wonderful old lady! I was Mr. Coodle's best man!

Mrs. P. Mr. Coodle was a very disgraceful character, who left me three weeks after our marriage and has been living in Australia ever since.

Dee. He was a boy, ma'am - a mere boy - don't be too hard on the imprudence of early youth.

Mrs. P. He ran away with all my money -

Dee. He was a creature of impulse -

Mrs. P. And although he made a large fortune at the diggings he never refunded one penny of my property!

Dee. Boys will be boys. Come, come - don't be too hard upon him. He intends to make you ample compensation.

Mrs. P. Intends, Sir! Why, what in the world do you know about him?

Dee. Ma'am - prepare yourself for a surprise. I bring a message from him. He and I landed at Southampton last night and he has sent me on to say that in the course of a day or two at farthest he will be with you.

Mrs. P. *(aside)*. Oh indeed, Mr. Dee! *(Aloud)*. Well, if he evinces any signs of sorrow I may, perhaps, be induced to forgive him. But what is his special object in returning?

Dee. Ma'am, I won't deceive you.

Mrs. P. You can't, Sir.

Dee. I wouldn't if I could, and that is saying a great deal. His special object in returning to you is to confer the hand of his niece and ward, Miss Annabella Penrose, on a highly eligible young gentleman of property living in this neighbourhood, a Mr. Bee or Cee, or -

Mrs. P. Dee?

Dee. Dee - That was the name. A Mr. Dee. Do you happen to know him?

Mrs. P. Perfectly. A very undesirable acquaintance for any young lady.

Dee. Eh?

Mrs. P. One of the very worst characters in the country, Sir - a person we certainly tolerate, because I knew his poor father, and besides, we are very good-natured people, and don't like to hurt anybody's feelings, but I never knew a man so universally disliked.

Dee. Oh, ah! And does Annabella dislike him?

Mrs. P. Dislike him? She detests him.

Dee. But he's very rich -

Mrs. P. Rich? Ha! ha! ha! My dear sir, he hasn't a brass farthing he can call his own.

Dee. What do you mean, ma'am?

Mrs. P. You know the Royal Indelible Bank that holds securities and deposits of his to the value of £32,000?

Dee. Yes - yes - that is, I've heard of it -

Mrs. P. I've just heard that it has stopped payment, and not only that, but the Atmospheric Castle Building Company, Limited, in which he has invested all his spare capital, is on the eve of winding-up! I just sent round to him to tell him so, but he wasn't at home.

Dee. *(Aside)*. Good gracious! Is it possible! I must see about this! *(Aloud)*. But your niece, ma'am, has money.

Mrs. P. £25,000.

Dee. Just so - Well, remember, Mr. Coodle has sent me to say that she is to marry Mr. Dee under any circumstances - rich or poor - rich or poor. Mind, ma'am, it's Coodle's order - I'm going to see Mr. Dee, ma'am, and tell him the happiness in store for him, good morning, ma'am! *(Aside)*. The Indelible gone and the Atmospherics blown up! Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, what shall I do! *(Exits.)*

Mrs. P. Ha! ha! Well, Mr. Dee, I think I've taught you a lesson, but I haven't done with you yet. Hey? Why, what's this?

(Enter SERVANT.)

Servant. Another gentleman to see you and he, also, declines to send in his card.

Mrs. P. Another? Refuses his card, too, does he? The fashion of "No Cards" has extended from weddings to morning calls, it seems. Well, send him here. *(Exit servant.)* Some nonsense of Mr. Churchmouse's this time, I'll be bound. Oh, here comes the mysterious gentleman, and as I live it is Mr. Churchmouse.

Enter CHURCHMOUSE as COODLE, a begging-letter imposter.

Ch. Good morning, madam. I come on a sweet errand of mercy. Madam, you are rich, others are poor; you are in possession of your senses, others are not. You have the full enjoyment of a valuable set of limbs; others, unfortunately, are short of the proper complement. Madam, in me you behold the channel of communication - the

conduit-pipe, if I may so express myself - between the wealthy, and the wise, and the well made, on the one hand - the destitute, the delirious, and the disjointed, on the other.

Mrs. P. You represent some charity, I presume?

Ch. Madam, I represent no individual charity. I am not of those who make invidious distinctions. I am the Universal Agent for All the Charities in Great Britain and Ireland. I deal rather with the broad principle of charity, than with its details.

Mrs. P. I see. You look upon it in abstract.

Ch. Very much so indeed, ma'am. At the same time you are quite at liberty to say whether you wish your half-crown to be devoted to any special institution, or whether you prefer that it should be equally distributed among the eight hundred and sixty-seven charities of Great Britain and Ireland. The truly charitable usually prefer the latter course, for their names being printed 867 times, they have the advantage of setting 867 good examples at a very modest outlay. I am an eleemosynary pillar post. Post four half-crowns in the waistcoat pocket and don't trouble yourself any further about it. Dismiss it, ma'am, from your mind altogether. You will never hear of it again.

Mrs. P. I really haven't my purse with me - you can ask the servant for half-a-crown - the housemaid I mean - not the man.

Ch. Your housemaid? You have a housemaid, then?

Mrs. P. Certainly.

Ch. Oh, allow me - the Humble Housemaid's Happy Home (*giving prospectus*). An admirable charity, ma'am, where humble housemaids are taught that postmen are pitfalls and bakers are snareful abominations.

Mrs. P. A curious charity.

Ch. But a highly valuable one. A young woman - a housemaid - comes to our home and confesses that she would like to marry a baker. Do we dismiss her on that account? Oh no! We are all love. We read her "Lives of Bakers who have been Convicted." We throw her into the society of butchers. We draw comparisons between butchers and bakers to the manifest disadvantage of the latter. We lend her little tracts, "Butchers as they are and Bakers as they might be," "I'll have your Alum and Potatoes!" We sing her little songs in praise of a butcher's life, "Chump-chop Charley is my name," or "Come, and we'll dismember Little Frolicking Lambs!" until her soul is absolutely impregnated with the poetry of a butcher's life.

Mrs. P. And she marries a butcher?

Ch. Oh, de-ar no! We then proceed to disgust her with butchers as we disgusted her with bakers, flooding her, so to speak, with postmen, reminding her that postmen alone knock double knocks and all tradespeople knock single knocks, and we draw moral from this that the character of their knock is an emblem of the state of life for which they are most fitted. When her mind is charged with postmen, we turn on a supply of grocer's young men, then policemen, then milkmen, and so on, showing the hollowness of each class of suitor in turn, the whole course of instruction tending to point the stock moral of our establishment, that "all men are vanity." Your name madam, that I may emblazon it on the 867 scrolls of the 867 charities I have the honour to represent.

Mrs. P. My name is Pennythorne - but you need not trouble yourself to print it.

Ch. Pennythorne? Is it possible? No - no -

Mrs. P. That, Sir, is my name.

Ch. Then it is - it must be -

Mrs. P. Sir?

Ch. But no - impossible -

Mrs. P. What's impossible?

Ch. You cannot be the Frederika Pennythorne (now Coodle) whom I married thirty years ago -

Mrs. P. Twenty.

Ch. True - twenty - at St. James's Church, Piccadilly -

Mrs. P. St. George's, Hanover Square.

Ch. True - St. George's, Hanover Square - one lovely July day -

Mrs. P. January.

Ch. True - January - it's the same thing. No, no - I won't believe it. Your theory is ingenious but it won't do.

Mrs. P. What does the man mean?

Ch. Mean, ma'am? Why that you are not the Frederika Pennythorne, (now Coodle), whom I have been sighing for during the last twenty years in the backwoods of North America -

Mrs. P. West Australia.

Ch. True - it was West Australia. Frederika, it is impossible to resist the persuasive eloquence of the facts you adduce to identify me. You have conquered, and the prize is yours!

Mrs. P. Oh, you are Mr. Coodle, are you? You have arrived rather earlier than you intended. Your friend said you would not be here till to-morrow or the next day.

Ch. *(taken aback)*. Oh, my friend said that, did he?

Mrs. P. Of course he did. He brought your message.

Ch. Oh, he brought my message.

Mrs. P. Certainly. He has only just left. He will be back directly.

Ch. *(aside)*. This is extremely awkward. I wonder what on earth she means -

Enter MR. DEE, still disguised.

Mrs. P. Oh, your message was hardly necessary, for Mr. Coodle has arrived.

Dee. Oh, Coodle has arrived, has he?

Mrs. P. Yes, here he is. I'll go and fetch Annabella, and Mr. Coodle and she can fight it out together.

Exit MRS. P.

Dee. How d'ye do, Coodle?

Ch. How de do? You - you - gave my message?

Dee. Oh, yes. I gave your message.

Ch. I hope you gave it word for word. It was of very particular importance that it should be given word for word.

Dee. Oh, yes. Word for word.

Ch. That's right. *(Aside.)* It might help a little if I knew what the message was.
(Awkward pause.)

Dee. Sir, this is not a time for ceremony. Are you, or are you not, Mr. Coodle?

Ch. *(aside)*. Must brazen it out! *(Aloud.)* Oh, yes, I'm Coodle.

Dee. Are you sure you are Mr. Coodle?

Ch. Sure? Well one can never be sure of anything, but I have an impression -

Dee. An impression, Sir, is not enough. *(Aside.)* This man is an imposter. *(Aloud.)* What should you say, Sir, if it turned out that I was Mr. Coodle?

Ch. I should say it would be a remarkable instance of mistaken identity on my part.

Dee. *(aside.)* He is an imposter, I knew he was. *(Aloud.)* Well Sir, I am Coodle.

Ch. You are?

Dee. I am.

Ch. The, Sir, I frankly admit that I was mistaken. I was misled, Sir, by an accidental resemblance, We are wonderfully alike, Sir. *(Aside.)* This is getting very awkward.

Dee. But what could have been your object in assuming my name, Sir?

Ch. I will be candid with you. It was simply to spare you the trouble of giving your consent to the marriage of a dear young friend of mine - one Churchmouse - with your ward Annabella Penrose.

Dee. Churchmouse, Sir? Nothing of the kind, Sir! I had intended her from her earliest childhood for my worthy old friend Mr. Dee.

Ch. Oh - well. But, between ourselves, Mr. Dee is not exactly - you know - the sort of man for an accomplished young lady - He's a decent fellow - poor chap - but he's not - you understand. *(Tapping his forehead.)*

Dee. Oh, Dee isn't quite right there, isn't he?

Ch. Right? He's as mad as a hatter. Dangerous. Rabid. He's been three times in a lunatic asylum.

Dee. You astonish me - He seems quite quiet.

Ch. Yes; that's his cunning. He's alright till after sunset - then his paroxysms begin and last till daylight! Awful, isn't it?

Dee. Humph - I've known that young man since he was so long, Sir, and I never had the slightest idea of this.

Ch. Young man? He's fifty.

Dee. Nonsense, Sir, thirty-five.

Ch. You know what the song says about elderly gentlemen who propose to marry?

Dee. No, I don't, Sir.

Ch.. I'll tell you.

No. 3. - SONG - Mr. Churchmouse.

An elderly person, a prophet by trade,
With quips and tips on withered old lips,
He married a young and a beautiful maid.
This shocking old blade,
Though rather decayed,
Married a young and a beautiful maid.

Of all his acquaintances, bidden, or bad,
With loud high jinks, and underbred winks,
None thought they'd a family have - but they had -
A singular lad,
Who drove 'em half mad,
For he turned out a horribly fast little cad.

For when he was born he astonished all by,
(With their "Law! Dear me! Did ever you see?")
He'd a weed in his mouth, and a glass in his eye,
His hat all awry,
An octagon tie,
And a miniature, miniature glass in his eye.

He grumbled at wearing a frock and a cap,
With his "Oh, dear oh!" and his "Hang it, you know!"
And turned up his nose at his excellent pap.
"My friends, it's a tap,
Dat am not worth a rap -
"Now this was remarkably excellent pap.

His father, a pleasant old gentleman he
With nursery rhyme, and "Once on a time,"
Would tell him the story of "Little Bo P."
"So pretty was she
So pretty and wee,
As pretty, as pretty, as pretty can be!"

But the babe, with a dig that would startle an ox,
With his "C'ch! oh my! Go along wis 'oo! Fie!"
Would exclaim, "I'm affaid 'oo a socking old fox!"
Now a father it shocks,
And it whitens his locks,
When his little babe calls him a shocking old fox!

The name of his father he'd couple and pair,

With ill-bred laugh and insolent chaff,
With those of the nursery heroines rare:
Virginia the Fair,
And good Goldenhair,
Till the nuisance was more than a prophet could bear.

"Dere's Jill and White Cat" (said the bold little brat,
With his loud "Ha, ha! 'oo sly ickle Pa!").
"Wiz 'oo Beauty, Bo-Peep, and 'oo Mrs. Jack Sprat.
I've noticed you pat
My pretty White Cat;
I sink dear mama ought to know about dat!"

He early determined to marry and wive,
For better or worse, with his elderly nurse;
Which the poor little boy didn't live to contrive.
His health didn't thrive;
No longer alive,
He died - an enfeebled old dotard - at five.

Moral.

Now, elderly men of the bachelor crew,
With wrinkled nose,
And spectacled nose,
Don't marry at all.
You may take it as true,
If ever you do
he step you will rue,
For your babes will be elderly, elderly too.

Enter MRS. P. as SALAMANCA TROMBONE.

Mrs. P. (*Speaking off*). You must find room for the elephant in the stables. Keep the panther and the leopard apart because they fight. A couple of dog kennels will do for the tigers, and look here, you can hang up the boa constrictors on the umbrella stand in the hall. (*To CHURCHMOUSE and DEE*) How de do?

Both (*aghast.*) How de do?

Mrs. P. Don't know me? Ha! Of course not. How should you? Take off your hat.

Dee. But really, ma'am -

Mrs. P. Take off your hat - you are in the presence of royalty!

Dee. Of Royalty?

Mrs. P. Yes. I am the Queen of Babbetyboobledore.

Dee. Oh! my geography is rather shaky.

Mrs. P. You never heard of the place? Benighted ignorance! It's an island in the Indian Archipelago.

Dee. I hope you found the climate agreeable, ma'am.

Mrs. P. Very

Dee. Then why leave it?

Mrs. P. I am here to cultivate amicable relations with Great Britain, and as a first step I've called upon my old friends Mr. and Mrs. Coodle.

Ch. But they are not amicable relations. They haven't spoken for twenty years.

Mrs. P. No matter. My people, Sir, are in a very unhappy condition.

Ch. I can quite believe it, ma'am.

Mrs. P. The dawn of civilization has not yet broken upon them, but I have undertaken to tame them.

Dee. They couldn't be in better hands. But may I ask, are you a native?

Mrs. P. No. I am a native of Great Britain, I am ashamed to say.

Dee. The feeling is mutual, ma'am, I'm sure.

Mrs. P. Twenty years ago I was wrecked on the island. Their queen had just died, and the selection of a successor was being carried on by competitive examination. It was a question of physical strength. I won.

Ch. *(warmly shaking her hand)*. My dear madam, I congratulate you I'm sure -

Mrs. P. Go away and don't be ridiculous. They elected me their queen -

Dee. Benighted beings! Some people never know when they are well off.

Mrs. P. Benighted? You're right there. You can form no idea of the depths of ignorance into which this unhappy people is plunged, they have positively no sense of propriety. Listen! I'll tell you all about them.

No. 4. - SONG - Mrs. Pennythorne.

You ask me what species of people I met
In Babbetyboobledore?
They're a very remarkably backward set
In Babbetyboobledore.
They live in a foolishly simple way,
And whatever they happen to think, they say -
Oh pity the ignorant darkies, pray,
Of Babbetyboobledore!

Barbarity rampant seems to thrive
In Babbetyboobledore!
The ignorant savages rise at five
In Babbetyboobledore.
They breakfast at seven - at two they dine,
The gentlemen never sit over their wine,
So everybody's in bed by nine
In Babbetyboobledore!

The girls of the island are pretty and fair
In Babbetyboobledore!
But they never attempt to colour their hair
In Babbetyboobledore!
They're horribly wanting in matters of taste,
They haven't a notion of jewels or paste,
And as for their figures, there isn't a waist
In Babbetyboobledore!

They are strict in their method of dealing with thieves
In Babbetyboobledore!
But they come down as well on the man who receives
In Babbetyboobledore!
If they know that a thief in that singular clime
Is planning a robbery, coming in time,
They take him before - and not after - the crime
In Babbetyboobledore!

Civilization takes no stride
In Babbetyboobledore.
There's nothing like self-respect or pride
In Babbetyboobledore.
They've little regard for money or birth -
Unless it's allied to genuine worth.
There isn't another domain on earth
Like Babbetyboobledore!

Mrs. P. (*speaking*). Now, then, to business: which of you two is Coodle?

Dee. I am Coodle.

Mrs. P. Sure of that?

Dee. (*looking at cardcase.*) Quite sure.

Mrs. P. Ha! Because I've come to shoot Coodle. (*Producing revolver.*)

Dee. To shoot Coodle?

Mrs. P. To shoot Coodle.

Dee. (*going to CHURCHMOUSE*). My dear Coodle, I'm sorry - I'm very very sorry for you.

CHURCHMOUSE has his face buried in his hands, in apparent grief.

Mrs. P. That Coodle? I thought you said you were Coodle.

Dee. Did I say so? that's so like me! absence of mind, my dear madam. Yes, this is Coodle! Poor, poor Coodle!

CHURCHMOUSE removes his hands, and discovers his natural face.

Mrs. P. Nonsense, Sir, Mr. Coodle is more than two and twenty.

Dee. More than two and twenty? More than two and fifty. (*Sees CHURCHMOUSE.*)
Hullo, Churchmouse!

Ch. Hullo, Coodle!

Dee. Coodle, Sir, nonsense. But why do you want to shoot him?

Mrs. P. Because he forged a certificate of my burial - also my will.

Dee. Then you are -

Mrs. P. Miss Salamanca Trombone.

Dee. Oh, go along - you're dead.

Mrs. P. Am I? (*Squeezes his arm.*)

Dee. No - I apologise. Then Annabella Penrose hasn't £25,000.

Mrs. P. Not 25,000 pence.

Enter MISS PENROSE.

Dee. Poor little thing! How young she looks! And I - how old I look! It would be too bad, after all, to graft such a tender rosebud on such a tough old oak as I. No - I'll be magnanimous, Miss Penrose, you have had a narrow escape. You love me, but I will not take advantage of your youth and inexperience. I resign you - you are too young for me!

Miss P. Too young for what, uncle?

Dee. Uncle? Oh, of course. I forgot; yes, Uncle, to be sure.

He fidgets with his beard; it comes off in his hand.

All. Mr. Ellis Dee!

Dee. Yes. Odd, isn't it! Yes, Miss Penrose, I am sorry for you, but you are too young for me.

Ch. But not too young for me?

Miss P. Nor too poor?

Ch. Nor too poor!

Mrs. P. *(discovering her identity.)* Nor too poor, I am sure - unless £25,000 is insufficient.

All. Mrs. Pennythorne!

Mrs. P. Yes, Mr. Churchmouse, I have much pleasure in handing you this little autograph of mine, in the hope and belief that you will want it before very long. *(Hands slip of paper.)*

Dee. *(reads.)* At St. Stickleback's, Clifferton-by-the-Sea. By Rev'd. Chasuble Highfly -

Mrs. P. Peter, the only son of the late Solomon Churchmouse, to Annabella, only daughter of the late Sir Peter Penrose, of the Penrosery, Penrith. No Cards!

No. 5. - FINALE

Ch. Believe me, as far as with me it remains,
You'll never see Coodle more!

Dee. I vow - under penalty, penance, and pains -
You'll never see Coodle more!

Mrs. P. Ah, Coodle, and I, we could never agree,
Let that be a lesson to each of the three.
Take warning, my dear Annabella, from me.
I'll never see Coodle more!

Mrs. P.	Ah, Coodle and I, We could never agree,		Others.	Ah! Coodle and she, They could never agree,
All..	Coodle-oodle-oodle! &c.			
Mrs. P.	Take warning, my dear Annabella, From me.		Others.	Her terrible fate is a warning To me.
All.	Let that be a lesson to each of the three.			
Mrs. P.	I'll never see Coodle more!		Others.	She'll never see Coodle more!

CURTAIN.