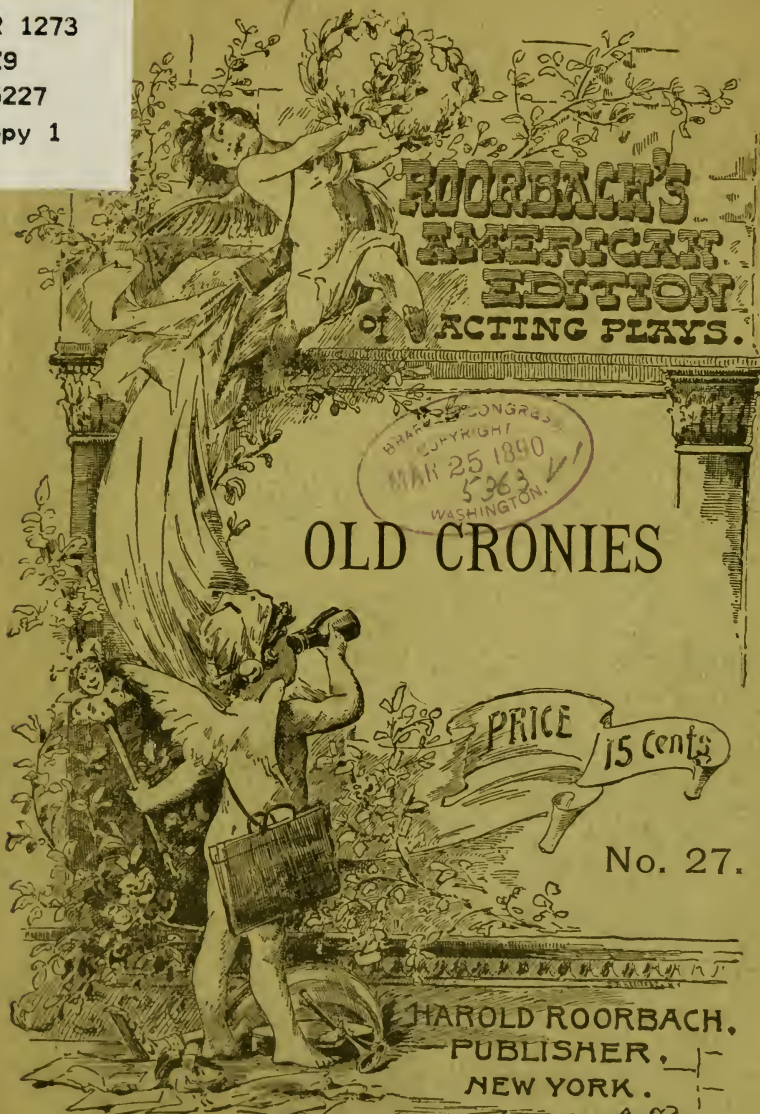


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OLD CRONIES

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No. 27.

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OLD CRONIES

A COMEDIETTA IN ONE ACT
FOR TWO MALE CHARACTERS

BY
S. THEYRE SMITH

NEW AMERICAN EDITION, CORRECTLY REPRINTED FROM THE ORIGINAL AUTHORIZED ACTING EDITION, WITH THE ORIGINAL CAST OF THE CHARACTERS, ARGUMENT OF THE PLAY, TIME OF REPRESENTATION, DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUMES, SCENE AND PROPERTY PLOTS, DIAGRAM OF THE STAGE SETTING, SIDES OF ENTRANCE AND EXIT, RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE PERFORMERS, EXPLANATION OF THE STAGE DIRECTIONS, ETC., AND ALL OF THE STAGE BUSINESS.

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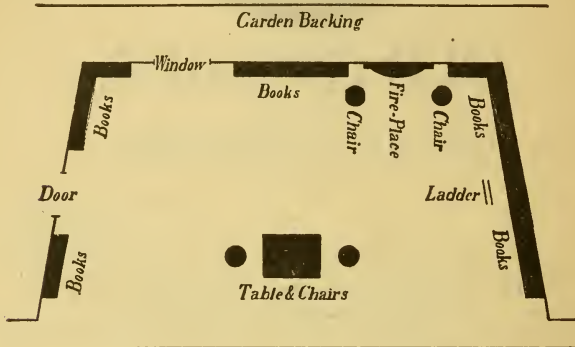


NEW YORK
HAROLD ROORBACH
PUBLISHER

PROPERTIES.

Furniture as per scene-plot. Writing case with papers, books, writing-materials, etc., on table. Books on shelf L. Telegram to be handed in from window. Pipe, matches and money for PIGEON.

SCENE PLOT AND STAGE SETTING.



SCENE.—Plain interior (study) boxed in 3 G, backed with garden drop in 4 G. Window R. F. and fireplace L. F. Bookshelves around walls. Door R. 2 E. Chairs R. and L. of fireplace. Table and two chairs down C. Carpet down.

N. B. All scenery may be, and frequently is, entirely dispensed with, the representation taking place on a mere platform, or behind a folding-door opening.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

In observing, the performer is supposed to face the audience. R., means right; L., left; C., centre; R. C., right of centre; L. C., left of centre; D. F., door in the flat or back scene; R. F., right side of the flat; L. F., left side of the flat; R. D., right door; L. D., left door; I E., first entrance; 2 E., second entrance; U. E., upper entrance; 1, 2, or 3 G., first, second or third grooves; UP STAGE, toward the back; DOWN STAGE, toward the footlights.

R. R. C. C. L. C. L.

NOTE.—The text of this play is correctly reprinted from the original authorized acting edition, without change. The introduction has been carefully prepared by an expert, and is the only part of this book protected by copyright.



OLD CRONIES.

Scene.—*A study; bookshelves all round room; library ladder against bookcase, L.; large window in back wall; door, R.; writing case with papers, books, writing materials, &c., in front; DR. JACKS discovered seated at table engaged in literary work.*

Jacks. Oh! these derivations! Dictionary making would be comparatively easy work if it were not for these verbal genealogies. When, like Dr. Faustus, I've made a word dance out of England into France, out of France into Spain, it whips over the border into Arabic, flings off its article and stares me in the face with scarcely a Christian letter left in it to know it by; or, after pursuing another through a dozen different disguises, it slips from under my fingers into that Alsatia of a Sanscrit, where my powers to follow it end. (*rises and comes to L. H.*) Oh, these derivations! and yet there is a pleasure in lexicographical pains that only lexicographers know, and then the glory of it! *Jacks' Dictionary of the English Language.* What a proud—(*at window*) Who's that coming up the walk? Pigeon! Captain Pigeon, with his everlasting pipe! (*crosses to R. of table and sits*) Oh! dear me! Now I did hope to have had this morning undisturbed. Oh! dear, dear! He'll come, and he'll sit down in that easy chair by the fire, and there he'll remain suggesting the most eccentric derivations till my brain whirls! (*clutching his brow*) Oh! dear, dear! (*Enter CAPTAIN PIGEON, knocking out his pipe as he comes in*) Ah, Pigeon, how d'y'e do? So glad to see you! (*offering hand*)

Pigeon. Stop! Wait! Stand off! If I am disturbing the dictionary, say so, and I (*L. C.*) am gone like a lost derivation. If I am interrupting the current of your ideas, speak, and by gad, sir! exit Pigeon as though out of a trap, sir! Not but what I have been of some assistance to you before now. Eh? I have suggested some novelties in derivation that would startle previous lexicographers.

Jacks. Certainly, certainly; but—My dear friend, is it business or pleasure that brings you? If I can do anything for you,

my time is yours, but if this is a mere morning call, a mere—*(absently)* By the way “mere,” “mere,” Latin “merus—” *(taking up pen and making note)*

Pigeon. (c.) “Mere”—a pool—a piece of water. French, “Mer”—Latin, “Mare”—Greek,—polly—something. (JACKS *clutches his brow and stares wildly*) Connection clear enough. But the fact is, my dear Jacks, I would not have disturbed you for the world, but I—I had something I—I wished to—

Jacks. Oh! you wish to consult me. That’s another thing—that’s enough—no more words. The dictionary can wait. I won’t be such a hypocrite as to say that I—*(absently)* Hum! “Hypocrite!” “Hypocrite!” Greek—evidently—*(taking pen)*

Pigeon. “Hypocrite!” Greek, of course. “Hippos”—a horse, and “Krites,” a judge. (JACKS *seizes his brow and stares*) Because the horsey men among the old Greeks were such a confounded set of deceivers. Legs, sir, mere legs. Clear as crystal!

Jacks. Oh, dear! oh, dear! That’s quite a new derivation, Pigeon. I don’t think it can be right, but—

Pigeon. Right! Right as the mail, sir. But, now, if you can give me two minutes.

Jacks. As long as you like, my dear friend. Let us hear what it is. Come, draw your chair up. We old bachelors like to be comfortable, eh? *(comes to R. C.)* What’s the matter?

Pigeon. *(with a strange laugh)* Oh! nothing, nothing, only *(laughs again)* you said—Bachelors—ha! ha! *(back to fire)*

Jacks. Yes; why not? “Bachelor” from the Saxon “Bachiler—”

Pigeon. Saxon! not at all. “Bachelor!” from “Baculus”—a stick; dry wood, sir; only good to burn, sir; no use to posterity. Pah!

Jacks. *(with his usual agonized perplexity)* Oh! dear me! That’s quite contrary to the received—Oh, dear me! But—but, my dear Pigeon—are you well? You seem strangely excited this morning. Do you feel at all queer in the head, Pigeon, or anything?

Pigeon. Clear as a silver bell, sir. Clear as the brow of Beauty. Clear as—

Jacks. But why this figurative style, my friend, so unlike your ordinary phraseology? Come! you have something to communicate to me. Come, now, what is it? *(sits R. of fire)*

Pigeon. Well, to tell you the truth, I—the fact is—well, you’ll laugh at me, I know, but I don’t care. Laugh on, laugh on. Confound it, sir; laugh on. *(sits L. of fire)*

Jacks. But what am I to laugh at?

Pigeon. Eh? Oh, true! Well, the fact is—ha, ha! I’m—I’m in love!

Jacks. In what?

Pigeon. (*hotly*) In love, sir—I've fallen in love.

Jacks. You? At your—No, I don't mean that. But fallen in love! You!

Pigeon. Why not? (*in a voice of thunder*) Haven't I as much right to whisper soft nothings—haven't I as much right to bill and coo as—

Jacks. Certainly, certainly—no one more so, Pigeon. I am very glad to hear of it. No, I don't mean that, but—Well! And who is the lady? Come! I congratulate you with—No, no. I don't mean that, but—Now, who is it?

Pigeon. Well—ha, ha! What do you say to Miss Jones?

Jacks. Say! (*taking his hand and shaking it warmly*) That I offer you my sincerest—ah, which?

Pigeon. Why, the eldest.

Jacks. (*continuing the interrupted shake*) My very sincerest—hum! Which Jones's eldest?

Pigeon. Why, Caradoc Jones's eldest daughter, Olivia, of course; you talk as if there were no end of Jones's.

Jacks. Olivia Jones! I've known her all her life. Dear me! Olivia Jones! I wish you joy, my dear Pigeon; a very suitable person, I daresay.

Pigeon. A suitable person! Jacks, what prose you do talk! (*rise and go L.*) I should have thought that if there was one living creature to whom the term "suitable person" would be inappropriate it was Olivia Jones. Suitable person!

Jacks. I beg pardon—I beg pardon—but you know I always was very matter of fact—very prosy—I never could see the poetical side of marriage.

Pigeon. How should you when you've always kept on the bachelor's side of it?

Jacks. (*comes down*) But that, I've heard, is the poetical side of it. He! he! But—well! and has she said yes?

Pigeon. (C.) I haven't asked her yet—and that's just the point I wished to consult you upon.

Jacks. Oh! I see. Ah! well then I think, altogether, I—I wouldn't.

Pigeon. You wouldn't what?

Jacks. Wouldn't ask her.

Pigeon. But how am I to marry her if I don't ask her?

Jacks. (*slyly*) But if you don't ask her, you needn't marry her.

Pigeon. But I want to marry her: I mean to marry her— if she'll have me. What I wanted to ask you was, whether you think I had better propose to her by letter or by word of mouth. See?

Jacks. Oh! ah, yes; I understand; just so. Well, I should say, verbally.

Pigeon. Verbally, you think?

Jacks. Yes, I think so. Yes, I'm sure; verbally, certainly!

Pigeon. (*uneasily*) Why do you think verbally, Jacks?

Jacks. Well, I think it is paying a poor compliment to the lady, and says little for the eagerness of your passion if you can calmly sit down, write your offer, seal it, put a stamp on it, post it, and then wait a day or two for the answer. Moreover, there is nothing so painful as suspense. Now, if you make your proposal in person, you have the presence of your idol to inspire you, the sense of touch to assist you; you speak, she consents, and you know the worst at once. Oh! verbally, certainly.

Pigeon. But—but I daren't.

Jacks. You—

Pigeon. Well, I daren't. Don't I speak distinctly?

Jacks. Yes—yes—but what I mean is—I can't fancy you fearing anything. In spite of your name you are such an eagle in a dovecot, Pigeon, that I should have thought you could have looked the sun in the face without winking.

Pigeon. So I can, sir; I can look anything male in the face without winking. But, when it's a woman I look at—gad, sir, then I wink if you like. Then it's another thing. A breath terrifies me—a frown would kill me. If I were to speak to her and she should—No—'pon my sacred honor! No, I daren't.

Jacks. Well, if you can't do it that way, then I should advise—by letter. (*sits L. of table*)

Pigeon. By letter, you think?

Jacks. Yes—I think so. On the whole—yes.

Pigeon. (*uneasily*) Why do you think by letter, Jacks?

Jacks. Well, I think it argues more respect towards the lady of your choice to express your sentiments for her in that way, than to rush brutally into her drawing-room, seize her hand, plump on to your knees, and set off talking all manner of nonsense about sighing and dying, and raptures and blisses, and all the rest of it. Besides, you know, it rather forces her hand. It's always harder to refuse a verbal invitation than a written one. Yes, I should say by letter, certainly.

Pigeon. But—but—I can't!

Jacks. You?—

Pigeon. Well, I can't. Don't you hear what I say? I've tried and I can't write a word. Ah! my dear fellow, if you'd only write the letter for me.

Jacks. My dear Pigeon, I'd write it with delight if I could; but, to tell you the truth, it's a sort of literature that I have had no experience of. I never—I never wrote a love letter in my life.

Pigeon. You could do it right enough, if you'd only try.

Jacks. My dear friend, I'll try—I'll try certainly if you wish it; but—well, I'll try. (*gets paper, &c.*) Let me see. (*beginning to write*) Your address, Blue Rocks, Billingborough, April the— (*pauses*)

Pigeon. Well, the first, isn't it? Go on.

Jacks. Yes, but I thought perhaps you mightn't like—but, oh, if you don't mind, (*writes*) April the 1st, eighteen hundred—

Pigeon. Here, stop, stop! I don't think that date will do.

Jacks. You think not?

Pigeon. (*C., by fire*) No, it seems like—it looks—hang it! people are such fools. No; let us date it March 31st, as if I had written it overnight.

Jacks. Yes, and then there will be a good reason why you were no wiser next morning. No, no, I don't mean that. Let us go on, then. Yes, yes, (*writes*) March 31st, eighteen— Now then.

Pigeon. Heave ahead! (*back to fire*)

Jacks. Aye, aye, sir. (*a long and thoughtful pause, during which JACKS makes one or two demonstrations, as if he were on the point of beginning to write and then checks himself*) How—how do you think we ought to address her?

Pigeon. Well, that's just what I was thinking of. (*another pause, and then JACKS dashes at the paper and writes a word*) Now he's off. (*rubbing his hands and watching JACKS, who after writing the word is merely leaning over the paper and thinking deeply*) How far have you got?

Jacks. Why—ha! ha! Well—he! he! So far I have only written—"Madam."

Pigeon. By Jove! you haven't got far! I shall never be married at this rate. Besides, "Madam!" I don't think "Madam" will do!

Jacks. H'm?

Pigeon. Well, I don't think "Madam" will do, it's so blessed formal.

Jacks. Perhaps it is a little formal, but if it's not to be "Madam," what is it to be?

Pigeon. (*back of table, sheepishly*) I suppose you'd think "Angel of beauty," or "Angel of—"

Jacks. Oh! my dear friend, I couldn't—I really couldn't. Angel! No—no—angel's much too high flown. We should never be able to keep it up. No—no—no—I couldn't—I—Come, what do you say to "Dear Miss Jones?"

Pigeon. That's too much like an invitation to dinner. (*sits R. of table*) Pitch it a little stronger than that, Jacks. Here, now: how would "Dearest Olivia" do?

Jacks. (*in a tone of remonstrance*) My dear friend! I don't think she'd like it.

Pigeon. Not like what?

Jacks. Well, the Christian name and the—the superlative. I'm afraid she'd think it forward.

Pigeon. Forward! But hang it all, forward's the word when one makes advances.

Jacks. Perhaps; but I don't think I could countenance such a—

Pigeon. (*angrily*) Then what the plague are we to put?

Jacks. That is the point—that, no doubt, is the point. How would—no—or what if we—no—I have it. (*both rise*)

Pigeon. (*laying down pen*) What is it?

Jacks. Suppose we have a walk round the garden and think it over for a moment in the fresh air?

Pigeon. Ah, good thought! we might put a flower in.

Jacks. In where?

Pigeon. Why, in the envelope.

Jacks. What for?

Pigeon. What for? As a symbol of affection, sir—a delicate hint that I'm there.

Jacks. Oh, I see! a Bachelor's Button or a sprig of Old Man. He! he! Eh? No, no, I don't mean that. Come, let us consider now. (*taking his arm and walking towards window*) What we want is something that combines strong affection and profound respect, some thing—

Pigeon. Hold! I have it—the very combination. What do you say to "My dearest Miss Jones," eh?

Jacks. I don't think I'd put "My."

Pigeon. (C.) Why not? It gives more value to "dearest," don't you see?

Jacks. (L. C.) Yes, but don't *you* see? It begs the whole question—

Pigeon. Not at all.

Jacks. Oh, excuse me! "My" implies possession. Now, till she says "Yes"—

Pigeon. Nothing of the sort. "My dearest" only means "dearest to me"—me, Pigeon!

Jacks. No, no, indeed, it means "your dearest" and no one else's dearest; it claims a right of property.

Pigeon. (*violently*) I tell you—

Jacks. (*crosses and sits L. of table*) Well, well, we need not dispute about so small a thing—"my dearest" be it. So now for it. (*writes*)

Pigeon. (*leaning over him*) Ay, now we're off at last. (R. C.) Now we're— Do you make your M's that way?

Jacks. (*a little annoyed*) Yes, I do!

Pigeon. I don't think you should make your M's that way when you write to a lady.

Jacks. Now my excellent friend, when you copy it out you can

make your M's how you like. And I should write your letter with more comfort to myself, Pigeon, if you would not blow down my neck.

Pigeon. I wasn't blowing down your neck, but do get on. What have you put a full stop there for?

Jacks. (*rather irritably*) I've not put a full stop.

Pigeon. What is it then?

Jacks. Why, a comma, of course. But really, my dear friend, I can't write if you breath into my ear in this way. Though I'm sadly in want of inspiration, I confess, yet it's not that sort I require.

Pigeon. What touchy things these old bachelors are, (*crosses to L.*) bless my soul! Sorry—can't say more than that—sorry. Come now, we've got over the difficulty. Now then, "My dearest Miss Jones." It's all plain sailing now. Get to work!

Jacks. (*getting to work*) Yes—"My dearest Miss Jones"—a—a—Yes, now we're in full cry. "My dearest Miss Jones"—a——

Pigeon. Yes—go on.

Jacks. Yes. I'm going. "My dearest Miss Jones,"—a—(*cautiously*) "I love you," eh?

Pigeon. No, hang it—that's too abrupt!

Jacks. Think it is?

Pigeon. (*back of table*) Gad, yes! You shouldn't plunge into it like that. What you want is a gentle descent. See?

Jacks. *Facilis descensus*, eh? Ha! ha! No—no—I don't mean that, of course. What sort of—

Pigeon. Well, a gentle descent. (*action of hand*)

Jacks. Yes, yes. I know. A—(*action of hand*) a gentle descent. But what sort of a——

Pigeon. Well, can't you say something about a—a—(*pauses in thought. Sits R. of table*)

Jacks. How if we begin by—you know—(*a pause*)

Pigeon. Or ask her whether she—whether she—See?

Jacks. It's an exceedingly difficult letter to write.

Pigeon. (*wrathfully*) It's a pernicious difficult letter to write. It's a— Stop! I've an idea.

Jacks. Have you? What?

Pigeon. Let's direct the envelope.

Jacks. Oh, my dear Pigeon, what excellent notions you have! Capital; perhaps it may suggest something. But you must do that.

Pigeon. I know, sir. Give me the pen.

Jacks. (*goes to back of table*) Here it is. (*rubbing his hands and watching him*) Now we're really advancing. Yes, Miss O L I V——

Pigeon. Well, well, I know, sir!

Jacks. Just so. (*looking over him*) "Jones." Yes. J O N E——

Pigeon. Why, confound it, do you suppose I can't spell Jones?

Jacks. Of course, my dear friend; of course you can.

Pigeon. I suppose I can. "10, Parade, Cooington." There you are!

Jacks. Ah! (*regarding envelope admiringly*) This is indeed progress! (*sits L. of table*)

Pigeon. Well, now, come along! To return to the letter. Where had we got to?

Jacks. Oh! Ah! let me see. (*reads*) "My dearest Miss Jones."

Pigeon. Ah! of course. Well! how do we go on?

Jacks. (*thoughtfully*) Yes, that's the point. That's the—

Pigeon. Couldn't you—couldn't you begin by saying something about her health?

Jacks. Why, is there anything the matter with her?

Pigeon. (*irritably*) No, I don't know that anything's the matter with her!

Jacks. Then why refer to her health?

Pigeon. Well, I was only wanting to begin somehow.

Jacks. True! true! It is, as you say, a perniciously difficult letter to write.

Pigeon. It's a confounded difficult letter to write. There ought to be books or something to tell you how to do these things.

Jacks. (*points L. ; PIGEON crosses to L.*) Dear me, of course. That reminds me. I've got the very book up there! *What to Do in Every Case*. Don't you see? (*pointing*) Between the—no—there! The next thing to *Johnson's Madness*. No, no—the other way—just before you come to *Tears of Repentance*.

Pigeon. (*reaching it down*) Strange situation for a book on matrimony! Now, what shall I look for?

Jacks. Look for "Proposal."

Pigeon. P—"Pickles." Pro—Pro—Proverbs—"Marry in haste, and"—oh! confound the thing! Prop—Prop—"How to Prop French Beans"—Prop—"Proposal." Here you are!

Jacks. Read it out.

Pigeon. (*reads*) "Form of letter containing a proposal of marriage by a young gentleman to a young lady."

Jacks. Then that won't do.

Pigeon. (*snappishly*) Why not?

Jacks. Well, my dear friend, no one has a higher appreciation of your many excellent qualities of mind and heart than I have, but still it is not within the power of friendship to consider you a young gentleman. Come—come—don't be offended. Proceed! look whether there is not some form adapted for such as are of riper years.

Pigeon. (*reads surlily*) "From a gentleman of middle age to a lady of contemporaneous condition." I believe the idiot's poking fun at us! "Madam."

Jacks. I told you so!

Pigeon. Don't be in a hurry—"or, dear Madam—or, dear Miss or Mrs.—or, dearest Miss or Mrs., according to the previous familiarity of the parties."—What does he mean by that, the fool? "It is with fingers——"

Jacks. Eh?

Pigeon. (*irritably*) Well, that's what he says, "It is with fingers——" he says.

Jacks. What "is with fingers?"

Pigeon. Well, if you'll let me go on, perhaps we shall find out. "It is with fingers that can scarce hold the pen, and with a heart palpitating with all soft emotions that I indite these lines to her, whose maiden charms"—(Note: In case of a widow omit "maiden")—"have so moved my soul to all sweet impulses of love and respect"—(Note: In case of a widow omit "respect")—"that I feel my life's happiness depends upon your granting what I now with all impatience yet all ceremony——" (Note: In case of a widow omit "all ceremony") What lunatic rubbish is this? Bah! Sooner than send such a letter as that I'll die a bachelor! (*puts book in case*)

Jacks. Yes; I'm afraid that would scarcely do. To say the truth, it reads rather extravagantly. Well, my dear friend, I really don't know what to suggest.

Pigeon. (c.) Humph! What's the use of being a dictionary-maker if you can do no more with all your words than this I don't know. Here you've all the words in the language at your finger ends, and not a blessed one of them will work.

Jacks. Because it is a duty to which I am not accustomed to put them, my worthy friend. I can't feel the situation. I have no thoughts on the subject, you see, and there can't be language without thought.

Pigeon. Can't there? (*turning to letter*) Plague take it. If we could only get over this prolegomena business we might put it plumply: Saw you—loved you—offer hand, heart, fortune. Yes or no?

Jacks. My dear Pigeon! that's just like a telegram.

Pigeon. By Jove! the very thing. Let's wire it!

Jacks. Let's what it?

Pigeon. Wire it—telegraph it. Come, get a fresh piece of paper and draw up the telegram; there will be no difficulty about that, at any rate. Be quick, we can get the answer in five minutes, for they never have much business on these wires.

Jacks. (*preparing paper*) Well, ha! ha! It's a new idea certainly. Telegraph a proposal—ha! ha! (*writes*) From Joseph Pigeon, Blue Rocks——

Pigeon. No, stop! Give this address; we'll have the answer here.

Jacks. Very well, Auburn Lodge, Billingborough, to Miss Olivia Jones—

Pigeon. 10, Parade, Cooington.

Jacks. Let me see ; “much pressed for time, forgive mode of communication.”

Pigeon. Hold on. Say “much hurried” instead of “much pressed for time.” Keep within the shilling, old man, if you can.

Jacks. Very well. “Have loved you long.”

Pigeon. No, I wouldn't say “have loved you long,” for I have not loved her more than a fortnight.

Jacks. We can't say “have loved you a fortnight,” though, can we?

Pigeon. I suppose not.

Jacks. A fortnight's a good long time to keep it up. I think I'd let it go.

Pigeon. Very well, and perhaps I did love her long before I knew it.

Jacks. “Beg to offer hand, heart, fortune.”

Pigeon. Cut out “heart,” it's not needed.

Jacks. It is usually mentioned among the other items, I fancy, but perhaps it is the least important. (*crosses it out*) “Please reply instantly.”

Pigeon. “Answer prepaid.” Hang it all, I'll do the handsome thing while I'm about it.

Jacks. Very well. (*counts*) Let me see. Twenty exactly.

Pigeon. That's right. I like to have my money's worth. (*with feeling*) Jacks, I think the “answer prepaid” ought to touch her. Eh?

Jacks. Pigeon, it will surely affect her deeply!

Pigeon. Now, then, where's your man? Watson!

Jacks. I think he is in the garden. I'll call him. (*opening window and speaking through it*) Watson! Here! Take this at once to the telegraph office, it's only two doors off, you know. Pay for the message and the reply—two shillings.

Pigeon. Here's the money. (*JACKS takes it and hands it out of window, then closes window*) I don't mind about it, of course, but, ha! ha! ha! it's rather hard my having to pay for what she says, after all. (*sits R. of fire*)

Jacks. (*sits L. of fire*) Ah! my dear friend, it will be money well laid out—if she says no. If she don't, why you must be prepared to pay for a good many things that you never paid for before. Wives are costly articles, you must recollect.

Pigeon. I don't see why they should be, then ; for they say the supply exceeds the demand. And then there's the—ha! ha!—the fifteen hundred a year, you know.

Jacks. What fifteen hundred a year?

Pigeon. Why, her mother's fortune, which comes to her. What are you staring at? Isn't it fifteen hundred?

Jacks. My dear Pigeon, she has nothing in the way of independent fortune at all.

Pigeon. I was assured it was fifteen hundred pounds if it was a farthing!

Jacks. Perhaps; but—but it isn't a farthing!

Pigeon. Then what liars people are! Now, are you certain?

Jacks. Certain! My dear friend, I know her whole family. I've known the girl herself for forty years.

Pigeon. (*angrily; lights his pipe*) You can't have known her for forty years, for I heard her say herself not a week ago that she should be five-and-thirty if she lived till her next birthday.

Jacks. My excellent Pigeon, she'll never be five-and-thirty, if she lives till she's a hundred.

Pigeon. Well, what if she is forty; why shouldn't she be forty if she likes?

Jacks. Of course. Every reason why she should be, though she doesn't like, he! he! By-the-way, hum!—That's—hum!—that's rather unpleasant for you though. But, of course, you're prepared to give up something?

Pigeon. (*furiously*) I'll give up nothing. I declare most solemnly I'll give up—hum! Now what do you mean?

Jacks. A mere trifle, a mere trifle! Nothing but that she strongly objects to smoking.

Pigeon. (*horrified*) Objects to what?

Jacks. Yes, she can't bear the smell of tobacco.

Pigeon. But hang it, sir! I can't live without smoking.

Jacks. Exactly, that's what I meant by saying it would be so unpleasant for you.

Pigeon. Unpleasant! Well, I think you might have told me all this before.

Jacks. But, my dear friend—

Pigeon. I won't give it up. It isn't as if I were a great smoker like some men.

Jacks. Aren't you? I thought—Surely, yes.

Pigeon. Nothing of the sort. What do I smoke? Just one pipe when I'm dressing—

Jacks. Oh, dear! dear! though.

Pigeon. (*back to fire*) And two or three after breakfast, and three or four after luncheon, and then dinner, and then I smoke till I go to bed, and have just half a one in bed to keep my nose warm for the night.

Jacks. Half a pipe to keep your nose warm! But, my excellent Pigeon, no woman in the world would permit it!

Pigeon. Permit it! Confound their permissions, sir! (*rises, R. C.; after walking the room impatiently for a minute*) Jacks, by-the-way,

that telegram. Bless my soul! Is there time to recall it, do you think?

Jacks. (*rises, L. C.*) No, it's at Cooington by this time. But why should we recall it? What, do you regret already that you—

Pigeon. (*angrily*) Nothing of the sort, sir, but—hem! But don't you see, we've gone and offered her marriage and never said a word about her beauty? See?

Jacks. My dear friend, it couldn't be done for the money. If we had once begun praising her, I must tell you that I don't think she'd have been satisfied with a shillingsworth. Besides—her beauty! Come! Honestly now, my dear Pigeon: do you think her handsome?

Pigeon. Handsome! Why, don't you?

Jacks. Well: No, Pigeon; I certainly do not. And then, her figure!—

Pigeon. Don't you talk about a woman's figure, an old bachelor like you, who scarcely know her waist from her shoulders.

Jacks. And if I do not know a woman's waist from her shoulders, Captain Pigeon, it is from my own modesty of observation, and not from her lack of liberality in affording me the opportunity of acquiring that knowledge.

Pigeon. Bah, sir! Choose some other subject for your satire till you have learnt the difference between the body of a dress and the sleeves.

Jacks. (*severely*) Sir! (*then thoughtfully*) Stop! "Body." "Body"—of a dress; from the Saxon "Bodig"—

Pigeon. Nothing of the sort, sir. "Body" of a dress! Comes from—hem!—from "Bodice," which comes from—from Boadicea; *lucus a non lucendo*, because she never wore one.

Jacks. (*with a stare of horrified perplexity*) Hold my head! hold my head—But it can't be. I shall have to get a season ticket for the nearest asylum, Pigeon, if you go on in that way. Oh! thank goodness, here's Watson. (*hastily, and going to window*) Can't be the telegram already, surely! (*opening window*) Here! Watson! Is that the telegram? Give it me. Why, it's addressed to me. (*opens it*) Heyday! from Caradoc Jones himself.

Pigeon. (*who has joined him; impatiently*) Well, well? What does she say?

Jacks. She says nothing. This is from her father. You had better—Here. (*giving telegram*)

Pigeon. (*reads*) "Accepted Major Bubble, of the Greens, this morning." (*after a pause*) Oh! . . . Oh! (*folding telegram and returning it to JACKS*) Ah! Major Bubble. Eh? Bubble, is it? Oh! (*very quietly*)

Jacks. You must bear up, my dear friend.

Pigeon. I shall bear up or not as I think proper, sir. Whether I bear up or bear down is my affair, I suppose, sir.

Jacks. Of course, Pigeon, of course. All I meant was you must not suffer this disap—

Pigeon. Suffer, sir! there's no suffering about it. Do you suppose that I would regret a woman who could feel any interest in such a gander-legged, pig-faced swab of a son of a sea-cook as that Bubble, sir? Why, I'd blow a better man than him out of a basin of soap-suds with a tobacco pipe. Bubble, is it? Ha! ha! Bubble, eh! Well, my bubble's burst; and who cares? Egad! I think I'm well out of it. Hang your married men! We'll stick to single blessedness, old man, eh?—still remain old Bachelors and—

Both. OLD CRONIES. (*shaking hands*)

CURTAIN.



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