



SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER — SYNOPSIS

At Hardcastle Hall in the West Country Mr Hardcastle intends his daughter Kate to marry the son of his old friend, Sir Charles Marlow, whilst Mrs Hardcastle, wishing her inherited fortune to remain in the family, is hoping her son Tony Lumpkin will marry Kate's cousin Constance.

Tony has to go along with this plan because as far as he is aware he is not old enough to refuse the match: only when he is twenty-one does he 'come of age'.

Sir Charles' son, Marlow, is on his way to Hardcastle Hall with his friend Hastings, when the mischievous Tony recognises them in a local tavern. Tony tricks the pair into thinking Hardcastle Hall is in fact an inn, so when they eventually arrive and rebuff their welcome, Mr Hardcastle is not best pleased at his intended future son-in-law.

Meanwhile, Constance is in love with Marlow's friend, Hastings, and when they encounter each other at the Hardcastle's and plan their elopement, she tells him of Tony's trickery, deciding to hide the truth from Marlow. Hastings therefore feigns that by incredible coincidence, Constance

and her cousin Kate are staying at the same inn as them.

When Marlow and Kate meet he lives up to his reputation - while shy around upper-class women, Marlow seduces women of a lower-class with much more ease! Having taken a shine to him nonetheless, Kate decides to 'stoop to conquer' by pretending to be the inn's barnmaid. On their next meeting, as predicted, Marlow is immediately at ease with Kate pretending to be a servant.

Learning of Constance and Hastings' plans to elope, Tony agrees to assist the lovers and in doing so thwart his mother's hopes of marriage. He offers to steal Constance's family jewels that Mrs Hardcastle is looking after for when she marries. Constance is distraught to find they are missing, but Tony reassures her that the precious jewels are safe with Hastings, but Hastings has passed them onto Marlow who in his foolishness has entrusted them to the 'landlady' of the house for safekeeping. Little does Marlow know this 'landlady' is in fact Mrs Hardcastle!

When Kate finally tells Marlow that he has been tricked and he is at Hardcastle Hall, he is horrified. He decides to leave immediately, and

Kate - still under the pretence of a lowly relation of the Hardcastle family - weeps at his departure.

Tony receives a letter from Hastings revealing his elopement with Constance, but because Tony is unable to read, Mrs Hardcastle reads it, and the elopement plan is exposed.

When Sir Charles, Marlow's father, arrives, all seems as though it will iron itself out, but then Marlow denies having feelings for Kate. To reassure both fathers, Kate hides them while she reveals her true status to Marlow, who kneels before her.

Tony, supposed to be leading Mrs Hardcastle and Constance away from the Hall, actually conducts a magnificent wild-garden-goose-chase. At the denouement, he reveals that he cannot object to marrying Constance until he is twenty-one. It is uncovered that Mrs Hardcastle has been hiding the fact Tony is already of age, and so can in fact refuse Constance, allowing the marriage between her and Hastings and the retention of her inherited fortune. Hastings and Constance, Marlow and Kate, will marry - and almost everyone - Mrs Hardcastle excepted - is delighted.

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Mr Hardcastle , <i>a landowner</i>	Robert Maskell
Mrs Hardcastle , <i>his second wife</i>	Sarah Gobran
Tony Lumpkin , <i>Mrs Hardcastle's son by her first husband</i>	Corey Montague-Sholay
Kate Hardcastle , <i>Mr Hardcastle's daughter by his first wife</i>	Natasha Rickman
Constance Neville , <i>Mrs Hardcastle's niece and ward</i>	Rachel Summers
Stingo , <i>Landlord of The Three Pigeons public house</i>	Matt Pinches
Charles Marlow , <i>a gentleman from London</i>	James Sheldon
George Hastings , <i>Marlow's friend, secretly engaged to Constance</i>	Tom Richardson
Diggory , <i>a servant</i>	Matt Pinches
Sir Charles Marlow , <i>Marlow's father and Mr Hardcastle's old friend</i>	Matt Pinches

Setting

The country house world of PG Wodehouse, between the wars.
The action takes place over a single day and night.

Production Team

Director	Tom Littler
Set & Costume Designer	Neil Irish
Sound Designer	Matt Eaton
Assistant Designer / Costume Supervisor	Anett Black
Assistant Director	Indiana Lown-Collins
Company Stage Manager	Beth Mann
Deputy Stage Manager	CJ Mitchell
Assistant Stage Manager	Kim Munroe
Dialect Coach	Nick Trumble
Audio Description	Kerry Elkins

There will be an interval of 20 minutes. Please ensure all mobile phones are switched off and we politely request that you do not take photographs during the performance. The use of video recording is also prohibited.

