

RUDDIGORE

OR

THE WITCH'S CURSE

Libretto by Sir William S. Gilbert
Music by Sir Arthur S. Sullivan

**Revised by Joe Andrews for The Gilbert & Sullivan Very Light Opera Company
First Revision 2020, Second Revision 2022**

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

SIR RUTHVEN MURGATROYD (*disguised as Robin Oakapple, a Young Farmer*)

RICHARD DAUNTLESS (*his Foster-Brother, a Man-o'-war's man*)

SIR DESPARD MURGATROYD (*a Wicked Baronet of Ruddigore,*)

OLD ADAM GOODHEART (*Robin's Faithful Servant*)

SIR RODERIC MURGATROYD (*a Ghost, a former Wicked Baronet of Ruddigore*)

ROSE MAYBUD (*a Village Maiden*)

MAD MARGARET

DAME HANNAH (*Rose's Aunt*)

ZORAH (*Professional Bridesmaid*)

RUTH (*Professional Bridesmaid*)

Chorus of Professional Bridesmaids and Villagers,

London Gentlemen or "Bucks and Blades,"

Ghosts of Ancestors

ACT I

The Fishing Village of Rederring, Cornwall

ACT II

The Main Hall of Ruddigore Castle

TIME

The late 1940s

ACT I

SCENE – *The fishing village of Rederring, Cornwall. ROSE MAYBUD's cottage is seen L. TOWNSMEN and TOWNSWOMEN are engaged in business. TOWNSMEN exit, TOWNSWOMEN remain. Enter CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS, with NIGEL, their Choreographer.*

CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS

Fair is Rose as bright May-day;
Soft is Rose as warm west-wind;
Sweet is Rose as new-mown hay –
Rose is queen of maiden-kind!
 Rose, all glowing
 With virgin blushes, say –
 Is anybody going
 To marry you to-day?

SOLO – ZORAH

Every day, as the days roll on,
Bridesmaids' garb we gaily don,
Sure that a maid so fairly famed
Can't long remain unclaimed.
Hour by hour and day by day,
Several months have passed away,
Though she's the fairest flower that blows,
No one has married Rose!

CHORUS

Rose, all glowing
 With virgin blushes, say –
Is anybody going
 To marry you to-day?

ZORAH Hour by hour and day by day,
 Months have passed away.

CHORUS Fair is Rose as bright Mayday, etc.

Enter DAME HANNAH from cottage.

HANNAH Ah, gentle maidens, you sing well but vainly, for Rose is still heart-free, and looks coldly upon her many suitors.

ZORAH It's very disappointing. Every young man in the village is in love with her, but they are daunted by her beauty and modesty, and won't declare themselves; so, until she makes her own choice, there's no chance for anybody else.

RUTH This is, perhaps, the only village in the world that possesses an endowed corps of professional bridesmaids and a full-time choreographer, (*NIGEL clears his throat*), florist (*NIGEL clears his throat again*) and wedding planner (*offers someone a business card*) all of whom are bound to be on duty every day from ten to four – and it is at least six months since our services were required. (*CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS drop their pose and sigh.*) The pious charity by which we exist is practically wasted! Someone simply must get married to break the ... the ...

ZORAH ... nuptial logjam.

RUTH Yes, just so.

ZORAH If no one weds, we shall lose our funding and that will be the end of it! Dame Hannah – you're a nice old person – *you* could marry if you liked. There's Old Adam – Robin's faithful servant – he loves you with all the frenzy of a boy of fourteen.

HANNAH Nay – that may never be, for I am pledged!

ALL To whom?

HANNAH To an eternal maidenhood! (*CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS quizzically sigh.*)

(*Aside to the audience*)

Many years ago, I was betrothed to a god-like youth who wooed me under an assumed name. But on the very day upon which our wedding was to have been celebrated, I discovered that he was no other than Sir Roderic Murgatroyd, one of the bad Baronets of Ruddigore, and the uncle of the man who now bears that title. As a son of that accursed race, he was no husband for an honest girl, so, madly as I loved him, I left him then and there. He died but ten years since, but I never saw him again.

(*Back to the CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS*)

ZORAH But why should you not marry a bad Baronet of Ruddigore?

RUTH All baronets are bad; but was he worse than other baronets?

HANNAH My child, he was accursed. (*CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS gasp.*)

ZORAH But who cursed him? Not you, I trust!

HANNAH No, not I. (*CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS breathe a sigh of relief.*) The curse is on all his line and has been ever since the time of Sir Rupert, the first Baronet. Listen, and you shall hear the legend.

LEGEND – HANNAH

Sir Rupert Murgatroyd
His leisure and his riches
He ruthlessly employed
In persecuting witches.
With fear he'd make them quake –
He'd duck them in his lake –
He'd break their bones
With sticks and stones,
And burn them at the stake!

CHORUS This sport he much enjoyed,
Did Rupert Murgatroyd –
No sense of shame
Or pity came
To Rupert Murgatroyd!

Once, on the village green,
A palsied hag he roasted,
And what took place, I ween,
Shook his composure boasted;
For, as the torture grim
Seized on each withered limb,
The writhing dame
'Mid fire and flame
Yelled forth this curse on him:

“Each lord of Ruddigore,
Despite his best endeavour,
Shall do one crime, or more,
Once, every day, for ever!
This doom he can't defy,
However he may try,
For should he stay
His hand, that day
In torture he shall die!”

The prophecy came true:
Each heir who held the title
Had, every day, to do
Some crime of import vital;
Until, with guilt o'erplied,
“I'll sin no more!” he cried,
And on the day
He said that say,
In agony he died!

CHORUS. And thus, with sinning cloyed,
Has died each Murgatroyd,
And so shall fall,
Both one and all,
Each coming Murgatroyd!

(*Exeunt TOWNSWOMEN, CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS and N. Enter ROSE MAYBUD from cottage, with small basket on her arm.*)

ROSE Auntie Han! Auntie Han! (*a la Dorothy, The Wizard of Oz*)

HANNAH Here, dear child. Where are you off to, dear Rose? On some errand of charity, as is your wont?

ROSE A few gifts, dear aunt, for deserving villagers. Here is some peppermint rock for old gaffer Gadderby, a set of false teeth for pretty, little Ruth Rowbottom, and some cigarettes ... (*Hannah takes the pack.*)

HANNAH For your dear Aunt Hannah?

ROSE No, for that poor orphan girl on the hill.

HANNAH And what've you got for strange Mr. Q. at Road's End who is certain the rapture is upon us and Methodists consort with the Devil? (Rose pulls out an N95 face mask.) Well, good luck with that one, Dear. Ah, Rose, pity that so much goodness should not help to make some gallant youth happy for life! Rose, why do you harden your heart? Is there no one in all the village whom you could love?

ROSE And if there were such a one, truly it would ill become me to tell him so.

HANNAH No, dear one, where true love is, there is little need of prim formality.

ROSE Hush, dear aunt, for your words pain me sorely.

(*Aside to the audience*)

Left in a basket hung to the knocker of the workhouse door, with nothing that I could call mine own, save a change of baby-linen and a book of etiquette, little wonder if I have always regarded that work as a voice from a parent's tomb. This hallowed volume (*producing a book of etiquette*), composed, if I may believe the titlepage, by no less an authority than the wife of a Lord Mayor, has been, through life, my guide and monitor. By its solemn precepts I have learned to test the moral worth of all who approach me. The man who picks his teeth, or eats peas with a knife, I look upon as a lost creature, and he who has not acquired the proper way of entering and leaving a room is the object of my pity and horror. There are those in this village who bite their nails, dear aunt, and nearly all are wont to use their pocket combs in public places. In truth I could pursue this painful theme much further, but no, I have said enough.

(*Back to DAME HANNAH*)

HANNAH But is there not one among them who is faultless, in your eyes? For example – young Robin. He combines the manners of a Marquis with the morals of a Methodist. Couldn't you love *him*?

ROSE And even if I could, how should I confess it to him? For, Auntie Han, he is shy, and won't say a word!

BALLAD – ROSE.

If somebody there chanced to be
Who loved me in a manner true,
My heart would point him out to me,
And I would point him out to you.
(Referring to book.) But here it says of those who point,
Their manners must be out of joint –
You *may* not point –
You *must* not point –
It's manners out of joint, to point!

Ah! Had I the love of such as he,
Some quiet spot he'd take me to,
Then he could whisper it to me,
And I could whisper it to you.
(Referring to book.) But whispering, I've somewhere met,
Is contrary to etiquette:
Where can it be (*Searching book.*)
Now let me see – (*Finding reference.*)
Yes, yes! It's contrary to etiquette!

(*Showing it to DAME HANNAH.*)

If any well-bred youth I knew,
Polite and gentle, neat and trim,
Then I would hint as much to you,
And you could hint as much to him.
(Referring to book.) But here it says, in plainest print,
“It's most unladylike to hint” –
You *may* not hint,
You *must* not hint –
It says you mustn't hint, in print!

Ah! And if I loved him through and through –
(True love and not a passing whim),
Then I could speak of it to you,
And you could speak of it to him.
(Referring to book.) But here I find it doesn't do
To speak until you're spoken to.
Where can it be? (*Searching book.*)
Now let me see – (*Finding reference.*)
Yes, yes! “Don't speak until you're spoken to!”

(*DAME HANNAH takes a pack of cigarettes and exits.*)

ROSE Poor aunt! Little did the good soul think, when she breathed the hallowed name of Robin - that I find him dear, kind and handsome. But he resembles all the youths in this village, in that he is unduly bashful in my presence.

(During this speech, ROBIN has entered, initially not noticing ROSE. ROSE is about to go when ROBIN notices her and gasps.)

And it is hard to bring him to the point. Oh my word, he is here!

ROBIN (calling out to her) Miss Maybud!

ROSE (surprised) Mr. Oakapple!

ROBIN I wished to say that – it is a fine day.

ROSE It is fine, indeed.

ROBIN But we do want for rain.

ROSE Yes, sorely! (long pause, Robin turns and lets out the breath he's been holding) Is that all?

ROBIN (sighing) That is all.

ROSE Good day, Master Robin!

ROBIN Good day, Mistress Rose! (Both going – both stop.)

(Speaking over each other)

ROSE I crave pardon, I –

ROBIN I beg pardon, I –

(They laugh -- and begin to speak over each other again. Each mumble to themselves)

ROBIN I would like to consult you –

(Speaking over each other. They laugh again -- Rose gestures for him to begin)

ROSE Truly?

ROBIN It is about a friend.

ROSE In truth I have a friend myself.

ROBIN Indeed? I mean, of course –

ROSE And I would like to consult you –

ROBIN (anxiously) About him?

ROSE *(prudishly)* About her.

ROBIN *(relieved)* Let us consult one another.

DUET – ROBIN AND ROSE

ROBIN I know a youth who loves a little maid –
 (Hey, but his face is a sight for to see!)
Silent is he, for he's modest and afraid –
 (Hey, but he's timid as a youth can be!)

ROSE I know a maid who loves a gallant youth,
 (Hey, but she sickens as the days go by!)
She cannot tell him all the sad, sad truth –
 (Hey, but I think that little maid will die!)

ROBIN Poor little man!

ROSE Poor little maid!

ROBIN Poor little man!

ROSE Poor little maid!

BOTH Now tell me pray, and tell me true,
What in the world should the young man/maiden do?

ROBIN He cannot eat, and he cannot sleep –
 (Hey, but his face is a sight for to see!)
Daily he goes for to wail – for to weep –
 (Hey, but he's wretched as a youth can be!)

ROSE She's very thin and she's very pale –
 (Hey, but she sickens as the days go by!)
Daily she goes for to weep – for to wail –
 (Hey, but I think that little maid will die!)

ROBIN Poor little maid!

ROSE Poor little man!

ROBIN Poor little maid!

ROSE Poor little man!

BOTH Now tell me pray, and tell me true,
What in the world should the young man/maiden do?

ROSE If I were the youth, I should offer her my name –
(Hey, but her face is a sight for to see!)

ROBIN If were the maid I should fan his honest flame –
(Hey, but he's bashful as a youth can be!)

ROSE If I were the youth, I should speak to her to-day –
(Hey, but she sickens as the days go by!)

ROBIN If I were the maid, I should meet the lad half way –
(For I really do believe that timid youth will die!)

ROSE Poor little man!

ROBIN Poor little maid!

ROSE Poor little man!

ROBIN Poor little maid!

BOTH I thank you, miss/sir, for your counsel true;
I'll tell that youth/maid what he/she ought to do!

(Exit ROSE.)

ROBIN Poor child! I sometimes think that if she wasn't quite so particular, I might venture to – but no, no – even then I should be unworthy of her!

(Enter OLD ADAM.)

ADAM My kind master is sad! Dear Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd –

ROBIN Hush! As you love me, breathe not that hated name.

(Aside to the audience)

Twenty years ago, in horror at the prospect of inheriting that hideous title, and with it the ban that compels all who succeed to the baronetcy to commit at least one deadly crime per day, for life, I fled my home, and concealed myself in this innocent fishing village under the name of Robin Oakapple. My younger brother, Despard, believing me to be dead, succeeded to the title and its attendant curse. For twenty years I have been dead and buried.

(Back to OLD ADAM)

Don't dig me up now.

ADAM Dear master, it shall be as you wish, for have I not sworn to obey you forever in all things? Yet, as we are here alone, and as I belong to that particular description of good old man to whom the truth is a refreshing novelty, let me call you by your own right title once more! (*ROBIN glance around and assents.*) Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd! Baronet! Of Ruddigore! Whew! Just saying it makes my troubles melt like lemon drops. (*a la Dorothy, The Wizard of Oz*)

ROBIN My poor old friend! Would there were more like you!

ADAM Would there were indeed! But I bring you good tidings. Your foster-brother, Richard, has returned from sea – his ship, the *Tom-Tit*, rides yonder at anchor, and he himself is even now in this very village!

ROBIN My beloved foster-brother? No, no – it cannot be!

ADAM It is even so – and see, he comes this way!

ROBIN (*Calling out, exiting R*) Richard! Richard!

(Enter CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS L.)

CHORUS.

From the briny sea
Comes young Richard, all victorious!
Valorous is he –
His achievements all are glorious!
Let the welkin ring
With the news we bring
Sing it – shout it –
Tell about it –
Safe and sound returneth he,
All victorious from the sea!

(Enter RICHARD, with two SAILORS L. The girls welcome him.)

BALLAD – RICHARD

I shipped, d'ye see, in a Revenue sloop,
And, off Cape Finistere,
A merchantman we see,
A Frenchman, going free,
So we made for the bold Mounseer,
D'ye see?
We made for the bold Mounseer.
But she proved to be a Frigate – and she up with her ports,
And fires with a thirty-two!
It come uncommon near,
But we answered with a cheer,
Which paralysed the Parley-voo,
D'ye see?
Which paralysed the Parley-voo!

CHORUS Which paralysed the Parley-voo, etc.

Then our Captain he up and he says, says he,
“That chap we need not fear, –
We can take her, if we like,
She is sartin for to strike,
For she’s only a darned Mounseer,
D’ye see?
She’s only a darned Mounseer!”
“But to fight a French fal-lal – it’s like hittin’ of a gal –
It’s a lubberly thing for to do;
For we, with all our faults,
Why, we’re sturdy British salts,
While she’s only a Parley-voo,
D’ye see?
While she’s only a poor Parley-voo!”

CHORUS While she’s only a Parley-voo, etc.

So we up with our helm, and we scuds before the breeze,
As we gives a compassionating cheer;
Froggee answers with a shout
As he sees us go about,
Which was grateful of the poor Mounseer,
D’ye see?
Which was grateful of the poor Mounseer!
And I’ll wager in their joy they kissed each other’s cheek
(*ZORAH nods consent, RICHARD kisses her cheeks*)
(Which is what them furriners do),
And they blessed their lucky stars
We were hardy British tars
Who had pity on a poor Parley-voo,
D’ye see?
Who had pity on a poor Parley-voo!

CHORUS Who had pity on a poor Parley-voo, etc.

HORNPIPE

(*Exeunt CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS and two SAILORS, as ROBIN comes forward.*)

ROBIN Richard! Richard!

RICHARD Robin!

ROBIN My beloved foster-brother, and very dearest friend, welcome home again after ten long years at sea! It is such deeds as you have just described that cause our flag to be loved and dreaded throughout the civilized world!

RICHARD Why, lord love ye, Rob, that's but a trifle to what we *have* done in the way of sparing life! I believe I may say, without exaggeration, that the merciful little *Tom-Tit* has spared more French frigates than any craft afloat! But 'taint for a British seaman to brag, so I'll just stow my jawin' tackle and belay. (*ROBIN sighs.*) But 'vast heavin', messmate, what's brought *you* all a-cockbill?

ROBIN Oh, Dick, I love Rose Maybud, and love in vain!

RICHARD *You* love in vain? Come, that's too good! Why, you're a fine strapping muscular-ish young fellow – tall and strong as a to'-gall'n'-m'st – taut as a fore-stay – aye, and a barrowknight to boot, if all had their rights!

ROBIN Hush, Richard – not a word about my true rank, which none here suspect. Yes, I know well enough that few men are better calculated to win a woman's heart than I. I'm a fine fellow, Dick, and worthy any woman's love – happy the girl who gets me, say I. But I'm timid, Dick; shy, nervous, modest, retiring, diffident, and I cannot tell her, Dick, I cannot tell her! Ah, you've no idea what a poor opinion I have of myself, and how little I deserve it.

RICHARD Robin, do you call to mind how, years ago, we swore that, come what might, we would always act upon our hearts' dictates?

ROBIN Aye, Dick, and I've always kept that oath. In doubt, difficulty, and danger, I've always asked my heart what I should do, and it has never failed me.

RICHARD Right! Let your heart be your compass, with a clear conscience for your binnacle light, and you'll sail ten knots on a bowline, clear of shoals, rocks, and quicksands! Well, now, what does my heart say in this here difficult situation? Why, it says, "Dick," it says – (it calls me Dick 'cos it's known me from a babby) – "Dick," it says, "*you ain't* shy – *you ain't* modest – speak you up for him as is!" Robin, my lad, just you lay me alongside, and when she's becalmed under my lee, I'll spin her a yarn that shall serve to fish you two together for life!

ROBIN Will you do this thing for me? Can you, do you think? Yes. There's no false modesty about *you*. Your, what I would call bumptious self-assertiveness (and I mean the expression in its complimentary sense) has already made you a bos'n's mate, and it will make an admiral of you in time, if you work it properly, you dear, incompetent old impostor! My dear fellow, I'd give my right arm for one tenth of your modest assurance!

SONG – ROBIN

My boy, you may take it from me,
That of all the afflictions accurst
With which a man's saddled
And hampered and addled,
A diffident nature's the worst.
Though clever as clever can be –
A Crichton of early romance –
You must stir it and stump it,
And blow your own trumpet,
Or, trust me, you haven't a chance!

If you wish in the world to advance,
Your merits you're bound to enhance,
 You must stir it and stump it,
 And blow your own trumpet,
Or, trust me, you haven't a chance!
If you wish in the world to advance, etc.

Now take, for example, *my* case:
I've a bright intellectual brain –
 In all London city
 There's no one so witty –
I've thought so again and again.
I've a highly intelligent face –
 My features cannot be denied –
 But, whatever I try, sir,
 I fail in – and why, sir?
I'm modesty personified!
If you wish in the world to advance, etc.
If you wish in the world to advance, etc.

As a poet, I'm tender and quaint –
I've passion and fervour and grace –
 From Ovid and Horace
 To Swinburne and Morris,
They all of them take a back place.
Then I sing and I play and I paint:
 Though none are accomplished as I,
 To say so were treason:
 You ask me the reason?
I'm diffident, modest, and shy!

BOTH If you wish in the world to advance, etc.

(*Exit ROBIN.*)

RICHARD (*looking after him*). Ah, it's a thousand pities he's such a poor opinion of himself, for a finer fellow don't walk! Well, I'll do my best for him. "Plead for him as though it was for your own father" – that's what my heart's a-remakin' to me just now. But here she comes! Steady! Steady it is! (*Enter ROSE – he is much struck by her.*) By the Port Admiral, but she's a tight little craft! Come, come, she's not for you, Dick, and yet – she's fit to marry Sir Laurence Oh-lih-veer! By the Flag of Old England, I can't look at her unmoved.

ROSE Sir, you are agitated –

RICHARD Aye, aye, my lass, well said! I am agitated, true enough! – took flat aback, my girl; but 'tis naught – 'twill pass. (*aside*) This here heart of mine's a-dictatin' to me like anythink. Question is, have I a right to disregard its promptings?

ROSE Can I do anything to relieve your anguish, for it seems to me that you are in sore trouble? This apple – (*offering an apple*).

RICHARD (*looking at it and returning it*) No, my lass, 'tain't that: I'm – I'm took flat aback – I never see anything like you in all my born days. Parbuckle me, if you ain't the loveliest gal I've ever set eyes on. There – I can't say fairer than that, can I?

ROSE No. (*aside*) The question is, Is it appropriate that an utter stranger should thus express himself? (*Refers to book.*) Yes – “Always speak the truth.”

RICHARD I'd no thoughts of sayin' this here to you on my own account, for, truth to tell, I was chartered by another; but when I see you my heart it up and it says, says it, “This is the very lass for *you*, Dick” – “speak up to her, Dick,” it says – (it calls me Dickacos we was at school together) – “tell her all, Dick,” it says, “never sail under false colours – it's mean!” *That's* what my heart tells me to say, and in my rough, common-sailor fashion, I've said it, and I'm a-waiting for your reply. I'm a-tremblin', miss. Lookye here – (*holding out his hand*). That's narvousness!

ROSE (*aside*) Now, how should a maiden deal with such an one? (*Consults book.*) “Keep no one in unnecessary suspense.” (*aloud*) Behold, I will not keep you in unnecessary suspense. (*Refers to book.*) “In accepting an offer of marriage, do so with apparent hesitation.” (*aloud*) I take you, but with a certain show of reluctance. (*Refers to book.*) “Avoid any appearance of eagerness.” (*aloud*) Though you will bear in mind that I am far from anxious to do so. (*Refers to book.*) “A little show of emotion will not be misplaced! (*aloud*) Pardon this tear! (*Wipes her eye.*)

RICHARD Rose, you've made me the happiest blue-jacket in England! I wouldn't change places with the Admiral of the Fleet, no matter who he's a-huggin' of at this present moment! But, axin' your pardon, miss (*wiping his lips with his hand*), might I be permitted to salute the flag I'm a-goin' to sail under?

ROSE (*referring to book*) “An engaged young lady should not permit too many familiarities.” (*aloud*) Once! (*ROSE holds out her hand to be kissed. RICHARD does so, but then kisses her on the lips. ROSE melts in his arms and then kisses him back aggressively. Afterwards, she is happily dazed*)

DUET – RICHARD AND ROSE.

RICHARD The battle's roar is over,
 O my love!
Embrace thy tender lover,
 O my love!
From tempests' welter,
 From war's alarms,
O give me shelter
 Within those arms!
Thy smile alluring,
All heart-ache curing,
Gives peace enduring,
 O my love!

ROSE If heart both true and tender,
 O my love!
A life-love can engender,
 O my love!
A truce to sighing
 And tears of brine,
For joy undying
 Shall aye be mine,

BOTH And thou and I, love,
Shall live and die, love,
Without a sigh, love –
 My own, my love!

(Enter ROBIN, with CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS.)

CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS

If well his suit has sped,
Oh, may they soon be wed!
Oh, tell us, tell us, pray,
What doth the maiden say?
In singing are we justified,
 Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!
Let the nuptial knot be tied:
 In fair phrases
 Hymn their praises,
 Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride?

(CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS have entered in #9 doing the wedding walk and segue into a trot (on the quarter notes) circle around the couple at "Hail") "...Hail the bridegroom, hail the bride! Let the nuptial knot ...etc." (Sing through the whole phrase and strike the usual pose on final "bride!" One Bridesmaid throws confetti)

ROBIN "Ah! Bridesmaids! Singing! You've spoken to her!"

RICHARD (With gravitas, preparing him for bad news) Aye, my lad, I have – so to speak – spoke to her.

ROBIN (Thinking the worst) And she refuses?

RICHARD Why, no, I can't truly say she do.

ROBIN Then she accepts! My darling! (Embraces Rose from her side)

CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS (Circle the couple and sing right after "darling!")

Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!
Let the Nuptial night be tied, in fair phrases, hymn their praises,
Hail the bridegroom hail the bride"

(End in pose, one Bridesmaid throws confetti)

ROSE (From within the embrace, referring to her book) Now, what should a maiden do when she is embraced by the wrong gentleman?

RICHARD Belay, my lad, belay. You don't understand.

ROSE (Break from reading) Oh, sir, belay, I beg you!

RICHARD (Richard takes Robin aside – downstage left.) You see, it's like this: she accepts – but it's me!

ROBIN You! (Richard embraces Rose.)

CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS (Circles the couple. **CHORUS OF BUCKS AND BLADES** enters with **TOWNSWOMEN** who are carrying cakes.)

Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!
Let the Nuptial night be tied, in fair phrases, hymn their praises,
(Whispered) Hail the bridegroom hail the bride”

ROBIN (interrupting angrily.) Hold your tongues, will you! (**CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS** continue the circle into pose with confetti. They hold their pose through the following dialogue.) Now then, what does this mean?

RICHARD My poor lad, my heart grieves for thee, but it's like this: the moment I see her, and just as I was a-goin' to mention your name, my heart it up and it says, says it, "Dick, you've fell in love with her yourself," it says; "be honest and sailor-like – don't skulk under false colours – speak up," it says, "take her, you dog, and with her my blessin'!" (Embraces Rose)

CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS (Singing/moving immediately after "Blessin'" **CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS** circle the couple)

Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!

ROBIN Will you be quiet! (**CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS** stop singing and moving.)

NIGEL We have been working on this number for TWO YEARS and we never even get to the second verse before you ...

ROBIN (Cutting him off) Go away!

NIGEL (Shrieks) Ladies! (**TOWNSWOMEN** exit, dejected. **CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS** finish their circle whispering the words -- starting over at "Hail the bridegroom...". **NIGEL** trots out with the **CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS** s. Last BRIDESMAID tosses confetti in ROBIN's face on her exit). Vulgar girls!

RICHARD What could I do? I'm bound to obey my heart's dictates.

ROBIN Of course – no doubt. It's quite right – I don't mind – that is, not particularly – only it's – it is disappointing, you know.

ROSE (To Robin) Oh, but, sir, I didn't know that you sought me in wedlock, or truly I should not have listened to this man, for truly, he is a lowly mariner, and very poor, whereas you till the land and have several head of oxen and many sheep and swine, a considerable dairy farm and (*more seductively*) a great deal of corn and oil!

RICHARD That's true, my lass, but it's done now, ain't it, Rob?

ROSE Still it may be that I should not be happy in with you. I am still quite young and little able to judge. Moreover, as to your character, I know nothing at all!

ROBIN Dear, Rose, I'll answer for that. Dick has won your love fairly. Broken-hearted as I am, I'll stand up for Dick through thick and thin!

RICHARD (With emotion) Thankye, messmate! that's well said. That's spoken honest. Thankye, Rob! (Grasps his hand.)

ROSE Yet I think I have heard that sailors are ... uh ... worldly men, and little prone to lead serious and thoughtful lives! (Points down L) Girl! (Richard dashes down L to look. Slowly realizes that there is no Girl)

ROBIN What should I say? Admit that Dick is *not* a steady character, and that when he's excited he uses language that would make your hair curl. Grant that – he does. It's the truth, and I'm not going to deny it. (Richard chuckles) But look at his *good* qualities. He's as nimble as a pony, and his hornpipe is the talk of the Fleet! And dogs ...

ROSE Dogs?

(Richard barks)

ROBIN Dogs are very fond of him. No, not a work against Dick.

RICHARD Thankye, Rob! That's well spoken. Thankye, Rob!

ROSE But it may be that he drinks heavily, making him wild and beastly.

ROBIN Well, suppose he does, and I don't say he don't, for rum's his burden, and ever has been. He *does* drink – I won't deny it.

RICHARD Guilty!

ROBIN But what of that? Look at his arms –tattooed to the shoulder! (Richard pulls up a sleeve.) No, no – I won't hear a word against Dick!

ROSE But they say that mariners are but rarely true to those whom they profess to love!

ROBIN Granted – granted – and I don't say that Dick isn't as bad as any of 'em. (Richard chuckles.) You are, you know you are, you dog! (Richard chuckles) A devil of a fellow – a regular out-and-out Errol Flynn! But what then? You can't have everything, and a better hand at turning-in a dead-eye don't walk a deck! And what an accomplishment *that* is in a family man! No, no – not a word against Dick. I'll stick up for him through thick and thin!

RICHARD Thankye, Rob, thankye. You're a true friend. I've acted accordin' to my heart's dictates, and such orders as them no man should disobey.

ENSEMBLE – RICHARD, ROBIN, AND ROSE.

In sailing o'er life's ocean wide
Your heart should be your only guide;
With summer sea and favouring wind,
Yourself in port you'll surely find.

SOLO – RICHARD.

*My heart says, “To this maiden strike –
She’s captured you.
She’s just the sort of girl you like –
You know you do.
If other man her heart should gain,
I shall resign.”
That’s what it says to me quite plain,
This heart of mine.*

SOLO – ROBIN.

*My heart says, “You’ve a prosperous lot,
With acres wide;
You mean to settle all you’ve got
Upon your bride.”
It don’t pretend to shape my acts
By word or sign;
It merely states these simple facts,
This heart of mine!*

SOLO – ROSE.

Ten minutes since my heart said “white” –
It now says “black”.
It then said “left” – it now says “right” –
Hearts often tack.
I must obey its latest strain –
You tell me so. (*To RICHARD.*)
But should it change its mind again,
I’ll let you know. (*she gives Richard an apple*)

(*Turning from RICHARD to ROBIN, who embraces her.*)

ENSEMBLE

In sailing o'er life's ocean wide
No doubt the heart should be your guide;
But it is awkward when you find
A heart that does not know its mind!

(*Exeunt ROBIN with ROSE L., and RICHARD, weeping, R. Enter MAD MARGARET. She is wildly dressed in picturesque tatters, and is an obvious caricature of theatrical madness.*)

SCENA – MARGARET

Cheerily carols the lark
Over the cot.
Merrily whistles the clerk
Scratching a blot.
 But the lark
 And the clerk,
 I remark,
 Comfort me not!

Over the ripening peach
Buzzes the bee.
Splash on the billowy beach
Tumbles the sea.
 But the peach
 And the beach
 They are each
 Nothing to me!

 And why?
 Who am I?
Daft Madge! Crazy Meg!
Mad Margaret! Poor Peg!
 He! he! he! he! (*chuckling*)

 Mad, I?
 Yes, very!
 But why?
 Mystery!
 Don't call!

No crime –
 'Tis only
That I'm
 Love-lonely!
 That's all!

BALLAD – MARGARET

To a garden full of posies
Cometh one to gather flowers,
And he wanders through its bowers
Toying with the wanton roses,
Who, uprising from their beds,
Hold on high their shameless heads
With their pretty lips a-pouting,
Never doubting – never doubting
That for Cytherean posies
He would gather aught but roses!

In a nest of weeds and nettles
Lay a violet, half-hidden,
Hoping that his glance unbidden
Yet might fall upon her petals.
Though she lived alone, apart,
Hope lay nestling at her heart,
But, alas, the cruel awaking
Set her little heart a-breaking,
For he gathered for his posies
Only roses – only roses! (*Bursts into tears.*)

(Enter ROSE.)

ROSE A maiden, and in tears? Can I do anything to soften her sorrow? Apple? (*offering apple*).

MARGARET (*Examines it and rejects it.*) No! (*mysteriously*) Tell me, are you mad?

ROSE I? No! That is, I think not.

MARGARET That's well! Then you don't love Sir Despard Murgatroyd? All mad girls love him. *I* love him. I'm poor Mad Margaret – Crazy Meg – Poor Peg! He! he! he! he! (*chuckling*). (*suddenly and mysteriously*) I'm READY ...

ROSE Ready? Ready for what?

MARGARET My close up. (*a la Norma Desmond, Sunset Boulevard*)

(*rapid fire*)

ROSE What?

MARGARET What??

ROSE What???

(*Margaret strikes a pose, Rose shrieks*)

MARGARET I love the Baronet ... Sir Despard.

ROSE You love the bad Baronet of Ruddigore? Oh, horrible – too horrible!

MARGARET What a world...what a world! (*a la the Wicked Witch, The Wizard of Oz*) Do you pity me? Then be my mother! Forget it! I'm no stray dog you can pick up, and I like my neck without a collar! NYAH! (*a la Kansas City Confidential*) The dog had a mother, but she drank and the dog fled! Hush! Don't speak. (*Rose keeps trying to speak. MARGARET holds ROSE's lips closed*) No. They sing a brave song in our parts – it runs somewhat thus: (*sings a la Shirley Temple*)

On The Good Ship Lollipop
It's a sweet trip to a candy shop
Where bon-bons play
On the sunny beach of ... on the sunny beach of ...

I forget where the bon bons play! But so the song goes! Listen – I've come to abduct her!

ROSE Mercy, whom?

MARGARET You mean “who”.

ROSE Nay! it is the accusative after the verb.

MARGARET Fiddle-dee-dee. (*a la Scarlet O'Hara, Gone With the Wind*) (*Whispers melodramatically.*) I've come to abduct Rose Maybud!

ROSE (*Aside, alarmed.*) Rose Maybud!

MARGARET Aye! I love Sir Despard (*a la Katharine Hepburn, Alice Adams*) really I do! (*back to self*) He loved me once. But that's all gone. Fisht! He gave me a Valentino glance – thus (*business*) – and made me his. He will give *her* a Valentino glance, and make *her* his. But it shall not be, for I'll stamp on her – stamp on her – stamp on her! (*a la Barbara Stanwyck*) Did you ever kill anybody? No? Why not? Because you're weak. Listen – I killed a fly this morning! It buzzed, and I wouldn't have it. So I bumped it off, see! Nyah. (*a la Edgar G. Robinson, as if with a gun ...*) Pop pop pop! Nyah ...

ROSE But, oh dear! I am Rose Maybud, and I would fain not die “pop ... nyah.”

MARGARET You are Rose Maybud? (*holstering her imaginary gun*)

ROSE Yes, sweet Rose Maybud!

MARGARET Strange! (*aside*) They told me she was beautiful! (*back*) And he loves you! No, no! (*aside*) Fasten your seatbelt, Rose Maybud, it's going to be a bumpy night. (*Betty Davis, All About Eve*) (*back*)

(*rapid fire*)

ROSE What?

MARGARET What??

ROSE What???

(*ROSE shrieks and holds her own lips closed*)

MARGARET He loves you? If I thought that, I would treat you like the hardened gumshoe treated the scarlet dame, see? I'd tear you from limb to limb, see? Pop! Nyah....

ROSE No, please! Be pacified, for truly I am pledged to another, and we are to be wedded this very day!

MARGARET Swear me that! Come to a Commissioner and let me have it on affidavit! *I* once made an affidavit – but it died – it died – it died! I want to LIVE! (*a la I Want to Live*) But see, they come – Sir Despard and his evil crew! Hide, hide – they are all mad – quite mad!

ROSE What makes you think so?

MARGARET They sing choruses in public. That's mad enough, I think! Go – hide away, or they will seize you!

ROSE But I thought ...

MARGARET Bip! Bip! Bip! Bip!

(*Exeunt together R, on tiptoe. Enter CHORUS OF BUCKS AND BLADES, heralded by CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS.*)

CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS

Welcome, gentry,
For your entry
Sets our tender hearts a-beating.
Men of station,
Admiration
Prompts this unaffected greeting.
Hearty greeting offer we!

CHORUS OF BUCKS AND BLADES

When thoroughly tired
Of being admired,
By ladies of gentle degree – degree,
With flattery sated,
High-flown and inflated,
Away from the city we flee – we flee!
From charms intramural
To prettiness rural
The sudden transition
Is simply Elysian,
So come, Amaryllis,
Come, Chloe and Phyllis,
Your slaves, for the moment, are we!

CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS

The sons of the tillage
Who dwell in this village
Are people of lowly degree – degree.
Though honest and active,
They're most unattractive,
And awkward as awkward can be – can be.
They're clumsy clodhoppers
With axes and choppers,
And shepherds and ploughmen
And drovers and cowmen,
Hedgers and reapers
And carters and keepers,
But never a lover for me!

ENSEMBLE

BRIDESMAIDS.	BUCKS AND BLADES.
So welcome gentry, etc.	When thoroughly tired, etc.

(Enter DESPARD, wearing signature trench coat and red scarf. Everyone is shocked and frightened)

SONG AND CHORUS – DESPARD

DESPARD Oh, why am I moody and sad?

CHORUS Can't guess!

DESPARD And why am I guiltily mad?

CHORUS Confess!

DESPARD Because I am thoroughly bad!

CHORUS Oh yes –

DESPARD You'll see it at once in my face.

Oh, why am I husky and hoarse?

CHORUS Ah, why?

DESPARD It's the workings of conscience, of course.

CHORUS Fie, fie!

DESPARD And huskiness stands for remorse,

CHORUS Oh my!

DESPARD At least it does so in my case!

When in crime one is fully employed –

CHORUS Like you –

DESPARD Your expression gets warped and destroyed:

CHORUS It do.

DESPARD It's a penalty none can avoid;

CHORUS How true!

DESPARD I once was a nice-looking youth;

But like stone from a strong catapult –

CHORUS (*explaining to each other*) A trice –

DESPARD I rushed at my terrible cult –

CHORUS (*explaining to each other*) That's vice –

DESPARD Observe the unpleasant result!

CHORUS Not nice.

DESPARD Indeed I am telling the truth!

Oh, innocent, happy though poor!

CHORUS That's we –

DESPARD If I had been virtuous, I'm sure –

CHORUS Like me –

DESPARD I should be as nice-looking as you're!

CHORUS May be.

DESPARD You are very nice-looking indeed!

Oh, innocents, listen in time –

CHORUS We *doe*,

DESPARD Avoid an existence of crime –

CHORUS Just so –

DESPARD Or you'll be as ugly as I'm –

CHORUS No! No!

DESPARD And now, if you please, we'll proceed.

(All the girls express their horror of DESPARD. As he approaches them, they fly from him, terror-stricken, leaving him alone on the stage.)

DESPARD Poor children, how they loathe me – me whose hands are certainly steeped in infamy, but whose heart is as the heart of a little child! But what was a poor baronet to do, when a whole picture gallery of ancestors would step down from their frames and threaten him with an excruciating death if he hesitate to commit his daily crime? But ha! ha! I get even with them! (*mysteriously*) I get my crime over the first thing in the morning, and then, ha! ha! for the rest of the day I do good – I do good – I do good! (*melodramatically*) Two days since, I stole a child and built an orphan asylum. Yesterday I robbed a bank and endowed a bishopric. To-day I carry off Rose Maybud and atone with a cathedral! This is what it is to be the sport and toy of one's ancestors! I thought I had a way out ... a way to be bitterly revenged upon them! (*secretly...aside*) I gave all the portraits to the Walker, where nobody shall ever look upon their faces again. (*Laughs wickedly, but then begins to cry*) But - curses! - it was to no avail ... as a "thank you" for the gift, they sent me slides (*pulling out one or a few slides from his pocket*) of each portrait ... and now it is THESE accursed celluloid slides that come to life to haunt me ... no longer from their frames, but from a prosaic, pedestrian projector. It's madness in 35 millimeter! (*Wringing his hands*) Wretched WALKER!

(Enter RICHARD.)

RICHARD Ax your honour's pardon, but –

DESPARD Ha! observed! And by a mariner! What would you with me, fellow?

RICHARD Your honour, I'm a poor man-o'-war's-man, becalmed in the doldrums.

DESPARD I'm a tormented baronet, sir, so speak plainly.

RICHARD Then I make bold to ax your honour's advice. Does your honour know what it is to have a heart?

DESPARD My honour knows what it is to have a complete apparatus for conducting the circulation of the blood through the veins and arteries of the human body.

RICHARD Aye, but has your honour a heart that ups and looks you in the face, and gives you quarter-deck orders that it's life and death to disobey?

DESPARD I have not a heart of that description, but I have ancestors on film that presume to take that liberty.

RICHARD Well, your honour, it's like this. Your honour had an elder brother –

- DESPARD** It had.
- RICHARD** Who should have inherited your title and, with it, its cuss.
- DESPARD** Aye, but he died. Oh, poor Ruthven!
- RICHARD** He didn't.
- DESPARD** He did *not*?
- RICHARD** He didn't. On the contrary, he lives in this here very village, under the name of Robin Oakapple, and he's a-going to marry Rose Maybud this very day.
- DESPARD** Ruthven's alive, and going to marry Rose Maybud! Can this be possible?
- RICHARD** Now the question I was going to ask your honour is – ought I to tell your honour this?
- DESPARD** I don't know. It's a delicate point. I think you ought. Mind, I'm not sure, but I think so.
- RICHARD** That's what my heart says. It says, "Dick," it says (it calls me Dick acos it's entitled to take that liberty), "that there young gal would recoil from him if she knowed what he really were. Ought you to stand off and on, and let this young gal take this false step and never fire a shot across her bows to bring her to? No," it says, "you did *not* ought." And I won't ought, accordin'.
- DESPARD** Then you really feel yourself at liberty to tell me that my elder brother lives – that I may charge him with his cruel deceit, and transfer to his shoulders the hideous thraldom under which I have laboured for so many years! (*Realizing*) Free – free at last! Free to live a blameless life, and to die beloved and regretted by all who knew me!
- DUET – DESPARD AND RICHARD**
- RICHARD** You understand?
- DESPARD** I think I do;
With vigour unshaken
This step shall be taken.
It's neatly planned.
- RICHARD** I think so too;
I'll readily bet it
You'll never regret it!
- BOTH** For duty, duty must be done;
The rule applies to every one,
And painful though that duty be,
To shirk the task were fiddle-de-dee!
- DESPARD** The bridegroom comes –

- RICHARD** Likewise the bride –
The maidens are very
Elated and merry;
They are her chums.
- DESPARD** To lash their pride
Were almost a pity,
The pretty committee!
- BOTH** But duty, duty must be done;
The rule applies to every one,
And painful though that duty be,
To shirk the task were fiddle-de-dee!

(*Exeunt RICHARD and DESPARD.*)

(Enter Townspeople, CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS and CHORUS OF BUCKS AND BLADES.)

CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS AND TOWNSWOMEN

Hail the bride of seventeen summers;
In fair phrases
Hymn her praises;
Lift your song on high, all comers.
She rejoices
In your voices.
Smiling summer beams upon her,
Shedding every blessing on her:
Maidens greet her –
Kindly treat her –
You may all be brides some day!

CHORUS OF BUCKS AND BLADES, AND TOWNSMEN

Hail the bridegroom who advances,
Agitated,
Yet elated.
He's in easy circumstances,
Young and lusty,
True and trusty.

ALL Smiling summer beams upon her, etc.

(Enter ROBIN, attended by RICHARD and OLD ADAM, meeting ROSE, attended by ZORAH and DAME HANNAH. ROSE and ROBIN embrace.)

MADRIGAL - ROSE, DAME HANNAH, RICHARD, OLD ADAM, WITH CHORUS

ROSE When the buds are blossoming,
Smiling welcome to the spring,
Lovers choose a wedding day –
Life is love in merry May!

WOMEN Spring is green –
Summer's rose –

QUARTET It is sad when summer goes,
Fa la, la, etc.

MEN Autumn's gold –
Winter's grey –

QUARTET Winter still is far away –
Fa la, la etc.

CHORUS Leaves in autumn fade and fall,
Winter is the end of all.
Spring and summer teem with glee:
Spring and summer, then, for me!
Fa la, la, etc.

HANNAH In the spring-time seed is sown:
In the summer grass is mown:
In the autumn you may reap:
Winter is the time for sleep.

WOMEN Spring is hope –
Summer's joy –

QUARTET Spring and summer never cloy.
Fa la, la, etc.

MEN Autumn, toil –
Winter, rest –

QUARTET Winter, after all, is best –
Fa la, la, etc

CHORUS Spring and summer pleasure you,
Autumn, aye, and winter too –
Every season has its cheer,
Life is lovely all the year!
Fa la, la, etc

GAVOTTE

(After Gavotte, enter DESPARD.)

DESPARD Hold, bride and bridegroom, ere you wed each other,
I claim young Robin as my elder brother!
His rightful title I have long enjoyed:
I claim him as Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd!

CHORUS Oh wonder!

ROSE (*wildly*) Deny the falsehood, Robin, as you should, it is a plot!

ROBIN I would, if conscientiously I could,
But I cannot!

CHORUS Ah, base one! Ah, base one!

SOLO – ROBIN

As pure and blameless peasant,
I cannot, I regret,
Deny a truth unpleasant,
I am that Baronet!

CHORUS He is that Baronet! (*Voiced in rhythm, out to audience*) Oh!

ROBIN But when completely rated
Bad Baronet am I,
That I am what he's stated
I'll recklessly deny!

CHORUS He'll recklessly deny!

ROBIN When I'm a bad Bart. I will tell taradiddles!

CHORUS He'll tell taradiddles when he's a bad Bart.

ROBIN I'll play a bad part on the falsest of fiddles.

CHORUS On very false fiddles he'll play a bad part!

ROBIN But until that takes place I must be conscientious –

CHORUS He'll be conscientious until that takes place.

ROBIN Then adieu with good grace to my morals sententious!

CHORUS To morals sententious adieu with good grace!

ROBIN & CHORUS When I'm/he's a bad Bart I/he will tell taradiddles, etc.

ZORAH Who is the wretch who hath betrayed thee?
Let him stand forth!

RICHARD (*coming forward*) 'Twas I!

ALL Die, traitor!

RICHARD Hold! my conscience made me!
Withhold your wrath!

SOLO – RICHARD.

Within this breast there beats a heart
Whose voice can't be gainsaid.
It bade me thy true rank impart,
And I at once obeyed.
I knew 'twould blight thy budding fate –
I knew 'twould cause thee anguish great –
But did I therefore hesitate?
No! I at once obeyed!

AL Acclaim him who, when his true heart
Bade him young Robin's rank impart,
Immediately obeyed!

SOLO – ROSE (*ROBIN looks hopefully to ROSE*).

Farewell!
Thou hadst my heart –
'Twas quickly won!
But now we part –
Thy face I shun!
Farewell!
Go bend the knee
At Vice's shrine,
Of life with me
All hope resign.
Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!

(*ROBIN rushes out in sorrow*)

(*To DESPARD.*) Take me – I am thy bride!

BRIDESMAIDS (*Circle around ROSE and DESPARD, and pose*)

Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!
When the nuptial knot is tied;
Every day will bring some joy
That can never, never cloy!

(Enter MARGARET, who listens.)

DESPARD Excuse me, I'm a virtuous person now –

ROSE That's why I wed you!

DESPARD And I to Margaret must keep my vow!

MARGARET Have I misread you?
Oh, joy! with newly kindled rapture warmed,
I kneel before you! (*kneels*)

DESPARD I once disliked you; now that I've reformed,
How I adore you! (*They embrace.*)

BRIDESMAIDS (*Circle around MARGARET and DESPARD, and pose*)

Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!
When the nuptial knot is tied;
Every day will bring some joy
That can never, never cloy!

ROSE Richard, of him I love bereft,
Through thy design,
Thou art the only one that's left,
So I am thine! (*They embrace.*)

BRIDESMAIDS (*Circle around ROSE and RICHARD unenthusiastically, and pose*)

Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!
Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!

DUET – ROSE AND RICHARD

Oh, happy the lily
When kissed by the bee;
And, sipping tranquilly,
Quite happy is he;
And happy the filly
That neighs in her pride;
But happier than any,
A pound to a penny,
A lover is, when he
Embraces his bride!

DUET – DESPARD AND MARGARET

Oh, happy the flowers
That blossom in June,
And happy the bowers
That gain by the boon,
But happier by hours
The man of descent,
Who, folly regretting,
Is bent on forgetting
His bad baronetting,
And means to repent!

TRIO – HANNAH, OLD ADAM, AND ZORAH

Oh, happy the blossom
That blooms on the lea,
Likewise the opossum
That sits on a tree,
But when you come across 'em,
They cannot compare
With those who are treading
The dance at a wedding,
While people are spreading
The best of good fare!

Solo – ROBIN

Oh, wretched the debtor
Who's signing a deed!
And wretched the letter
That no one can read!
But very much better
Their lot it must be
Than that of the person
I'm making this verse on,
Whose head there's a curse on –
Alluding to me!

ENSEMBLE WITH CHORUS

Oh, happy the lily, etc.

DANCE

(*Exeunt TOWNSPEOPLE, CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS, CHORUS OF BUCKS AND BLADES, OLD ADAM, DAME HANNAH. ROBIN pleads one more time with ROSE. RICHARD leads her off L. ROBIN falls to the ground. DESPARD and MARGARET approach, dropping C onto ROBIN. Final tableau.*)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE. – The Main Hall of Ruddigore Castle

Enter ROBIN and OLD ADAM melodramatically. They are greatly altered in appearance, ROBIN wearing the haggard aspect of a guilty roué; OLD ADAM, that of the wicked steward to such a man.

DUET – ROBIN AND ADAM

ROBIN I once was as meek as a new-born lamb,
I'm now Sir Murgatroyd – ha! ha!
With greater precision
(Without the elision),
Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd – ha! ha!

ADAM And I, who was once his *valley-de-sham*,
As steward I'm now employed – ha! ha!
The dickens may take him –
I'll never forsake him!
As steward I'm now employed – ha! ha!

BOTH How dreadful when an innocent heart
Becomes, perforce, a bad young Bart.,
And still more hard on old Adam,
His former faithful *valley-de-sham*!

(ROBIN settles into his chair and begins his view of the ancestors images projected on the projector screen.)

ROBIN This is a painful state of things, Old Adam!

ADAM Painful, indeed! Ah, my poor master, when I swore that, come what would, I would serve you in all things for ever, I little thought to what a pass it would bring me! The confidential adviser to the greatest villain in this long line of ancestral depravity (*gesturing to the screen*)!

ROBIN Look at them ... at first glance they seem ordinary and reasonable enough. But each one was more wretched and vile than the last. (*OLD ADAM gives a Lurch-like moan.*) Oh, Adam! Have you ever seen such a set of sorry scoundrels? And now I ... I am one of them!

(Slides the bookshelf over the projector screen. Moves chair and projector to mid stage L.)

ADAM Speaking of which, sir, what crime do you propose to commit today?

ROBIN How should I know? As my confidential adviser, it's your duty to suggest something.

ADAM Sir, I loathe the life you are leading, but a good old man's oath is paramount, and I obey. Richard Dauntless is here with pretty Rose Maybud, to ask your consent to their marriage. Poison their beer.

ROBIN No – not that – I know I'm a bad Bart., but I'm not as bad a Bart. as all that.

ADAM Well, there you are, you see! It's no use my making suggestions if you don't adopt them.

ROBIN (*melodramatically*) How would it be, do you think, were I to lure him here with cunning wile – bind him with good stout rope to yonder post – and then, by making hideous faces at him, curdle the heart-blood in his arteries, and freeze the very marrow in his bones? (*Evil laugh*) How say you, Adam, is not the scheme well planned?

ADAM It would be simply rude – nothing more. But soft – they come! Walk this way.

(*OLD ADAM affects a foot dragging walk and ROBIN follows him, imitating his walk. Both exit, RICHARD and ROSE enter, followed by CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS and TOWNSWOMEN.*)

DUET – RICHARD AND ROSE

RICHARD Happily coupled are we,
 You see –
I am a jolly Jack Tar,
 My star,
And you are the fairest,
The richest and rarest
Of innocent lasses you are,
 By far –
Of innocent lasses you are!
Fanned by a favouring gale,
 You'll sail
Over life's treacherous sea
 With me,
And as for bad weather,
We'll brave it together,
And you shall creep under my lee,
 My wee!
And you shall creep under my lee!

For you are such a smart little craft –
Such a neat little, sweet little craft,
 Such a bright little, tight little,
 Slight little, light little,
Trim little, prim little craft!

CHORUS For she is such, etc.

ROSE My hopes will be blighted, I fear,
 My dear;
In a month you'll be going to sea,
 Quite free,
And all of my wishes
You'll throw to the fishes
As though they were never to be;
 Poor me!
As though they were never to be.
And I shall be left all alone
 To moan,
And weep at your cruel deceit,
 Complete;
While you'll be asserting
Your freedom by flirting
With every woman you meet,
 You cheat – Ah!
With every woman you meet! Ah!

Though I am such a smart little craft –
Such a neat little, sweet little craft,
 Such a bright little, tight little,
 Slight little, light little,
Trim little, prim little craft!

CHORUS Though she is such, etc.

(Enter ROBIN and OLD ADAM.)

ROBIN Soho! pretty one – in my power at last, eh? Know ye not that I have those within my call who, at my lightest bidding, would immure ye in an uncomfortable dungeon? (*calling*) What ho! within there ...!

ADAM (*Calling off, pretending to be a distant voice offstage*) Yes master, we obey!

ROBIN Listen to them. Children of the night. What music they make. (*a la Dracula*)

ADAM Aaoooh!

ADAM Woof!

ROBIN Woof!

RICHARD Hold – we are prepared for this. (*producing a Union Jack*) Here is a flag that none dare defy (*ROBIN and OLD ADAM hiss, a la Dracula*), and while this glorious rag floats over Rose Maybud's head, the man does not live who would dare to lay unlicensed hand upon her!

ROBIN Foiled – and by a Union Jack! But a time will come, and then –

ROSE No, let me plead with him. (*To ROBIN.*) Sir Ruthven, have pity. In my book of etiquette the case of a maiden about to be wedded to one who unexpectedly turns out to be a baronet with a curse on him is not considered. Time was when you loved me madly. Prove that this was no selfish love by accordin your consent to my marriage with one who, if he be not you yourself, is the next best thing – your dearest friend!

ROBIN Oh, but Rose, do you truly love him?

ROSE I can't, I can't, I can't stand him. (*a la Singing in the Rain*)

ROBIN Oh, Rose.

BALLAD – ROSE.

In bygone days I had thy love,
Thou hadst my heart.
But Fate, all human vows above,
Our lives did part!
By the old love thou hadst for me –
By the fond heart that beat for thee –
By joys that never now can be,
Grant thou my prayer!

ALL (*kneeling*) Grant thou her prayer!

ROBIN (*recitative*) Take her – I yield!

ALL (*recitative*) Oh, rapture! (*All rising.*)

CHORUS Away to the parson we go –
Say we're solicitous very
That he will turn two into one –
Singing hey, derry down derry!

RICHARD For she *is* such a smart little craft –

ROSE Such a neat little, sweet little craft –

RICHARD Such a bright little –

ROSE Tight little –

RICHARD Slight little –

ROSE Light little –

BOTH Trim little, prim little craft!

CHORUS For she *is* such a smart little craft, etc.

(*Exeunt all but ROBIN and OLD ADAM*

ROBIN Oh Adam, for a week I have fulfilled my accursed doom! I have duly committed a crime a day!
Not a great crime ...

ADAM No.

ROBIN But still, in the eyes of one as strictly regulated as I used to be, a crime. But will my ghostly ancestors be satisfied with what I have done, or will they regard it as an unworthy subterfuge? (*ROBIN takes some slides out of his pocket and addresses them*) Oh, my forefathers, wallowers in blood, there came at last a day when, sick of crime, you, each and every, vowed to sin no more, and so, in agony, called welcome Death to free you from your cloying guiltiness. Let the sweet psalm of that repentant hour soften your long-dead hearts, and tune your souls to mercy on your poor posterity! (*kneeling center*)

(*Mist begins to boil out of the projector screen. The screen opens to a curtain of red illuminated mist. The ancestors' ghosts enter through the mist. The projector screen closes behind them.*)

CHORUS OF ANCESTORS

Painted emblems of a race,
All accurst in days of yore,
Each from his accustomed place
Steps into the world once more.

Baronet of Ruddigore,
Last of our accursèd line,
Down upon the oaken floor –
Down upon those knees of thine.

Coward, poltroon, shaker, squeamer,
Blockhead, sluggard, dullard, dreamer,
Shirker, shuffler, crawler, creeper,
Sniffler, snuffler, wailer, weeper,
Earthworm, maggot, tadpole, weevil!
Set upon thy course of evil,
Lest the King of Spectre-Land
Set on thee his grisly hand!

(*The spectre of RODERIC steps forward.*)

RODERIC Beware! beware! beware!

ROBIN Gaunt vision, who art thou
That thus, with icy glare
And stern relentless brow,
Appearest, who knows how?

RODERIC I am the spectre of the late
Sir Roderic Murgatroyd,
Who comes to warn thee that thy fate
Thou canst not now avoid.

ROBIN Alas, poor ghost!

RODERIC The pity you
Express for nothing goes:
We spectres are a jollier crew
Than you, perhaps, suppose!

CHORUS. We spectres are a jollier crew
Than you, perhaps, suppose!

SONG –RODERIC, OLD ADAM, GHOST

When the night wind howls in the chimney cowls,
and the bat in the moonlight flies,
And inky clouds, like funeral shrouds, sail over the midnight skies –
When the footpads quail at the night-bird's wail,
and black dogs bay at the moon,
Then is the spectres' holiday – then is the ghosts' high-noon!

CHORUS. Ha! ha!
Then is the ghosts' high-noon!

As the sob of the breeze sweeps over the trees,
and the mists lie low on the fen,
From grey tomb-stones are gathered the bones that once were
women and men,
And away they go, with a mop and a mow,
to the revel that ends too soon,
For cockcrow limits our holiday – the dead of the night's high-noon!

CHORUS. Ha! ha!
The dead of the night's high-noon!

And then each ghost with his ladye-toast to their churchyard beds
take flight,
With a kiss, perhaps, on her lantern chaps, and a grisly grim
“good-night”;
Till the welcome knell of the midnight bell rings forth its jolliest tune,
And ushers in our next high holiday –
the dead of the night's high-noon!

CHORUS Ha! ha!
The dead of the night's high-noon!
Ha! ha! ha! ha!

ROBIN I recognize you now—you are the picture that used to hang at the end of the gallery.

RODERIC In a bad light. I am.

ROBIN Are you considered a good likeness?

RODERIC Pretty well. Flattering.

ROBIN Because as a work of art you were poor.

RODERIC I am crude in colour, but I have only been painted ten years. And that magical light box hardly does me justice. In a couple of centuries I shall be considered an Old Master, and then you will be sorry you sent me off to that horrid modern museum. Why, half the patrons are lost and find me only by mistake...

ROBIN And may I ask why you've come to life?

RODERIC It is our duty to see that our successors commit their daily crimes in a conscientious and workmanlike fashion. It is our duty to remind you that you are evading the conditions under which you are permitted to exist.

ROBIN Really, I don't know what you'd have. I've only been a bad baronet a week, and I've committed a crime punctually every day.

RODERIC Let us inquire into this. Monday?

ADAM Monday was a Bank Holiday.

ROBIN Yes, yes! Quite right!

RODERIC True. Tuesday?

ROBIN On Tuesday I made a false income tax return.

ALL Ha! ha!

1ST GHOST That's nothing.

2ND GHOST Nothing at all.

3RD GHOST Everybody does that.

4TH GHOST It's expected of you.

5TH GHOST Fwahfehuuhhh. (*a la Frankenstein's Monster*)

4TH GHOST I agree!

RODERIC Wednesday?

ROBIN (*Melodramatically.*) On Wednesday I forged a will.

RODERIC Whose will?

ROBIN My own.

- RODERIC** My good sir, you can't forge your own will!
- ROBIN** Can't I though! I like that! I *did!* Besides, if a man can't forge his own will, whose will can he forge?
- 1ST GHOST** There's something in that.
- 2ND GHOST** Yes, it seems reasonable.
- 3RD GHOST** At first sight it does.
- 4TH GHOST** Fallacy somewhere, I fancy!
- 5TH GHOST** Fwahfehuuhhh. (*a la Frankenstein's Monster*)
- 4TH GHOST** Exactly!
- ROBIN** A man can do what he likes with his own?
- RODERIC** I suppose he can.
- ROBIN** Well, then, he can forge his own will, stoopid! On Thursday I shot a fox.
- ALL GHOSTS** Hear, hear! Huzzah. Well done. Yes, yes ... good.
- RODERIC** That's better. (*Addressing Ghosts*) Pass the fox, I think? (*They assent.*) Yes, pass the fox. Friday?
- ROBIN** Friday ... Friday ... Old Adam, Friday?
- ADAM** On Friday you forged a cheque, sir.
- ROBIN** Indeed. On Friday I forged a cheque.
- RODERIC** Whose cheque?
- ROBIN** Old Adam's.
- RODERIC** But Old Adam hasn't a banker.
- ROBIN** I didn't say I forged his banker - I said I forged his cheque. On Saturday I disinherited my only son.
- RODERIC** But you haven't got a son.
- ROBIN** No - not yet. I disinherited him in advance, to save time. You see - by this arrangement - he'll be born ready disinherited. (*Laughs evilly*)
- RODERIC** I see. But I don't think you can do that.
- ROBIN** My good sir, if I can't disinherit my own unborn son, whose unborn son can I disinherit?

RODERIC Humph! These arguments sound very well, but I can't help thinking that, if they were reduced to syllogistic form, they wouldn't hold water. Now quite understand us. We are foggy, but we don't permit our fogginess to be presumed upon. Unless you undertake to - well, suppose we say, carry off a lady? (*Addressing Ghosts.*] Those who are in favour of his carrying off a lady (*All hold up their hands except the 5th Ghost*) Those of the contrary opinion? (5th Ghost holds up his hand) Oh, you're never satisfied!

5th GHOST (*Discouraged*) Fwahfehuhhh. (*a la Frankenstein's Monster*)

RODERIC Yes, unless you undertake to carry off a lady at once - I don't care what lady - any lady - choose your lady - you perish in inconceivable agonies.

ROBIN Carry off a lady? Certainly not, on any account. I've the greatest respect for ladies, and I wouldn't do anything of the kind for worlds! No, no. I'm not that kind of baronet, I assure you! If that's all you've got to say, you'd better go back from whence you came. Off and back to your slides!

RODERIC Very good—then let the agonies commence.

(*Ghosts lift their left arms toward him: "Hop! Hop! Hop". ROBIN begins to hop in agony.*)

ROBIN Oh! Oh! Don't do that! I can't stand it!

RODERIC Painful, isn't it? It gets worse by degrees.

(*Ghosts point finger at ROBIN whistling and humming at the same time in an eerie sci-fi sound; ROBIN falls to his knees in pain.*)

ROBIN Oh—Oh! Stop a bit! Stop it, will you? I want to speak.

(*RODERIC makes signs to Ghosts, who resume their attitudes.*)

RODERIC Better?

ROBIN Yes - better now! Whew!

RODERIC Well, do you consent?

ROBIN But it's such an ungentlemanly thing to do!

RODERIC As you please. (*To a ghost.*) Desmond ... Read!

DESMOND (*DESMOND steps forward to stand by RODERIC, opens a copy of Moby Dick*) "Call me Ishmael ..." "

ROBIN Melville?! Stop—I can't stand it! I agree! I promise! It shall be done.

(*DESMOND laughs evilly, returns to his place*)

RODERIC Yes, Moby Dick always does the trick. To-day?

ROBIN To-day!

RODERIC At once?

ROBIN At once!

5th GHOST (*Slightly more comprehensible*) Retraaaaaahhh!

ROBIN Yes! I retract! I apologize! I had no idea it was anything like that! (*Pointing to DESMOND and the copy of Moby Dick*)

CHORUS.

He yields! He answers to our call!

We do not ask for more.

A sturdy fellow, after all,

This latest Ruddigore!

All perish in unheard-of woe

Who dare our wills defy;

We want your pardon, ere we go,

For having agonized you so –

So pardon us –

So pardon us –

So pardon us –

Or die!

ROBIN I pardon you!
I pardon you!

ALL. He pardons us –
Hurrah!

CHORUS. Painted emblems of a race,
All accurst in days of yore,
Each to his accustomed place
Steps unwillingly once more!

(*Mist begins to boil out of the projector screen. The screen opens to a curtain of red illuminated mist. The ancestors' ghosts exit through the mist. The projector screen closes behind them. ROBIN is overcome by emotion. OLD ADAM attends to ROBIN.*)

ADAM My poor master, this is not well –

ROBIN Old Adam, it won't do – did you hear them ...wretched ancestors! They say that I must do something desperate at once or perish in horrible agonies. (*To OLD ADAM*) You...oh, YOU, Adam! Go – go to yonder village – carry off a maiden – bring her here at once – anyone – I don't care which –

ADAM But –

ROBIN Not a word, but obey! Fly! Fly! Fly! (*a la the Wicked Witch, The Wizard of Oz*)

(Exit OLD ADAM and ROBIN.)

(Enter DESPARD and MARGARET. They are both well dressed, and present a strong contrast to their appearance in Act I.)

DUET – DESPARD AND MARGARET

DESPARD I once was a very abandoned person –

MARGARET Making the most of evil chances.

DESPARD Nobody could conceive a worse 'un –

MARGARET Even in all the old romances.

DESPARD I blush for my wild extravagances,
But be so kind
To bear in mind,

MARGARET We were the victims of circumstances! (*Dance.*)
That is one of our blameless dances.

MARGARET I was once an exceedingly odd young lady.

DESPARD Suffering much from gross forlorning.

MARGARET Clergymen thought my conduct shady.

DESPARD She went to their weddings dressed in mourning.

MARGARET It brought about painful public scorning
My ways were strange
Beyond all range –

DESPARD We should have come with a trigger warning. (*Dance.*)
That's a dance we just learned this morning.

DESPARD I've taken up reading all the scriptures.

MARGARET My taste for a wandering life is waning.

DESPARD Now I write screenplays for the pictures.

MARGARET They are not remarkably entertaining.

DESPARD A moderate livelihood we're gaining.

MARGARET We serve the cruel
At a boarding school.

DESPARD The duties are dull, but I'm not complaining. (*Dance.*)
This sort of thing takes a deal of training!

DESPARD We have been married a week.

MARGARET One happy, happy week!

DESPARD Our new life –

MARGARET Is delightful indeed!

DESPARD So calm!

MARGARET So unimpassioned! Darling, all this I owe to you! See, I am no longer wild and untidy. My hair is combed. My face is washed. My shoes fit!

DESPARD Margaret, don't. Pray restrain yourself. Remember, you are now the lead volunteer at Cornwall's most prestigious hospital.

MARGARET A gentle volunteer!

DESPARD You are orderly, methodical, neat; you have your emotions well under control.

MARGARET I have! (*wildly*) Dearest, when I think of all you have done for me, I fall at your feet. I embrace your ankles. I hug your knees! (*Doing so.*)

DESPARD Hush. This is not well. This is calculated to provoke remark. Be composed, I beg!

MARGARET Ah! you are angry with poor little Mad Margaret!

DESPARD No, not angry; but a lead volunteer should learn to eschew melodrama. Visit the poor, by all means, and give them tea and barley-water, but don't do it as if you were administering a bowl of deadly nightshade. It upsets them. Then when you nurse sick people, and find them not as well as could be expected, why go into hysterics?

MARGARET Why not?

DESPARD Because it's too jumpy for a sick-room.

MARGARET How strange! Oh, My Beloved! – how shall I express the all-absorbing gratitude that – (*clawing at him*)

DESPARD Now! (*warningly*)

MARGARET Yes, I know, My Love – it shan't occur again. (*He is seated – she sits on the ground by him.*) Shall I tell you one of poor Mad Margaret's odd dreams? Only it wasn't a dream, it was a place. And you and you and you... and you were there ... (*a la Dorothy, The Wizard of Oz*)

DESPARD Margaret, there's no on there.

MARGARET Yes...yes...I know. That's just it. I sometimes think that if we could hit upon something ... some signal to use whenever I am about to relapse ... maybe just whistle. You know how to whistle, don't you? You just put your lips together and ... (*a la Lauren Bacall, To Have and Have Not*)

DESPARD (*interrupting*) Yes, darling, of course I know how to whistle. But I think a WORD would be less likely to draw undue attention.

MARGARET Yes, a word that teems with hidden meaning.

DESPARD (*as if dropping the snowglobe ... ominously*) Rosebud? (*a la Charles Foster Kane, Citizen Kane*)

MARGARET (*considers it*) Hmm. No ... a place!

DESPARD Coon Rapids?

MARGARET (*considers it*) No, no ... "Basingstoke!" "Basingstoke" might recall me to my saner self. For, after all, I am only Mad Margaret! Daft Meg! The mad woman in the attic! (*a la Jane Eyre*) He! he! he!

DESPARD Poor child, she wanders! But soft – someone comes – Margaret – pray recollect yourself –if you don't Burnsville at once, I shall be seriously angry.

MARGARET (*helping him*). Basingstoke.

DESPARD Basingstoke.

MARGARET (*recovering herself*) Basingstoke it is!

DESPARD Then make it so.

(Enter ROBIN. *He sees them.*)

ROBIN Despard! And his young wife! This visit is unexpected.

MARGARET Shall I fly at him? Shall I tear him limb from limb? Shall I rend him asunder? Say but the word and –

DESPARD Basingstoke!

MARGARET (*suddenly demure*) Basingstoke it is!

DESPARD (*aside*) Then make it so. (*aloud*) My brother – I call you brother still, despite your horrible profligacy – we have come to urge you to abandon the evil courses to which you have committed yourself, and at any cost to become a pure and blameless taxpayer.

ROBIN But I've done no wrong yet.

MARGARET (*wildly*) No wrong! He has done no wrong! Did you hear that!

DESPARD Basingstoke!

MARGARET (*recovering herself*) Basingstoke it is!

DESPARD My brother – I still call you brother, you observe – you forget that you have been, in the eye of the law, a Bad Baronet of Ruddigore for ten years – and you are therefore responsible – in the eye of the law – for all the misdeeds committed by the unhappy gentleman who occupied your place.

ROBIN I see! Bless my heart, I never thought of that! Was I very bad?

DESPARD Awful. Wasn't he? (*To MARGARET*)

ROBIN And I've been going on like this for how long?

DESPARD Ten years! Think of all the atrocities you have committed – by attorney as it were – during that period. Remember how you trifled with this poor child's affections – how you raised her hopes on high (don't cry, my love – Basingstoke, you know), only to trample them in the dust when they were at the very zenith of their fullness. Oh fie, sir, fie – she trusted you!

ROBIN Did she? What a scoundrel I must have been! There, there – don't cry, my dear (*to MARGARET, who is sobbing on ROBIN's breast*), it's all right now. Burnsville, you know – Burnsville –

MARGARET (*sobbing*) It's Ba – Ba – Basingstoke!

ROBIN Basingstoke! Of course it is – Basingstoke.

MARGARET Then make it so! (*Both MARGARET and ROBIN compose themselves*)

ROBIN There, there – it's all right – he's married you now – that is, *I've* married you (*turning to DESPARD*) – I say, which of us has married her?

DESPARD Oh, *I've* married her.

ROBIN Oh, I'm glad of that. (*MARGARET reacts, to MARGARET*) Yes, *he's* married you now (*passing her over to DESPARD*), and anything more disreputable than my conduct seems to have been I've never even heard of. But my mind is made up – I will defy my ancestors. *I will* refuse to obey their behests, thus, by courting death, atone in some degree for the infamy of my career!

MARGARET I knew it – I knew it – God bless you – (*hysterically*)

DESPARD Basingstoke!

MARGARET Basingstoke it is! (*Recovers herself.*)

PATTER-TRIO. – ROBIN, DESPARD, AND MARGARET.

ROBIN My eyes are fully open to my awful situation –
I shall go at once to Roderic and make him an oration.
I shall tell him I've recovered my forgotten moral senses,
And I don't care twopence-halfpenny for any consequences.
Now I do not want to perish by the sword or by the dagger,
But a martyr may indulge a little pardonable swagger,
And a word or two of compliment my vanity would flatter,
But I've got to die tomorrow, so it really doesn't matter!

DESPARD So it really doesn't matter –

MARGARET So it really doesn't matter –

ALL. So it really doesn't matter, matter, matter, matter!

MAR. If were not a little mad and generally silly
I should give you my advice upon the subject, willy-nilly;
I should show you in a moment how to grapple with the question,
And you'd really be astonished at the force of my suggestion.
On the subject I shall write you a most valuable letter,
Full of excellent suggestions when I feel a little better,
But at present I'm afraid I am as mad as any hatter,
So I'll keep 'em to myself, for my opinion doesn't matter!

DESPARD Her opinion doesn't matter –

ROBIN Her opinion doesn't matter –

ALL. Her opinion doesn't matter, matter, matter, matter!

DESPARD If I had been so lucky as to have a steady brother
Who could talk to me as we are talking now to one another –
Who could give me good advice when he discovered I was erring
(Which is just the very favour which on you I am conferring),
My existence would have made a rather interesting idyll,
And I might have lived and died a very decent indiwiddle.
This particularly rapid, unintelligible patter
Isn't generally heard, and if it is it doesn't matter!

ROBIN If it is it doesn't matter –

MARGARET If it is it doesn't matter –

ALL. If it is it doesn't matter, matter, matter, matter!

(Exeunt DESPARD and MARGARET.)

(Enter OLD ADAM.)

ADAM (guiltily) Master – the deed is done!

ROBIN What deed?

ADAM She is here – alone, unprotected –

ROBIN Who?

ADAM The maiden. I've carried her off – I had a hard task, for she fought like a tiger-cat!

ROBIN Great Heaven, I had forgotten her! I had hoped to have died unspotted by crime, but I am foiled again – and by a tiger-cat! Produce her – and leave us!

(*OLD ADAM brings in DAME HANNAH, DAME HANNAH confronts OLD ADAM, says “Boo,” and OLD ADAM exits frightened.*)

ROBIN Dame Hannah! This is – this is not what I expected.

HANNAH Well, sir, and what would you with me? Oh, you have begun bravely – bravely indeed! Unappalled by the calm dignity of blameless womanhood, your minion has torn me -- me! poor Stephen Trusty's daughter -- from my spotless home, and dragged me, blindfold and shrieking, through hedges, over stiles, and across a very difficult country, and left me, helpless and trembling, at your mercy! (*Through this speech, DAME HANNAH has produced a small knife and by the end of the speech she has holds him from behind with the knife pointed to his jugular.*)

ROBIN Madam, I am extremely sorry for this. (*Slowly extracting himself.*) It is not at all what I intended – anything more correct – more deeply respectful than my intentions towards you, it would be impossible for anyone – however particular – to desire.

HANNAH Bah, I am not to be tricked by smooth words, hypocrite! But be warned in time, for there are, without, a hundred gallant hearts whose trusty blades would hack him limb from limb who dared to lay unholy hands on old Stephen Trusty's daughter!

ROBIN (*Straight to audience*) And this is what it is to embark upon a career of unlicensed pleasure!

(*DAME HANNAH, takes a large sword or battleaxe and throws her small dagger to ROBIN.*)

HANNAH Harkye, miscreant, you have secured me, and I am your poor prisoner; but if you think I cannot take care of myself you are very much mistaken. Now then, it's one to one, and let the best man win! (*Making for him.*)

ROBIN (*in terror*). Don't! don't look at me like that! I can't bear it! Roderic! Uncle! Save me!

(*RODERIC enters, from the projector screen. He comes down the stage.*)

RODERIC What is the matter? Have you carried her off?

ROBIN I have – she is there – look at her – she terrifies me!

RODERIC (*looking at DAME HANNAH*) Little Nannikin!

HANNAH (*amazed*) Roddy-doddy!

RODERIC My own old love! Why, how came *you* here?

HANNAH This brute – he carried me off! Bodily! But I'll show him! (*about to rush at ROBIN*).

RODERIC Stop! (*To ROBIN*) What do you mean by carrying off this lady? Are you aware that once upon a time she was engaged to be married to me? I'm very angry –very angry indeed.

ROBIN (*Mockingly*) "Carry off a lady. I don't care which lady, Any lady. Choose your lady." There, now let this be a lesson to you in future not to –

RODERIC Hold your tongue, sir.

ROBIN Yes, uncle.

RODERIC Have you given him any encouragement?

HANNAH (*to ROBIN*) Have I given you any encouragement? Frankly now, have I?

RODERIC No. Frankly, you have not. Anything more scrupulously correct than your conduct, it would be impossible to desire.

RODERIC You go away.

ROBIN Yes, uncle.

(*Exit ROBIN.*)

RODERIC This is a strange meeting after so many years!

HANNAH Very. I thought you were dead.

RODERIC I am. I died ten years ago.

HANNAH And are you pretty comfortable?

RODERIC Pretty well – that is – yes, pretty well.

HANNAH You don't deserve to be, for I loved you all the while, dear.

RODERIC And I you. Do you remember when we were young ... ?

(*YOUNG RODERIC enters UR*)

HANNAH I try not to ... but yes, yes I do.

(*YOUNG HANNAH enters UR, approaches YOUNG RODERIC*)

RODERIC I called you my little flower.

HANNAH Oh, my, yes...and you ... you were my great oak tree. Oh, but that awful curse. It made me dreadfully unhappy to hear of all your goings-on, you bad, bad boy!

BALLAD – DAME HANNAH AND DREAM BALLET

There grew a little flower
'Neath a great oak tree:
When the tempest 'gan to lower
Little heeded she:
No need had she to cower,
For she dreaded not its power –
She was happy in the bower
Of her great oak tree!
Sing hey,
Lackaday!
Let the tears fall free
For the pretty little flower
And the great oak tree!

BOTH Sing hey,
Lackaday! etc.

When she found that he was fickle,
Was that great oak tree,
She was in a pretty pickle,
As she well might be –
But his gallantries were mickle,
For Death followed with his sickle,
And her tears began to trickle
For her great oak tree!
Sing hey,
Lackaday! etc.

BOTH Sing hey,
Lackaday! etc.

Said she, "He loved me never,
Did that great oak tree,
But I'm neither rich nor clever,
And so why should he?
But though fate our fortunes sever,
To be constant I'll endeavour,
Aye, for ever and for ever,
To my great oak tree!"
Sing hey,
Lackaday! etc.

BOTH. Sing hey,
Lackaday! etc.

(*YOUNG RODERIC exits UR, YOUNG HANNAH gives RODERIC a flower, exits L, RODERIC gives flower to HANNAH. They stand together. Enter ROBIN, excitedly, followed by full cast.*)

ROBIN Stop a bit – both of you.

RODERIC This intrusion is unmannerly.

HANNAH If you think poor Stephen Trusty's daughter will stand for...

ROBIN (*interrupting*) I can't stop to apologize – an idea has just occurred to me. A Baronet of Ruddigore can only die through refusing to commit his daily crime.

RODERIC No doubt.

ROBIN Therefore, to *refuse* to commit a daily crime is tantamount to suicide!

RODERIC It would seem so.

ROBIN But suicide is, itself, a crime – and so, by your own showing, you ought never to have died at all!

RODERIC I see – I understand! Then we are all practically alive!

(Embraces *DAME HANNAH*)

ROBIN Every mad Jack of you! Undoubtedly!

(*Projector screen opens, mist descends, ANCESTORS enter*)

RODERIC My brother ancestors! Down from your celluloid cells! You believe yourselves to be dead ... you may take it from me, you're not! And an application to the Supreme Court is all that is necessary to prove that you never ought to have died at all.

ROBIN Rose, when you believed that I was a simple farmer, I believe you loved me?

ROSE Truly, madly, deeply!

ROBIN But when I became a bad baronet, you very properly loved Richard instead?

ROSE (*turning to RICHARD*) Truly, Somewhat, Sure.

ROBIN But if I should turn out *not* to be a bad baronet after all, how would you love me then?

ROSE. Truly, madly, deeply!

ROBIN As before?

ROSE Why, of course!

ROBIN My darling! (*They embrace.*)

RICHARD Here, I say, belay!

ROSE Oh, sir, belay, only if it's absolutely necessary!

(*ZORAH steps to RICHARD's side.*)

RICHARD Hello!

ROBIN Belay? Certainly not!

FINALE

ROSE When a man has been a naughty baronet,
And expresses deep repentance and regret,
 You should help him, if you're able,
 Like the mousie in the fable,
That's the teaching of my Book of Etiquette.

CHORUS. That's the teaching in her Book of Etiquette.

RICHARD If you ask me why I do not pipe my eye,
Like an honest British sailor, I reply,
 That with Zorah for my missis,
 There'll be bread and cheese and kisses,
Which is just the sort of ration I enjoye!

CHORUS. Which is just the sort of ration you enjoye!

ROBIN Having been a wicked baronet a week
Once again a modest livelihood I seek.
 Agricultural employment
 Is to me a keen enjoyment,
For I'm naturally diffident and meek!

DESPARD & MARGARET

Prompted by a keen desire to evoke
All the blessed calm of matrimony's yoke,
 We shall toddle off tomorrow,
 From this scene of sin and sorrow,
For to settle in the town of Basingstoke!

CHORUS Prompted by a keen desire to evoke, etc.

ALL For happy the lily,
When kissed by the bee;
But happier than any,
A lover is, when he
Embraces his bride!

CURTAIN