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RUDDIGORE

Or The Witch's Curse

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MORTALS

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

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

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

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

ROSE MAYBUD (*a Village Maiden*)

MAD MARGARET

DAME HANNAH (*Rose's Aunt*)

ZORAH and RUTH (*Professional Bridesmaids*)

GHOSTS

SIR RODERIC MURGATROYD (*the Twenty-first Baronet*) and others

Chorus of Officers, Ancestors, Professional Bridesmaids, and Villagers

ACT I The Fishing Village of Rederring, in Cornwall – Rose Maybud's cottage is left. Below the door is a bench against the wall. At the back is open sea with a ship riding at anchor.

ACT II The Picture Gallery in Ruddigore Castle – open to the public, the Tete Gallery (motto: Heads above the rest) features portraits of the Baronets of Ruddigore.

TIME Early in the 19th Century

ACT I

Enter Bridesmaids: ZORAH and RUTH (possibly one or two others) very keen and enthusiastic, the rest less so. They range themselves opposite ROSE's cottage.

SONG No. 1 FAIR IS ROSE

CHORUS (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?

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 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?
Fair is Rose, soft is Rose,
Rose is the queen of maidenkind.

Enter DAME HANNAH from cottage.

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

ZORAH. It's very disappointing. Every young man in the village is in love with her, but they are appalled 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 who are bound to be on duty every day from ten to four – and it is at least six months since our services were required. The pious charity by which we exist is practically wasted!

ZOR. We shall be disendowed – 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.

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

KB. To whom?

HAN. To an eternal maidenhood! Many years ago I was betrothed to a god-like youth who woo'd 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.

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

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

HAN. My child, he was accursed.

ZOR. But who cursed him? Not you, I trust!

HAN. 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:

SONG No. 2 SIR RUPERT MURGATROYD

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!

HAN. Nay, dear one, where true love is, there is little need of prim formality.

ROSE. Hush, dear aunt, for **your** words pain me sorely. Hung in a plated dish-cover to the knocker of the workhouse door, with **nothing to call my own, except** 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 title-page, 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 learnt to test the moral worth of all who approach me. The man who **eats peas with a knife or his Big Mac whilst walking down the street**, 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 pitying horror. There are those in this village who bite their nails, dear aunt, and nearly all are wont to use their **mobile phones** in public places, **even though they've got no chance of getting a decent signal**. In truth I could pursue this painful theme much further, but I have said enough.

HAN. But is there not one among them who is faultless, in thine eyes? For example – young Robin. He combines the manners of **an international diplomat** with the morals of, **well, anybody who disagrees with Donald Trump!** Could'st thou not love *him*?

ROSE. And even if I could, how should I confess it to him? For he is shy, and says nothing!

SONG No. 3 IF SOMEBODY THERE CHANCED TO BE

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.
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!

(Referring
to book.)

*(Referring
to book.)*

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.
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.)

*(Referring
to book.)*

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.
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!

*(Referring
to book.)*

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.
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!”

(Exit DAME HANNAH.)

ROSE. Poor aunt! Little did the good soul think, when she breathed the hallowed name of Robin, that he would do even as well as another. But he resembles all the youths in this village, in that he is unduly bashful in my presence, and so it is hard to bring him to the point. But soft, he is here!

(ROSE is about to go when ROBIN enters and calls her.)

ROBIN. Mistress Rose!

ROSE. *(surprised)* Master Robin!

ROB. I wished to say that – it is fine.

ROSE. It is passing fine.

ROB. But we do want rain.

ROSE. Aye, sorely! *(long pause)* Is that all?

ROB. *(sighing)* That is all.

ROSE. Good day, Master Robin!

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

ROSE. } I crave pardon, I –

ROB. } I beg pardon, I –

ROSE. You were about to say? –

ROB. I would fain consult you –

ROSE. Truly?

ROB. It is about a friend.

ROSE. In truth I have a friend myself.

ROB. Indeed? I mean, of course –

ROSE. And I would fain consult you –

ROB. *(anxiously)* About him?

ROSE. *(prudishly)* About *her*.

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

SONG No. 4 I KNOW A YOUTH

ROB. 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!)

ROB. Poor little man!

ROSE. Poor little maid!

ROB. 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?

ROB. 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!)

ROB. Poor little maid!

ROSE. Poor little man!

ROB. 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!)

ROB. If I 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!)

ROB. 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!
ROB. Poor little maid!
ROSE. Poor little man!
ROB. 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.)

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

(He sits desponding. Enter OLD ADAM.)

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

ROB. Hush! *(Looking about to ensure nobody heard)* Ten 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 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 ten years I have been dead and buried. Don't dig me up now.

ADAM. Dear master, it shall be as you wish, for have I not sworn to obey you for ever 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 assents. ADAM announces in a loud voice while ROBIN tries to keep him quiet.)* Sir Ruthven Farage Trump-Murgatroyd! Baronet! Of Ruddigore! Whew! It's like eight hours in Clacton!

ROB. Yes, yes. But, as you love me, pray do not breathe that hated name again. *(ADAM looks dejected)* 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 *Boaty McBoatface* rides yonder at anchor, and he himself is even now in this very village!

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

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

(Enter Chorus of Bridesmaids.)

SONG No. 5 FROM THE BRINY SEA

LADIES.

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. The girls welcome him as he greets old acquaintances.)

SONG No. 6 I SHIPPED, D'YE SEE

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 D'ye see?

Which paralysed the Parley-voo!

RICHARD.

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, D'ye see?
While she's only a poor Parley-voo!"

RICHARD. 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
(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, D'ye see?
Who had pity on a poor Parley-voo!

SONG No. 6a DRAINPIPE DANCE

(During the dance the chorus look on with amusement, confusion, derision.)

PERSON. *(interrupting)* It's supposed to be a hornpipe dance, you know.

RICH. Not drainpipe? But I don't know how to dance a hornpipe.

(Exeunt Chorus, disgusted and disappointed, as ROBIN comes forward.)

ROB. Richard!

RICH. Robin!

ROB. 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!

RICH. 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 marcifal little *Boaty McBoatface* 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?

ROB. What *are* you talking about?

RICH. (*Dropping accent*) What ails thee, dear foster brother? Wassup?

ROB. Alas, Dick, I love Rose Maybud, and love in vain!

RICH. You love in vain? Come, that's too good! Why, you're tall and strong as a to'-gall'n'-m'st – taut as a fore-stay – aye! (*ROBIN looks confused again*) You're a good-looking chap! (*Reverting to sailor-speak*) and a barrowknight to boot.

ROB. Hush, Richard – not a word about my true rank, which none here suspect. Ten 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 ...

RICH. (*interrupting, pointing to the audience*) Yes, they know all that.

ROB. (*looking at audience*) Just checking!

RICH. (*resuming*) blah, blah, blah ... you're a good-looking chap and a barrowknight to boot.

ROB. 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, cautious, nervous, wary, fearful ... (*RICHARD starts as if to speak*) ... modest, uncertain, retiring, diffident ... (*RICHARD tries again*) ... reticent, hesitant, insecure, timid ...

RICH. Get on with it!

ROB. ... 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.

RICH. (*Gives a knowing look, [pause], then...*) Robin, do you call to mind how, years ago, we swore that, come what might, we would always act upon our hearts' dictates?

ROB. 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.

RICH. 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! (*ROBIN looks confused, RICHARD ignores him*) Well, now, what does my heart say in this here difficult situation? Why, it says, "Dick," it says – (it calls me Dick acos 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 sarve to fish you two together for life!
(*ROBIN pauses, not quite sure whether he understood, whether this is good or bad. RICHARD nods to indicate that it is good.*)

ROB. (*relieved and pleased*) Will you do this thing for me? Can you, do you think? Yes. (*feeling his pulse*) There's no false modesty about you. Your, what I would call bumptious self-assertiveness (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 imposter! My dear fellow, I'd give my right arm for one tenth of your modest assurance!

SONG No. 7 MY BOY, YOU MAY TAKE IT FROM ME

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!

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,
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!

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?

RICH. No, I didn't

ROB. Oh, I thought you did. (*pauses, shrugs and carries on regardless*)

I'm diffident, modest, and shy!

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!

BOTH.

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!

(Exit ROBIN.)

RICH. *(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-remarkin' 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 Lord Nelson! By the Flag of Old England, I can't look at her unmoved.

ROSE. Sir, you are agitated –

RICH. Aye, aye, my lass, well said! *As flying a shy spinnaker in a strong sou'wester.*

ROSE. I'm sorry. What did you say?

RICH. *(pointedly and clearly)* Yes, I am agitated! *(Reverting to type)* Aye, aye, 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 some trouble? This apple – *(offering a damaged apple).*

RICH. *(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 **ship-shapest** gal I ever set eyes on. There – I can't say fairer than that, can I?

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

RICH. 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 Dick acos 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 a 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.*)

RICH. 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! (*RICHARD kisses her.*)

SONG No. 8 THE BATTLE'S ROAR IS OVER

RICH. 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,

ROSE. Gives peace enduring, O my love!
 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 – without a sigh
 My own, my love!
 And thou and I, love, Shall live and die, love,
 Without a sigh, love – My own, my love!

(Enter ROBIN, with CHORUS OF BRIDESMAIDS.)

SONG No. 9 IF WELL HIS SUIT HAS SPED

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,
 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?

ROB. Well – what news? Have you spoken to her?

RICH. Aye, my lad, I have – so to speak – spoke to her.

ROB. And she refuses?

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

ROB. Then she accepts! My darling! *(Embraces her for next 8 lines.)*

BRIDESMAIDS. Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!
 Let the nuptial knot be tied:
 In fair phrases Hymn their praises,
 Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride?

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

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

ROSE. Oh, sir, belay, I beseech you! (*breaking embrace*)

RICH. You see, it's like this: she accepts – but it's *me!*

ROB. You! (*RICHARD embraces ROSE.*)

BRIDESMAIDS. Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!

Let the nuptial knot be tied:

In fair phrases Hymn their praises ...

ROB. (*interrupting angrily*) Hold your tongues, will you!

BRIDESMAIDS. (*mocking*) Oooooooh!

ROB. Now then, what does this mean?

RICH. 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'!"

BRIDESMAIDS. Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!

Let the nuptial knot be tied:

In fair phrases Hymn their praises ...

ROB. Will you be quiet! Go away! (*Lead BRIDESMAIDS make faces at him and exeunt. Other BRIDESMAIDS follow*)

BRIDESMAID. It'll never last!

ROB. Vulgar girls!

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

ROB. 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, to be honest, I should not have listened to this man, for he is just a lowly mariner, and he's poor, **whereas you are a tiller of the land growing wheat and oats and barley, and you have fat cattle and a pantomime horse ...** **RICH.** Oh no he doesn't ...

ROSE. ... and many sheep and pigs and goats and chickens ...

RICH. That's true but ...

ROSE. ... and some llamas and a couple of ferrets; a considerable dairy farm and a thriving cheese manufacturing business ...

RICH. That's true but ...

ROSE. ... wind turbines and a caravan park with amusements and a Rick Stein restaurant ...

RICH. That's true, my lass, but ... (*pauses to see if ROSE is going to continue. She doesn't*) ... but it's done now, ain't it, Rob?

ROSE. Still, it may be that I will not be happy in your love. I am only young and little able to judge. And, as to your character I know nothing!

ROB. Nay, 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!

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

ROSE. Yet I have heard that sailors are worldly men, and not disposed to lead serious and thoughtful lives!

ROB. And what then? 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. But look at his *good* qualities. He's as nimble as a pony, and his “drain” pipe is the talk of the Fleet!

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

ROSE. But it may be that he drinks strong waters which befuddle a man, and make him as wild as the beasts of the desert!

ROB. Well, suppose he does, and I don't say he don't, for rum's his bane, and ever has been. He *does* drink – I won't deny it. But what of that? Look at his arms – tattooed to the shoulder! (*RICHARD rolls up his sleeves.*) No, no – I won't hear a word against Dick!

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

ROB. 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! a devil of a fellow – a regular out-and-out Lothario! 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!

RICH. 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.

SONG No. 10 IN SAILING O'ER LIFE'S OCEAN WIDE

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.

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.

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!

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.
I'll let you know.

(*Turning from RICHARD to ROBIN*)

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!
A heart that does not know its mind,
A heart, a heart that does not know its mind.
A heart, a heart that does not know its mind.

(*Exeunt ROBIN with ROSE r., and RICHARD, weeping, l.*)

(Enter MAD MARGARET. She is wildly dressed, and is an obvious caricature of theatrical madness.)

SONG No. 11 CHEERILY CAROLS THE LARK

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

To a garden full of posies
 Cometh one to gather flowers,
 And he wanders through its bowers
Toying with the wanton roses, the wanton roses,
 Who, uprising from their beds,
 Hold on high their shameless heads
With their pretty lips a-pouting,
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, upon her petals.
Though she lived alone, apart,
Hope lay nestling at her heart,
But, alas, the cruel awaking
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 your sorrow? (*rummaging in her basket*) **The Ann Widdecombe Guide To Fashion? Sunglasses?** This apple – (*offering apple*).

MAR. (*Examines it and rejects it.*) No! **man! Hey, are you, like, mad?**

ROSE. **I? No! That is, I don't think so.**

MAR. **That's cool! Then you don't love the Big D. Peace, man, peace and love.**

ROSE. **You speak strangely. Pray, what are you talking about?**

MAR. (*reverting to eccentric "normality"*) **The Big D ... Sir Despard Murgatroyd. All mad girls love him. I love him. I'm poor Mad Margaret – Crazy Meg – Poor Peg! He, he, he! (*cackles, then double-takes*) It's cool, man!**

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

MAR. You pity me? **That's cool, man! Be my mother!** The squirrel had a mother; but she drank and the squirrel fled! Hush! **Hang low!** They sing a brave song in our parts – it runs somewhat thus: (*sings*)

“The cat and the dog and the little puppée
Sat down in a – down in a – in a –”

I forget what they sat down in, but so the song goes! Listen – I've come to pinch her!

ROSE. Mercy, whom?

MAR. You mean “who”.

ROSE. No! it is the accusative after the verb. (*checking book*)

MAR. (*also checking book*) True. (*Whispers melodramatically.*) I have come to pinch Rose Maybud!

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

MAR. Aye! I love him – he loved me once. But that’s all gone. (*reverting to hippy*) Not cool! He gave me “the look” (*business*) – and, with his Burt Reynolds charm, I was his. He will give *her* the come-on, and make *her* his. But that’s definitely not hip, man, (*reverting to mad*) for I’ll stamp on her – stamp on her – stamp on her! Did you ever kill anybody? No? Why not? Listen – I killed a fly this morning! It buzzed, and I wouldn’t have it. So it died – pop! So shall she!

ROSE. But, behold, *I* am Rose Maybud, and I would prefer not to die “pop.”

MAR. You are Rose Maybud?

ROSE. Yes, sweet Rose Maybud!

MAR. Strange! They told me she was beautiful! And *he* loves you! No, no! **I cannot allow that to happen. It would be like a teenage mutant ninja catastrophe: a turtle disaster!**

ROSE. No, no, no! (*trying to be hippy*) Chill out, man! Peace! (*reverting*) for I am promised to another, and we are to be married this very day!

MAR. Swear me that! Come to a Commissioner and let me have it on an affidavit! *I* made an affidavit once – but it died – it died – it died! But see, they come – Sir Despard and his evil crew! Hide, hide – they are all mad – quite mad!

ROSE. What makes you think that?

MAR. Hush! They sing choruses in public. That’s mad enough, I think! Go – hide away, or they will seize you! Hush! Quite softly – quite, quite softly!

(*Exeunt R together, on tiptoe.*)

(*Enter Chorus of Bucks and Blades, heralded by Chorus of Bridesmaids.*)

SONG No. 12 WELCOME GENTRY

BRIDESMAIDS. Welcome, gentry, For your entry

Sets our tender hearts a-beating.

Men of station, Admiration Prompts this unaffected greeting.
Hearty greeting, Hearty greeting offer we!

MEN. 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!
Your slaves, for the moment, your slaves are we!

LADIES. 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! But never a lover for me!

MEN. Then come Amaryllis

LADIES. Hearty greeting

MEN. Come, Chloe and Phyllis

LADIES. Offer we, offer we! So

MEN.

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,
Come, Amaryllis, Come, Chloe and Phyllis,
Your slaves, for the moment, are we!
Your slaves, for the moment,
Your slaves are we
Welcome, welcome

LADIES.

Welcome gentry
For your entry
Sets our tender
Hearts a-beating.
Men of station,
Admiration
Prompts this unaf-
-fected greeting.
Hearty greeting, Hearty
greeting offer we
Welcome, welcome

Welcome, welcome, welcome we!

Welcome, welcome, welcome we!

(Enter SIR DESPARD MURGATROYD during final 4 bars of song no. 12 with characteristic melodramatic actions.)

SONG No. 13 OH, WHY AM I MOODY AND SAD?

SIR D. Oh, why am I moody and sad?
CH. Can't guess!
SIR D. And why am I guiltily mad?
CH. Confess!
SIR D. Because I am thoroughly bad!
CH. Oh yes –
SIR D. You'll see it at once in my face.
Oh, why am I husky and hoarse?
CH. Ah, why?
SIR D. It's the workings of conscience, of course.
CH. Fie, fie!
SIR D. And huskiness stands for remorse,
CH. Oh my!
SIR D. At least it does so in my case!
When in crime one is fully employed –
CH. Like you –
SIR D. Your expression gets warped and destroyed:
CH. It do.
SIR D. It's a penalty none can avoid;
CH. How true!
SIR D. I once was a nice-looking youth;
But like stone from a strong catapult –
CH. (explaining to each other) A trice –
SIR D. I rushed at my terrible cult –
CH. (explaining to each other) That's vice –
SIR D. Observe the unpleasant result!
CH. Not nice.
SIR D. Indeed I am telling the truth!
Oh, innocent, happy though poor!

CH. That's we –
SIR D. If I had been virtuous, I'm sure –
CH. Like me –
SIR D. I should be as nice-looking as you're!
CH. May be.
SIR D. You are very nice-looking indeed!
 Oh, innocents, listen in time –
CH. We *doe*,
SIR D. Avoid an existence of crime –
CH. Just so–
SIR D. Or you'll be as ugly as I'm–
CH. (loudly) No! No!
SIR D. And now, if you please, we'll proceed.

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

SIR D. 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 is a poor baronet to do, when a whole picture gallery of ancestors step down from their frames and threaten him with an excruciating death if he hesitate to commit his daily crime? But ha! ha! I am even with them! *(mysteriously)* I get my crime over 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. Today I carry off Rose Maybud and atone with a **super-duper machine to fix all the pot holes in the roads around here!** This is what it is to be the sport and toy of a Picture Gallery! But I will be bitterly revenged upon them! I will give them all to the **National Trust, and small children with sticky fingers will poke them all day long!**

(Enter RICHARD.)

RICH. Ax your honour's pardon, but –

SIR D. Ha! observed! And by a mariner! What would you with me, fellow?

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

SIR D. I don't know them.

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

SIR D. 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.

RICH. 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?

SIR D. I have not a heart of that description, but I have a Picture Gallery that presumes to take that liberty.

RICH. Well, your honour, it's like this. Your honour had an elder brother-

SIR D. It had.

RICH. Who should have inherited your title and, with it, its cuss.

SIR D. Aye, but he died. Oh, Ruthven!

RICH. Oh no he didn't.

VOICES. *(off stage)* Oh yes he did!

RICH. *(to voices)* Don't start all that again!

SIR D. He did *not* die?

RICH. *(looks threateningly off stage)* 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.

SIR D. Ruthven alive, and going to marry Rose Maybud! Can this be possible?

RICH. Now the question I was going to ask your honour is – ought I to tell your honour this?

SIR D. I don't know. It's a delicate point. I think you ought. Mind, I'm not sure, but I think so.

RICH. 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’.

SIR D. 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 thralldom under which I have laboured for so many years! Free – free at last! Free to live a blameless life, and to die beloved and regretted by all who knew me!

SONG No. 14 YOU UNDERSTAND?

RICH. You understand?

SIR D. I think I do;

With vigour unshaken This step shall be taken.

It’s neatly planned.

RICH. 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 everyone,

And painful though that duty be,

To shirk the task were fiddle-de-dee!

To shirk the task were fiddle-de-dee!

To shirk the task To shirk the task were

Fiddle-de, fiddle-de, fiddle-de

Fiddle-de, fiddle-de, fiddle-de, fiddle-de-dee

SIR D. The bridegroom comes –

RICH. Likewise the bride –

The maidens are very Elated and merry;

They are her chums.

SIR D. To lash their pride

Were almost a pity, The pretty committee!

BOTH. But duty, duty must be done; The rule applies to everyone,

And painful though that duty be,

To shirk the task were fiddle-de-dee!

To shirk the task were fiddle-de-dee!

To shirk the task To shirk the task were

Fiddle-de, fiddle-de, fiddle-de

Fiddle-de, fiddle-de, fiddle-de, fiddle-de-dee

(Exeunt RICHARD r and SIR DESPARD l.)

(Enter Chorus of Bridesmaids and Bucks.)

SONG No. 15 FINALE

LADIES. 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!

MEN. 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,
Shedding every blessing on her:
Maidens greet her – Kindly treat her –
You may all be brides some day!

(Enter ROBIN, attended by RICHARD and OLD ADAM, meeting ROSE, 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!

GIRLS. 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.

GIRLS. 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. (*and enter SIR DESPARD.*)

SIR D. 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. O wonder!

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

ROB. I would, if conscientiously I could, But I cannot!

CHORUS. Ah, base one! Ah, base one!

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

CHORUS. He is that Baronet!

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!

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

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

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

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

ROB. But until that takes place I must be conscientious –

CHORUS. He'll be conscientious until that takes place.

ROB. Then adieu with good grace to my morals sententious!

CHORUS. To morals sententious adieu with good grace!

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

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

RICH. (*coming forward*) 'Twas I!

ALL. Die, traitor!

RICH. Hold! my conscience made me! Withhold your wrath!

SOLO.

RICH. 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!

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

SOLO (*addressing ROBIN*).

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!

(To SIR DESPARD.)

Take me – I am thy bride!

BRIDESMAIDS. 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 from l., who listens.)

SIR D. Excuse me, I'm a virtuous person now –

ROSE. That's why I wed you!

SIR D. And I to Margaret must keep my vow!

MAR. Have I misread you?

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

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

BRIDESMAIDS. 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. Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!
Hail the Bridegroom – hail the Bride!

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!

SIR D. AND MAR. 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!

HAN., AD. AND ZOR. 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!

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!

ALL.

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!
Embraces his bride! Embraces his bride!

DANCE.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE. – *The Picture Gallery in Ruddigore Castle – open to the public, the Tete Gallery (motto: Heads above the rest) features portraits of the Baronets of Ruddigore from the time of James I, including that of Sir Rupert, alluded to in the legend, and of Sir Roderick, the most recently deceased.*

(Enter ROBIN from the back of the auditorium trying, rather ineffectually, to be a wicked villain. Interact with audience with half-hearted cackles and attempts at evil comments. ADAM enters on stage carrying a tray with decanter and poured glass, watching his master's efforts with some disdain. In despair he drains the glass. ROBIN is dressed as the villain, as at the end of Act I, ADAM, as the wicked steward to such a man.)

SONG No. 16 I ONCE WAS AS MEEK

ROB. 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 **Farage Trump**-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*! ...

ROB. 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 unhung! Now, sir, to business. What crime do you propose to commit to-day?

ROB. 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. (*Pensively*) So what hideous crime could you commit today? (*A flash of inspiration*) Donald Trump is visiting Cornwall to create another golf complex: you could kidnap him!

ROB. No, that would be too popular.

ADAM. (*Thinking again*) Boris Johnson is at the theme park: you could hang him from a zip-wire!

ROB. No, it's been done.

ADAM. (*Almost despairing*) Richard Dauntless is here with pretty Rose Maybud, to ask your consent to their marriage. Poison their beer.

ROB. 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.

ROB. (*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? How say you, Adam, is not the scheme well planned?

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

(ADAM and ROBIN retire up as RICHARD and ROSE enter, preceded by Chorus of Bridesmaids.)

SONG No. 17 HAPPILY COUPLED ARE WE

RICH. 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 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!
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 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!
 Such a bright little, tight little, Slight little, light little,
 Trim little, prim little craft!

(Enter ROBIN.)

ROB. *(trying to be villainous)* So - ho! 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!

RICH. Hold – we are prepared for this. (*producing a Union Jack*) Here is a flag that none dare defy (*all kneel*), 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!

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

ROSE. Nay, 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 giving your consent to my marriage with one who, if he be not you yourself, is the next best thing – your dearest friend!

SONG No. 18 IN BYGONE DAYS

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!

ROB. (*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!

RICH. For she *is* such a smart little craft –

ROSE. Such a neat little, sweet little craft –

RICH. Such a bright little –

ROSE. Tight little –

RICH. Slight little –

ROSE. Light little –

BOTH. Trim little, prim little craft!

CHORUS. For she *is* 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!
Such a bright little, tight little, Slight little, light little,
Trim little, prim little craft!
(*Exeunt all but ROBIN. Background Chorus remain.*)

ROB. For a week I have fulfilled my accursed doom! I have duly committed a crime a day! Not a great crime, I trust, 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? (*Acknowledging Pictures.*) 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*)

(The "public" turn around to reveal that they are the characters in the portraits. Other ghosts sing from the sides and upstage)

SONG No. 19 PAINTED EMBLEMS OF A RACE

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

(The Pictures step forward and march round the stage.)

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 SIR RODERIC enters from the side.)

SIR ROD. Beware! beware! beware!

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

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

ROB. Alas, poor ghost!

SIR ROD. 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 No. 20 WHEN THE NIGHT WIND HOWLS

SIR ROD. When the night wind howls in the chimney cowl,
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!

SIR ROD. For then is the ghosts' high-noon!

CHORUS. Ha! ha!

ALL. High noon, then is the ghosts' high noon

SIR ROD. 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!
SIR ROD. The dead of the night's high-noon!
ALL. High noon, the dead of the night's high noon
SIR ROD. 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!
SIR ROD. The dead of the night's high-noon!
CHORUS. Ha! ha!
ALL. High noon, the dead of the night's high noon
CHORUS. Ha! ha! Ha! ha!

ROB. I recognize you now – you are the picture that hangs at the end of the gallery. **You are dressed as a policeman.**

SIR ROD. No, no, that's a Constable.

ROB. Oh. Are you the one working at the lathe?

SIR ROD. No, that's a Turner.

ROB. Which one are you then?

SIR ROD. I'm the one next to the man holding the bag of gold: the Monet.

ROB. Really? Are you considered a good likeness?

SIR ROD. Pretty well. Flattering.

ROB. Because as a work of art you are poor.

1ST GHOST. That's true.

2ND GHOST. No doubt.

3RD GHOST. Wants tone.

4TH GHOST. I think you'll find that the brush technique is deficient for the quality of the paint that was used giving a

SIR ROD. (*interrupting*) I am crude in colour, but I have only been painted ten years. In a couple of centuries I shall be an Old Master, and then you will be sorry you spoke lightly of me.

ROB. And may I ask why you have left your frames?

SIR ROD. 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.

ROB. 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.

SIR ROD. Let us inquire into this. Monday?

ROB. Monday was a Bank Holiday.

SIR ROD. True. Tuesday?

ROB. 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. *I think you'll find that there is some expectation that those of high status and financial kudos*

SIR ROD. (*interrupting*) Wednesday?

ROB. (*melodramatically*). On Wednesday I forged a will.

SIR ROD. Whose will?

ROB. My own.

SIR ROD. My good sir, you can't forge your own will!

ROB. 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. *I think you'll find that, in fact and in legal precedence, there is a misconception that exists with regard ...*

ROB. (*interrupting*) A man can do what he likes with his own!

SIR ROD. I suppose he can.

ROB. Well, then, he can forge his own will, stoopid! On Thursday I shot a fox **hunter**.

1ST GHOST. Hear, hear!

SIR ROD. That's better. (*addressing Ghosts*) Pass the fox **thing**, I think? (*They assent.*)

4TH GHOST. I think you'll find that that is an acceptable ...

SIR ROD. (*interrupting*) Yes, pass the fox **thing**. Friday?

ROB. On Friday I forged a cheque.

SIR ROD. Whose cheque?

ROB. Old Adam's.

SIR ROD. But Old Adam hasn't a banker.

ROB. I didn't say I forged his banker – I said I forged his cheque. On Saturday I disinherited my only son.

SIR ROD. But you haven't got a son.

ROB. No – not yet. I disinherited him in advance, to save time. You see – by this arrangement – he'll be born ready disinherited.

SIR ROD. I see. But I don't think you can do that.

ROB. My good sir, if I can't disinherit my own unborn son, whose unborn son can I disinherit?

SIR ROD. 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 a Bishop.*) Those of the contrary opinion? (*Bishop holds up his hands.*) Oh, you're never satisfied! 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.

ROB. 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 to your frames.

SIR ROD. Very good – then let the agonies commence.

(*Ghosts make passes. ROBIN begins to writhe in agony.*)

ROB. Oh! Oh! Don't do that! I can't stand it!

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

ROB. Oh – Oh! Stop a bit! Stop it, will you? I want to speak.

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

SIR ROD. Better?

ROB. Yes – better now! Whew!

SIR ROD. Well, do you consent?

ROB. But it's such an ungentlemanly thing to do!

SIR ROD. As you please. *(to Ghosts)* Carry on!

ROB. Stop – I can't stand it! I agree! I promise! It shall be done!

SIR ROD. To-day?

ROB. To-day!

SIR ROD. At once?

ROB. At once! I retract! I apologize! I had no idea it was anything like that!

SONG No. 21 HE YIELDS!

GHOSTS. He yields! He yields! He answers to our call!

We do not ask for more.

A sturdy fellow, after all, This latest Ruddigore!

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,

We want your pardon 'ere we go

For having agonized you so –

So pardon us – So pardon us – So pardon us – Or die!

So pardon us – So pardon us – So pardon us – Or die!

ROB. I pardon you! I pardon you!

GHOSTS. He pardons us – He pardons us – He pardons us – Hurrah!

(The Ghosts return to their initial positions.)

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

(By this time the Ghosts have resumed their positions. ROBIN is overcome by emotion.) (Enter ADAM.)

ADAM. My poor master, you are not well –

ROB. Old Adam, it won't do – I've seen 'em – all my ancestors – they were here. They say that I must do something desperate at once, or perish in horrible agonies. Go – go to yonder village – carry off a maiden – bring her here at once – any one – I don't care which –

ADAM. But –

ROB. Not a word, but obey! Fly! *(Exit*

ADAM.)

SONG No. 22 AWAY, REMORSE!

ROB. Away, Remorse! Compunction, hence!
Go, Moral Force, Go, Penitence!
To Virtue's plea A long farewell –
Propriety, I ring your knell!
Come, guiltiness of deadliest hue!
Come, desperate deeds of derring-do!

Henceforth all the crimes that I find in the Times.

I've promised to perpetrate daily;

To-morrow I start with a petrified heart,

On a regular course of Old Bailey.

There's confidence tricking, bad coin, pocket-picking,

And several other disgraces –

There's postage-stamp priggling, and then thimble-rigging,

The three-card delusion at races!

Oh! A baronet's rank is exceedingly nice,

But the title's uncommonly dear at the price!

Ye well-to-do squires, who live in the shires,

Where petty distinctions are vital,

Who found Athenæums and local museums,

With views to a baronet's title –
Ye butchers and bakers and candlestick makers
Who sneer at all things that are tradey –
Whose middle-class lives are embarrassed by wives
Who long to parade as “My Lady”,
Oh! allow me to offer a word of advice,
The title's uncommonly dear at the price!

Ye supple M.P.'s who go down on your knees,
Your precious identity sinking,
And vote black or white as your leaders indite
(Which saves you the trouble of thinking),
For your country's good fame, her repute, or her shame,
You don't care the snuff of a candle –
But you're paid for your game when you're told that your

name

Will be graced by a baronet's handle –
Oh! Allow me to give *you* a word of advice–
The title's uncommonly dear at the price!

(Exit ROBIN.)

*(Enter DESPARD and MARGARET. They are both dressed **soberly** of formal cut, and present a strong contrast to their appearance in Act I.)*

SONG No. 23 I ONCE WAS A VERY ABANDONED PERSON

DES. I once was a very abandoned person –
MAR. Making the most of evil chances.
DES. Nobody could conceive a worse 'un –
MAR. Even in all the old romances.
DES. I blush for my wild extravagances,
But be so kind To bear in mind,
MAR. We were the victims of circumstances! *(Dance.)*
That is one of our blameless dances.
MAR. I was once an exceedingly odd young lady –
DES. Suffering much from spleen and vapours.
MAR. Clergymen thought my conduct shady –

DES. She didn't spend much upon linen-drapers.
MAR. It certainly entertained the gapers.
My ways were strange Beyond all range –
DES. Paragraphs got into all the papers. (*Dance.*)
We only cut respectable capers.
DES. I've given up all my wild proceedings.
MAR. My taste for a wandering life is waning.
DES. Now I'm a dab at penny readings.
MAR. They are not remarkably entertaining.
DES. A moderate livelihood we're gaining.
MAR. In fact we rule A National School.
DES. The duties are dull, but I'm not complaining.
Dance.)

This sort of thing takes a deal of training!

DES. We have been married a week.

MAR. One happy, happy week!

DES. Our new life –

MAR. Is delightful indeed!

DES. So calm!

MAR. So unimpassioned! (*reverting to previous "mad" persona*) All this I owe to you, **man!** See, I am no longer wild and untidy. **It's cool!** My hair is combed. My face is washed. My boots fit!

DES. Margaret, don't. Pray restrain yourself. Remember, you are now a district visitor.

MAR. A gentle district visitor!

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

MAR. (*calmly*) I have. (*wildly*) **Gee, man,** 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.*)

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

MAR. Ah! you are angry with poor little Mad Margaret!

DES. No, not angry; but a district visitor 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?

MAR. Why not?

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

MAR. How strange! Oh, how shall I express the all-absorbing gratitude that – (*about to throw herself at his feet*)

DES. Now! (*warningly*)

MAR. Yes, I know, dear – 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 thoughts? Well, then, when I am lying awake at night, and the pale moonlight streams through the latticed casement, strange fancies crowd upon my poor mad brain, and I sometimes think that if we could hit upon some word for you to use whenever I am about to relapse – some word that teems with hidden meaning – like “**Biggleswade**” – it might recall me to my saner self. For, after all, I am only Mad Margaret! Daft Meg! Poor Peg! He! he! he!

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

MAR. (*recovering herself*). **Biggleswade** it is!

DES. Then make it so.

(*Enter ROBIN. He starts on seeing them.*)

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

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

DES. **Biggleswade!**

MAR. (*suddenly demure*) **Biggleswade** it is!

DES. (*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 ratepayer.

ROB. But I've done no wrong yet.

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

DES. **Biggleswade!**

MAR. (*recovering herself*) **Biggleswade** it is!

DES. 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.

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

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

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

DES. 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 – **Biggleswade**, 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!

ROB. 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. Birmingham, you know – Birmingham – (*no effect*) *er, Blackpool, (still no effect), Bognor, Biddenham, Basingstoke!*

MAR. (*sobbing*) **Don't be ridiculous. Of course it's not Basingstoke!** It's **Biggleswade!**

ROB. **Biggleswade!** Of course it is – **Biggleswade.**

MAR. Then make it so!

ROB. 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?

DES. Oh, *I've* married her.

ROB. (*aside*) Oh, I'm glad of that. (*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!

MAR. I knew it – I knew it – God bless you – (*hysterically*)

DES. **Biggleswade!**

MAR. **Biggleswade** it is! (*Recovers herself.*)

SONG No. 24 MY EYES ARE FULLY OPEN

ROB. 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!

DES. So it really doesn't matter –

MAR. So it really doesn't matter –

DES. So it really doesn't matter –

MAR. So it really doesn't matter –

ROB. So it really doesn't matter –

DES. So it really doesn't matter –

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

ROB. & DES. Matter, matter, matter, matter

MAR. If I 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!

DES. Her opinion doesn't matter –

ROB. Her opinion doesn't matter –

DES. Her opinion doesn't matter –

ROB. Her opinion doesn't matter –

MAR. My opinion doesn't matter –

DES. Her opinion doesn't matter –

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

MAR. & ROB.. Matter, matter, matter, matter

DES. 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!

ROB. If it is it doesn't matter –

MAR. If it is it doesn't matter –

ROB. If it is it doesn't matter – (*DESPARD interrupts*)

MAR. If it is it doesn't matter –

(DESPARD slowly repeats the lines "This particularly rapid, unintelligible patter Isn't generally heard and if it is it doesn't matter" with growing annoyance as he realises the significance of the meaning. ROBIN and MARGARET now also realise and comment angrily to the Musical Director. Pulling themselves together they sing the following lines in a race with the orchestra.)

ALL. This particularly rapid, unintelligible patter
Isn't generally heard, and if it is it doesn't matter!
This particularly rapid, unintelligible patter
Isn't generally heard, and if it is it doesn't matter!
Matter, matter, matter, matter, matter,
Matter, matter, matter, matter, matter

(Margaret starts to wander off still singing "Matter, matter, matter, matter" etc. but returns as DEPARD begins again)

DES. I've learnt these wretched song words and it's taken me forever
And we practised and rehearsed and then we sang them all together
And as if that wasn't hard enough we had to move while singing
But the MD and Director said "Go back to the beginning"
And now after all that effort and the midnight oil it's burning
I have ackshly paid attention and it's now that I am learning
This particularly rapid unintelligible patter
Isn't generally heard and if it is it doesn't matter!

ROB. If it is it doesn't matter –

MAR. If it is it doesn't matter –

ROB. If it is it doesn't matter –

MAR. If it is it doesn't matter –

ALL. This particularly rapid, unintelligible patter
Isn't generally heard, and if it is it doesn't matter!
This particularly rapid, unintelligible patter
Isn't generally heard, and if it is it doesn't matter!
Matter, matter, matter, matter, matter,
Matter, matter, matter, matter, matter

(Exeunt DESPARD and MARGARET and ROBIN.)

(Enter ADAM from opposite side, with wheelbarrow.)

ADAM. *(guiltily, calling off, after ROBIN)* Master – the deed is done!

ROB. *(from off stage)* What deed?

ADAM. She is here – alone, unprotected – *(ADAM stands between the wheelbarrow and ROBIN)*

ROB. *(reappears)* Who?

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

ROB. 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!

(ADAM introduces DAME HANNAH, very much excited, and exits.)

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

HAN. 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 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! Yet not helpless, coward sir, for approach one step – nay, but the twentieth part of one poor inch – **and I shall** teach ye what it is to lay unholy hands on old Stephen Trusty's daughter!

ROB. Madam, I am extremely sorry for this. 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.

HAN. 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!

ROB. And this is what it is to embark upon a career of unlicensed pleasure!

HAN. Hark ye, miscreant, you have secured me, and I am your poor prisoner; (*motions threateningly to ROBIN*) but if you think I cannot take care of myself you are very much mistaken. (*ROBIN, to defend himself, takes a sword from a display. It turns out to be a small dagger. HANNAH reacts by taking a weapon which turns out to be a bigger sword. ROBIN, looking at the weapons discards the dagger and picks another weapon, which turns out to be bigger than HANNAH's. Finally HANNAH discards her weapon, picks the final weapon which is a light sabre.*) Now then, it's one to one, and let the best man win! (*Making for him.*)

ROB. (*ends up on the floor with Hannah's sword at his throat*) Don't! don't look at me like that! I can't bear it! Roderic! Uncle! Save me!

(*RODERIC enters, from his picture. He comes down the stage.*)

ROD. What is the matter? Have you carried her off?

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

ROD. (*looking at Hannah*) Little Nannikin!

HAN. (*amazed*) Roddy-doddy!

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

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

ROD. 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.

ROB. Now I hope this will be a lesson to you in future not to –

ROD. Hold your tongue, sir.

ROB. Yes, uncle.

ROD. Have you given him any encouragement?

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

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

ROD. You go away.

ROB. Yes, uncle. (*Exit ROBIN.*)

ROD. This is a strange meeting after so many years!

HAN. Very. I thought you were dead.

ROD. I am. I died ten years ago.

HAN. And are you pretty comfortable?

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

HAN. You don't deserve to be, for I loved you all the while, dear; and it made me dreadfully unhappy to hear of all your goings-on, you bad, bad boy!

SONG No. 26 THERE GREW A LITTLE FLOWER

HANNAH. 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!

Sing hey, Lackaday! Let the tears fall free
For the pretty little flower And the great oak tree!
BOTH. Sing hey, Lackaday! Sing hey, Lackaday!
Sing hey, Lackaday! Let the tears fall free
For the pretty little flower And the great oak tree!

HANNAH. 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!
Sing hey, Lackaday! Let the tears fall free
For the pretty little flower And the great oak tree!

BOTH. Sing hey, Lackaday! Sing hey, Lackaday!
 Sing hey, Lackaday! Let the tears fall free
 For the pretty little flower And the great oak tree!

HANNAH. 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!
 Sing hey, Lackaday! Let the tears fall free
 For the pretty little flower And the great oak tree!

BOTH. Sing hey, Lackaday! Sing hey, Lackaday!
 Sing hey, Lackaday! Let the tears fall free
 For the pretty little flower And the great oak tree!
 Sing hey, Lackaday! Hey, Lackaday, lackaday, lackaday!

(Falls weeping on SIR RODERIC's bosom.)

(Enter ROBIN, excitedly, followed by all the characters and Chorus of Bridesmaids.)

ROB. Stop a bit – both of you.

ROD. This intrusion is unmannerly.

HAN. I'm surprised at you.

ROB. 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.

ROD. No doubt.

ROB. Therefore, to refuse to commit a daily crime is tantamount to suicide!

ROD. It would seem so.

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

ROD. I see – I understand! Then I'm practically alive!

ROB. Undoubtedly! *(SIR RODERIC embraces DAME HANNAH.)*
 Rose, when you believed that I was a simple farmer, I believe you loved me?

ROSE. Madly, passionately!

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

ROSE. Passionately, madly!

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

ROSE. Madly, passionately!

ROB. As before?

ROSE. Why, of course!

ROB. My darling! (*They embrace.*)

RICH. Here, I say, belay!

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

ROB. Belay? Certainly not!

SONG No. 26 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.

RICH. 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 enjye!

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

ROB. 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!

DES. & MAR. Prompted by a keen desire to **persuade**
Of the blessed calm that wedded bliss has made,
We shall toddle off tomorrow, From this scene of sin and sorrow,
For to settle in the town of **Biggleswade!**

CHORUS. Prompted by a keen desire to **persuade**
Of the blessed calm that wedded bliss has made,
They will toddle off tomorrow, From this scene of sin and sorrow,

For to settle in the town of **Biggleswade!**
For to settle in the town of **Biggleswade!**
They will toddle off tomorrow, From this scene of sin and sorrow,
For to settle, settle, settle, settle, settle, settle
in the town of **Biggleswade!**

ALL. 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! Embraces his bride! Embraces his bride!

CURTAIN.