

## GILBERT &amp; SULLIVAN BOOKLET NO 4.

RUDDY GEORGE

Edited, and with an Introduction by Michael Walters

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the century since its first production, *Ruddy George* received little comment and aroused little interest among Gilbert and Sullivan scholars, until Phyllis Karr's article of 1974 in *The Gilbert and Sullivan Journal*. There was, however, considerable press coverage (which no-one seems to have studied till now) of the first and only matinee performance which took place on 19 March 1887 at Toole's Theatre. Almost the only subsequent account was a brief one by S.J. Adair-Fitzgerald in *The Story of the Savoy Opera* (1924), p. 134-5, which indicated that this was the piece's *only* performance. However, several of the press reports referred to the intention of putting on *Ruddy George* in the evening, and in *The Gilbert and Sullivan Journal*, Autumn 1974, p. 127, P.G. Nicoll (in a follow-up to Phyllis Karr's paper) examined the advertisement columns of *The Times* and recorded that while the performance on 19 March 1887 was indeed the only *matinee* performance, there was a subsequent series of 34 evening performances between Saturday 26th March and Saturday 7th May. There were no performances on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 6th, 7th and 8th April (presumably Easter?) One must presume that the subsequent series of performances were the result of Toole's wish to recoup some of the expenditure in mounting the play, for the opinions of the press would hardly have warranted it. Without exception, they tore *Ruddy George* to pieces. *The People* pointed out that the piece represented the "maiden effort" of the author and composer for the stage. Although condemning the piece, the press were divided on details, some critics thinking both words and music terrible, some considering the music quite good and commiserating with the composer for having to set such a poor libretto. Only one critic, that of the *Whitehall Review*, took an opposite viewpoint:

It would of course, with so small an orchestra as there is at Toole's Theatre, be impossible for much justice to be done to music; and, therefore, it is possible that there may have been something more than could be heard in the music composed by Mr. Percy Reeve. The prevailing idea of the music seemed to us also a parody on the Sullivan style, but Mr. Taylor writes better words than Mr. Percy Reeve does music.

The critics were quick to point out the most obvious weakness of the piece - the absurdity of trying to burlesque a burlesque; *The Figaro* put most succinctly what everyone else seemed to have been feeling:

*Ruddy George* will not do. To effectively parody what is in itself a pronounced burlesque is one of the most difficult of dramatic tasks, and it cannot be said that Mr. H.G.F. Taylor has shown any special aptitude in his attempt at performance. His little piece is not so much a parody of *Ruddigore* as a diluted and abbreviated imitation of it ... The music, by Percy Reeve, was worthy of a better book ... On Saturday evening I see *Ruddy George* is to be put into the evening bill at Toole's Theatre. It is to be hoped, therefore, that during the week the author has been able to give it more back bone.

Unfortunately we cannot now say whether or not he did, for it seems that neither the book nor the music was ever published, and the only copy of the text to survive so far as I have been able to determine was that filed in the Lord Chamberlain's office. *The Era*, in a long and uncharacteristically vicious review, made similar points, but added a very interesting comparison with another skit in similar vein, George Grossmith's one-man show *The Drama on Crutches*. This was a popular entertainment at the time and is alluded to in several writings of the period, but, alas, it does not seem ever to have been written down, and so is now lost. We have no way, therefore, of making the comparison ourselves. *The Era* critic, after discoursing at length on the futility of burlesquing a burlesque, went on:

Curiously enough, something of the kind has been done by one of the Savoy artists themselves. Mr. George Grossmith, in a sketch several times done by him at that theatre, called *The Drama on Crutches*, used to give an exceedingly droll "skit" on the Savoy opera, its "highly-trained" cast and chorus, and the peculiarities of the leading members of the company. There was real wit in the little bit of *badinage*, light, merry and full of point as it was. But in Mr. H.G.F. Taylor's so-called "parody" of *Ruddigore* ... there was hardly a dash of genuine humour. There was indeed an attempt to twit Mr. Grossmith with his thin voice and invariable knowledge of his part ... [This was a reference to the song "I always know my part" discussed later] ... But in addition to boring us with a silly piece, the author has added to his crime the sheer vulgarity of ridiculing, not the opera, but its author and composer, by producing them in effigy on the stage ... Mr. Percy Reeve suffered for the sins of his librettist, and the quaint drollery and musicianly cleverness of the music throughout went practically for naught.

Gilbert himself was present at the first performance, and as the London correspondent of the *Liverpool Daily Post* told his readers:

The songs and dances were both capital, if the piece was otherwise only a partial success. Mr. Gilbert was present, and liked it, and is said to have blamed Mr. Toole for not playing in it.

Whatever Gilbert may have thought, it seems clear that he, like most of the rest of the audience, received the piece politely:

Mr. Gilbert, smiling in a private box, had only reason to object that *his* spectre was neither forcible nor witty, and not a very likely sort of person to indulge in the exquisite nonsense of a "Bab Ballad". (*The Observer*)

The audience, which included Mr. Gilbert, was too good tempered to vent its disappointment, but some signs of disapprobation were heard, nevertheless. (*The Stage*)

The "signs of disapprobation" were alluded to elsewhere, and though *The Globe* recorded "a cordial reception", *The Morning Advertiser* was less polite, but still discrete:

The novelty at the little house hard by the Strand is a burlesque upon a burlesque, and as such is a hazardous experiment. Messrs Gilbert and Sullivan's opera is not a good subject for this treatment, and a certain proportion of the audience were of this opinion ...

*The News of the World*, at least its early edition, the one I looked at, was more specific:

... the authors ... did venture before the curtain at the close, but a loud hiss made them subsequently regret it.

The performance was preceded by a witty speech by Toole himself, which several of the critics thought to be the best thing about the performance. As *Modern Society* facetiously put it:

[Mr. Toole] made a speech - about whom do you think? Irving? No; try again. You give it up. Well, about himself. Unusual, wasn't it? No wonder you could not guess. Of course the audience laughed at it till they nearly choked. But this was more than some of us could at *Ruddy George* ...

Fortunately, we are able to decide for ourselves on the virtues of this speech, for five of the newspapers printed it in full. As these papers, *The Daily Chronicle*, *The Era*, *The Observer*, *The Topical Times* and *The Stage* were in complete agreement over the wording except for several minor points, we may believe that it does report exactly what Toole said:

Ladies and Gentlemen - I daresay you may be surprised to see me in front of this curtain at this moment; but as you know it has become a fashion for the manager to say a few words after a new piece, I thought I would make a change and say a few words before the new piece commences (laughter). The other day an esteemed brother manager explained why he did not act in a play - because he had an actor in his company who could act better than himself (laughter). Now the author and composer of this little piece wanted me to play in it; but as there was a great deal of singing in it, and I have gentlemen in my company who sing better than myself<sup>1</sup> - (I am a little disappointed that someone has not said "no, no" I rather relied on that) (laughter). I may add that my voice was tried and found not good enough. [However<sup>2</sup>], this being the case I thought it best to give you a rest, as there is a great deal of myself in this theatre - perhaps a little too much. (Again I am disappointed, I expected "no, no"). One word more respecting the title of the piece. I have had thousands of letters on the subject (laughter). Some think "Ruddy George" is not sanguinary enough. If that is so, perhaps friends will communicate with me on the subject. I may see my way to starting a prize competition for the best title, and a special letter-box can be placed at the stage door for the convenience of competitors. (laughter). At any rate, if the title is disapproved of it can be changed every week, or every night (laughter). Ladies and Gentlemen, I will not trespass on your time any longer, as I see the conductor is frowning at me, being anxious to commence ("No, no") Ah! you've come in too late with that. (laughter). Before retiring, permit me to say that you are all looking very well; in fact I never saw you looking better (a laugh). But then, I always do fancy you look better in this theatre than anywhere else. (laughter). For the present, good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and my earnest wish is that you may like the new piece. (cheers).

[<sup>1</sup>*The People* suggested that this referred to E.D. Ward. <sup>2</sup>This word was only in *The Stage*. *The Era* gave the speech as here printed, but omitted all references to laughter. *The Topical Times* also gave the speech as here printed, but omitted *some* of the references to laughter. *The Daily Chronicle* gave more references to laughter than did *The Topical Times*, and the *Observer* indicated more still, though it omitted a couple of sentences of the text. *The Stage* omitted the sentence "I may add that my voice was tried and found not good enough", gave the first sentence as "... you may be surprised to see me in front of the curtain at such a moment" instead of "this moment" and added an "as" before "there" in "but there was a great deal of singing in it". As the other papers all agree on these points, however, it seems likely that this represents faulty reporting, or merely typesetters errors on the part of *The Stage*. Ed.]

Having commented on Toole's speech, some of the press suggested that he should have played in the piece himself, as he might have been its salvation. It should, however, be pointed out that *Ruddy George* formed the second item of a triple bill. The first part was the *Trial of Barton v Pickwick* (adapted from Dickens) and the last part *Ici on Parle Français*. Toole played in both of these other pieces.

*Fun* had announced that:

The title *Ruddy George or Robin Redbreast* is not happy enough, however, though the selection of a musician - Mr. Percy Reeve - is. It stuck to its guns over the music, but generally the assessment of the piece makes dismal, though interesting, reading:

There is a funny notion or two lying about the piece, I think, and a song of some point ... comically sung by Mr. Ward, gained laughter, applause, and an encore, and merits particular notice; but on the whole, the skit, short as it is, is wonderfully dreary. Mr. Percy Reeve's music is good and clever - the overture, in particular, is observant and comical. (*Fun*)

... Such humour as was seen and welcomed in the performance was really infused into it by the personal fun and drollery of the actors ... The most entertaining item of the entertainment was a topical song, with sly allusions to G.O.M., The Prince of Wales, and other foremost celebrities [the song "Pray who's the most popular Prince of the day"] ... several of the songs were encored. (*The People*)

A cordial reception was awarded on Saturday afternoon *Ruddy George or Robin Redbreast*, a travesty by Messrs. H.G.F. Taylor and Percy Reeve of the latest eccentricity at the Savoy. No special interest was produced by the action of the piece, but the interpretation was to the taste of the public, and much laughter was elicited. (*The Globe*)

In some instances the fun of the parody is presumed to be hidden in making some of the characters as unlike as possible to their supposed prototypes of the Savoy, and an obvious want of grip is shown in the absence of one of the most dramatic figures - Mad Margaret ... At times the fun is rather personal, and only occasionally is it clever. (*The Observer*)

Mr. Percy Reeve has studied Sullivan's music to some advantage for his purpose, for many of the airs are direct and even clever imitations of his style. (*Morning Post*)

... the burlesque contains allusions to social topics of the time ... (*Morning Advertiser*)

Messrs. Taylor and Reeve have not been very happy in their attempt to parody the new opera at the Savoy. The humours of *Ruddy George* produced at Toole's Theatre on Saturday afternoon, does not extend much beyond substituting for the full length portraits of Sir Ruthven's forefathers Kitkat [?] panel likenesses of Mr. Gilbert, Sir Arthur Sullivan and Mr. D'Oyly Carte, which becoming suddenly endowed with life, utter rather pointless jests ... (*Daily News*)

*Ruddy George* is not a brilliant piece of composition, it is true, but there are some funny points of imitation about it. Where, of course, it fails is when the imitation is less clear, less pointed, than the original; and this is illustrated with curious force at the finish, where the originality of the parodist utterly fails. The ending of *Ruddigore* is very weak, the ending of *Ruddy George* contemptibly so ... The one bold feature, which, from its very boldness, suggested the extravagant treatment of extravaganza, has been omitted. The Mad Meg of the original is absent from the copy ... (*Whitehall Review*)

... a weak, spiritless and pointless affair. Had Mr. Toole played in it, possibly the verdict might have been different ... the clever music of Mr. Percy Reeve helped it along, but it is to be hoped that when it is put in the evening programme some alterations will have been made - notably the introduction of "Mad Margaret"? - why should not Mr. Toole be Mad Margaret? - and the celebrated Quaker Duet. (*Illustrated London News*)

We doubt very much whether *Ruddy George or Robin Redbreast*, the skit upon *Ruddigore* which was tried on Saturday morning at Toole's, is likely to take its place in the evening programme. There is not, perhaps, more bad taste in the joke than is inevitable whenever mimicry is introduced. There are one or two clever individual performances, and a few satisfactory laughs. But *Ruddy George* *qua* parody, is not a striking success, and, indeed it only suggests that the author and composer, Messrs. Taylor and Reeve, are either ignorant or afraid of the art of caricature. (*Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*)

The author is Mr. Taylor, but his piece is a misfit. The music of Mr. Percy Reeve, pleasing, and in some instances a *spirituelle* caricature, is talented everywhere. (*The World*)

In more skilful hands, perhaps, something more could have been made of the subject, but the enterprise was pre-destined to failure. (*The Graphic*)

... a very sorry affair ... the single line to be remembered was "all is not jam that sticks". (*News of the World*)

For *Ruddy George* at Toole's Theatre produced on Saturday afternoon, a short life may safely be predicted. It was the height of imprudence to attempt, in the first instance, to burlesque a burlesque, and a not very successful one either; and secondly, to omit the only two items in the original that lent themselves to parody, the character of Mad Margaret and the Serious Duet ... The music of Mr. Percy Reeve is charming, and worthy of a better setting. I hear it is suggested that Mr. Toole should, in case of *Ruddy George* being

put on in the evening bill, take the part of Sir Gaspard. In such an event author and composer are still further to be commiserated. (*The Bat*)

Burlesque upon burlesque will need something more witty and piquant than *Ruddy George or Robin Redbreast* before receiving encouragement as a form of dramatic entertainment new to London likely to be cultivated with success ... There may be a gleam of humour in the idea of imitating Mr. George Grossmith in one of the patter songs he delivers with so much volubility, but when there is nothing to support the imitation beyond the skill of the actor to whom the part is entrusted, the idea very quickly loses its point ... A party of professional gossips could only be regarded as a weak substitute for the professional bridesmaids ... it was a decided mistake to make the caricature embodiment of Mr. Gilbert sing a somewhat personal song. (*Daily Chronicle*)

So far as it goes, it is well enough, but it offers little point for the pen of the stage satirist. Its chief, its salient feature in this respect is certainly the character of Mad Margaret - so admirably sustained by Miss Jessie Bond - but oddly enough, this is the very part which Mr. H.G.F. Taylor has left alone in the so-called parody ... *Ruddy George or Robin Redbreast* is pointless and crude. It burlesques nothing at all; it is, occasionally, needlessly impertinent, and it is not, in itself, entertaining. (*The Stage*)

... As in the original burlesque the work of the composer, Mr. Percy Reeve, is far better than that of his colleague, Mr. H.G.F. Taylor ... Mr. Reeve has shown undoubted cleverness in some of his parodies on the music of Sir Arthur Sullivan, and with a better libretto the piece might have pleased better than it did. (*Topical Times*)

Messrs. H.G.F. Taylor and Percy Reeve are not to be complimented upon their work, unless we may assume that they have made up in temerity what they lack in humour. But for a descriptive line in the programme it would be difficult indeed to recognise *Ruddy George* as a parody at all ... (*The Times*)

It is very unequal ... and, opening well, it gradually falls off in fun and interest ... It is divided into two scenes, representing the two acts of the Savoy opera. The first is decidedly the best, being bright in song and dance ... Some of the dialogue cleverly parodies the quaint style of Mr. Gilbert; while Mr. Percy Reeve's music humorously hits off the manner of Sir Arthur with fairly successful results. (*Sunday Times*)

A popular favourite like Mr. Toole is by tacit consent permitted a license that is denied to others, whether they deserve it or not ... But take away the funny actor altogether, and then attempt to burlesque burlesque and the result is chaos indeed. At no time would Mr. Gilbert's *Ruddigore* have been a proper subject for ridicule. Being a mock representation of old-fashioned melodrama, it is in itself ridiculous and the chaff becomes puerile and wearisome. Had the author of *Ruddy George* the slightest capacity for parodying the style of Mr. Gilbert, or had the performers been skilful enough to mimic or imitate their brethren at the Savoy, the result might have been different, but at present the only credible feature of this very silly play is the music of Mr. Percy Reeve, whose echo of Sir Arthur Sullivan's manner is clever if not very bold or striking. The only two points in *Ruddigore* that obviously lent themselves to parody and fun were firstly Mad Margaret, and secondly the Serious Duet. These strange to say, are the two things that are wholly ignored. The entertainment has no beginning, middle or ending, no consistency, point or purpose, and it reminds one of nothing more than a comic story told by an earnest individual who has wholly forgotten what the joke is on which he is insisting ... there was really nothing of interest in the musical parody except Mr. Toole's funny address that started it, and the beautifully painted picture of Clovelly, in front of which these antics were performed. If *Ruddy George* is to be repeated Mr. Toole should at once play Sir Gaspard Rougegorge, restore the "serious dance" and pepper the tasteless hash with fun. (*Daily Telegraph*).

The burlesque would have benefited from a few more rehearsals. (*Morning Advertiser*)

Of the soloists, E.D. Ward received the most commendation, and elicited the most comment. At least one paper, *The Observer*, was of the opinion that his performance was one of the redeeming features of the production:

The chief merit the piece has is derived from Mr. E.D. Ward's quiet burlesque of the make-up and manner of Mr. George Grossmith.

*The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* was also of the opinion that the piece:

... depends ... almost entirely upon the personal efforts of Mr. E.D. Ward.

But other papers, though still paying Ward tribute, were not quite so unreservedly complimentary. After panning the piece (as noted earlier) *The Figaro* ceded that:

Even Mr. E.D. Ward, whose imitation of Mr. George Grossmith was really very artistic, found little scope for his powers of imitation and mimicry ...

And others commented:

Mr. E.D. Ward, who has a considerable sense of humour, strives to get over the physical impossibility of looking like Mr. Grossmith, and faintly sketches his peculiar style ... (*Daily Telegraph*)

Mr. Ward, as the red-waistcoated baronet, should be credited with an artistic idea. (*Daily News*)

Mr. Ward was certainly amusing as our own Gee-Gee ... (*Punch*)

... gives a fair caricature of Grossmith. (*The Bat*)

Mr. E.D. Ward, in his imitation of Grossmith, as Robin, is excellent. (*Morning Post*)

However, much of the merit of Ward's performance may have hinged on one song, as was suggested by some of the critics:

Mr. E.D. Ward certainly gave a remarkable imitation of Mr. George Grossmith in one song... (*News of the World*)

Mr. Ward's make-up in the prim rustic fashion of Mr. George Grossmith produced much laughter, as did the song of "I always know my part" sung by this gentleman to one of the ingenious imitations of Sir Arthur Sullivan's melodies which Mr. Percy Reeve the composer has furnished for the occasion. (*The Graphic*)

Mr. E.D. Ward, as Robin, exerted himself to such purpose as to win an encore for his first song, containing sundry sly references to the peculiarities of the comedian imitated, and having the frequent repetition of the line "But I always know my part", and here, it may be added, was his best chance of distinction. (*Daily Chronicle*)

An encore. Only one? *The Era*, however, indicated that he got a *double* encore for this song. The only sour note regarding Ward was struck by *The Stage* which commented sarcastically:

Mr. E.D. Ward, whose imitation of Mr. Bancroft in *Fédora* was decidedly clever, has not got the appearance or the voice for a burlesque of Mr. George Grossmith. He won applause, however, for a song bearing the refrain "I have no voice [sic], but I always know my part". Had Mr. Ward profited by the latter portion of this observation, it would have been just as well, for he required prompting several times during the course of this short piece.

I have been able to find out almost nothing about E.D. Ward (Robin) except that he died on 15 November 1889, aged 36. Next came Marie Linden (Rosy). According to Adair-Fitzgerald, she was still alive in 1924. I can find no information on her date of death.

Miss Marie Linden, looking very pretty under the limelight in a short blue skirt, had a telling song and dance of a music-hall type, the latter, however, having no possible reference to any Savoy original. But even two swallows [*a reference to Ward and Linden*] do not make a summer, and the remainder of the so-called musical parody was nothing short of tedious. (*News of the World*)

... brought her usual neatness and finish to bear upon this part. (*Morning Advertiser*)

... dances with her usual grace. (*The Bat*)  
 ... contents herself with singing and dancing very prettily as the village maiden Rosy. (*The Observer*)  
 ... dances charmingly. (*Daily Telegraph*)

Miss Marie Linden, as the doubly burlesque heroine, had also some happy moments; but when she had to ask Mr. Ward whether he was going "to walk [sic] over his own crops" and that capable actor was found to be provided with no more lively a reply than "I should come a cropper if I did" the task of amusing the audience was clearly rather an uphill one. (*Daily News*)

George Shelton (Sir Gaspard) died on 17 September 1932, aged 80. He was born in Manchester, and made his first stage appearance at the Prince's Theatre in that city. He remained there for some years as a "low comedian" and appeared with such actors as Adelaide Nielson, Samuel Phelps, E.A. Sothorn, Henry Irving, Barry Sullivan and J.L. Toole. Toole subsequently engaged him for the Folly Theatre, but was taken ill and so Shelton appeared briefly with H.J. Byron at the same theatre - his London debut being in January 1880 as Mr. Mumchance in *Married in Haste*. His subsequent association with Toole lasted nearly 16 years, and included such parts as Tackleton in *Dot*, Mr. Bangs in *The Light Fantastic*, Scorchner in *Waiting Consent*, Kitchener in *Over the Garden Wall*, Wallop in *Auntie*, Murch in *Girls and Boys*, Gretch in *Stage-Dora*, Thari-o-Galus in *Paw Clawdian*, Lord Babicombe in *The Butler*, Sir Gaspard in *Ruddy George*, Harris in *The Don*, George Tesman in *Ibsen's Ghost*, Ben in *Walker, London*, Minch in *The Best Man* and Job Tosh in *Thoroughbred*. After Toole's retirement Shelton appeared in 1897 at the Globe and the St. James's. He subsequently appeared at several West End Theatres, and from 1904-1909 appeared annually at the Duke of York's as Smee in *Peter Pan*. It was his unenviable task to mimic Rutland Barrington, but he seems to have succeeded:

Mr. Ward ... should be credited with an artistic idea, as should Mr. Shelton, who succeeded in giving to a grotesque caricature a droll suggestion of Mr. Barrington's portentous manner. (*Daily News*)

The only other mimic [besides Ward] is Mr. G. Shelton, who as Sir Gaspard Rougegeorge [sic] fairly catches the style of Mr. Barrington, but makes little capital out of the imitation. (*The Observer*)

The "villain at the Vic" style of performance of Mr. Shelton was most admirable, and his burlesque of Rutland Barrington droll to a degree. (*Morning Post*)

Emily Thorne (Joanna), who received fewer comments, died on 5 March 1907. She appeared at a number of London Theatres in the period 1890-1898, in such roles as Mrs. Obadiah Vanderbone in *Cerise and Co.* (Prince of Wales, 1890), Mrs. Coddle in *Married Life* (Vaudeville, 1890), Mrs. Shuttleworth in *The Judge* (Terry's, 1890), Mrs. Rollitt in *Woodbarrow Farm* by J.K. Jerome (Vaudeville, 1891), Agatha in *Vote for Giggs* (Vaudeville, 1892), Mrs. Bartholomew in *Uncle's Ghost* (Opera Comique, 1894), Mrs. Crewe in *The Joker* (Avenue, 1894), Mrs. Cottingham in *Teddy's Wives* (Strand, 1896), Caroline Hazzard in *Frolicsome Fanny* (Gaiety, 1897), Miss Popple in *The Triple Alliance* (Strand, 1897), Julia Fawcett in *The Vicar's Dilemma* (Terry's 1898) and Clarissa Champneys in *Our Boys* (Terry's, 1898).

... makes no attempt to be other than her own well-pronounced self as Aunt Joanna (*The Observer*)

[after commenting on Ward and Shelton] In other cases, the individuality of the actor triumphs over the desire to travesty. Miss Thorne shows, as Aunt Joanna, her own broad and accentuated style and speaks with a distinctness of utterance some of her associates would do well to copy. (*The Globe*)

Only *The Era* had anything much to say about the rest of the cast. It commented that:

Mr. C. Wilson, made up as Mr. Michael Gunn, laboured hard to extract fun from an absolutely empty role.

The others could do nothing with their parts, and:

It was aggravating to see such talent for travesty as Miss Linden's so utterly thrown away ... Of the three "make-ups" Mr. Catell's had the most resemblance to the original. Mr Lowne's was next best and Mr. De Pledge's was not in the least like Sir Arthur Sullivan.

The rest of the cast may have elicited no comments, but I have been able to find out a bit about some of them. C[?harles] Wilson (Dick), stage manager and producer, died 25 July 1909, aged 49. Watty Brunton (1828-18 Jan. 1904) (Old Daddy), appeared in a great many London productions. Those between 1890 and his death included, Father Dolan in *The Shaughraun* (Novelty, 1890), Ching Chow in *Aladdin up to Data* (Novelty, 1890), Phillips in *A Social Pest* (Novelty, 1891), Justin Hare in *East Lynne* (Novelty, 1891), Dr. Pfefforkorn in *You Mustn't Laugh* (Opera Comique, 1892), Antonio in *M. Jacques* (Opera Comique, 1892), Friar Tuck in *Santa Claus* (pantomime, Lyceum, 1894), Edward Darrell in *At Bay* (Novelty, 1896), Gibson in *The Ticket of Leave Man* (Novelty, 1896), Jacob Grafton in *Not Guilty* (Novelty, 1896), Tom Pendant in *Queenie* (Globe, 1897), The Stranger in *The Best of Friends* (Drury Lane, 1902), The Marquis of Blenavon in *A Queen of Society* (Adelphi, 1903) and Jarrie Brixham in *The Flood Tide* (Drury Lane, 1903). For Bella Wallis (Betty) no date of death is given in *Who's Who in the Theatre*. Adair-Fitzgerald says that she married and left the stage soon after *Ruddy George*. According to J.P. Wearing (*The London Stage* 1976 continuing, various volumes), she died in 1960. She appeared in at least two London shows, in 1900 as Humpty Dumpty in *Bootle's Baby; A Story of the Scarlet Lancers* at the Garrick, and in 1906 as the Gypsy in Liza Lehmann's opera *The Vicar of Wakefield* at the Prince of Wales. I can find nothing about *Susie Steele* (Molly) and *Miss J. Wise* (Old Chloe), who are not mentioned by Wearing. Charles Macready Lowne (Sir Gilbert) died 30 July 1941, aged 78. According to *Who's Who in the Theatre 1912*, he made his debut in August 1884 at Blackpool with J.L. Toole's company, continuing with Toole until the latter's retirement due to illness in 1896. He accompanied Toole on his Australian tour in 1890-91. After Toole's retirement, Lowne appeared at a number of West End Theatres, particularly Drury Lane where he played in the autumn dramas for several years in such plays as *The Duchess of Coolgardie*, *The White Heather*, *The Great Ruby* etc. His subsequent career on the London stage was in equally forgotten plays. George de Pledge (Sir Arthur) joined the D'Oyly Carte touring companies after appearing in *Ruddy George*. In August 1888 he came to the Savoy to play the Lieutenant in *Yeomen* and stayed to create Giorgio in *The Gondoliers*, and Barnabas Bellows-to-Mend in *Haddon Hall*. Very little else is known about him. I can find nothing at all about J.B. Catell (Sir D'Oyly), who is not mentioned by Wearing.

List of Newspapers consulted:

Figaro 26 March 1887  
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 Whitehall Review 24 March  
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 Morning Post 21 March  
 Morning Advertiser 21 March  
 Observer 20 March  
 Globe 21 March  
 People 27 March  
 Fun 16 and 30 March  
 Liverpool Daily Post 21 March  
 Modern Society 26 March

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ROBIN REDBREAST (Sir Roothven Rougegorgie nicknamed Ruddy George in disguise, a *gross myth* of the 19th century) E.D. Ward  
 DICK LEWARD (Captain of the Katherine Wheal Mine, at Polparrot, a Cornish portrait, not a Van Dyck, but perhaps a spurious *Lely*.) C[hables] Wilson  
 SIR GASPARD ROUGEGERGE (Of Rougegorgie Castle. A younger brat of an aristocrat, a fine specimen of *Barringtoniaceae* - still growing.) George Shelton  
 OLD DADDY LONGLEGS (Robin's confidential servant. - N.B. - The *Old Adam* has been rooted out, but the *stalk* remains.) Watty Brunton  
 ALLRAKE }  
 GOWRONG } Sodger Johnnies  
 SQUINTHIUS }  
 (doubled by the three ancestors)  
 ROSY (A foundling and a village belle claiming to be descended from *Abraham*.) Marie Linden  
 MARG'ET SANDS (A mad maid, afterwards SIGNORA GASPARDO RUDDIGIORNO, another village belle - cracked.) [silent role]  
 AUNT JOANNA (The foundling's "aunt", both *sober and ramshackle*.) Emily Thorne  
 OLD CHLOE } (Professional gossips, from the home for Indignant Miss L. Wise  
 BETTY } Gentlewomen.) Bella Wallis  
 MOLLY } Susie Steele  
 [Although listed in the Dramatis Personae, these three ladies are not named in the text - as in the case of the Ghosts in *Ruddigore!*]  
 PUPPETS  
 SIR GILBERT ROUGEGERGE } (Mad Baronets and Bad Marionets of Charles Macready Lowne  
 SIR ARTHUR ROUGEGERGE } Rougegorgie - all that is left of the George de Pledge  
 SIR DOYLEY ROUGEGERGE } 1,001 Knights and Baron-knights of that ilk.) J.B. Catell  
 Chorus of Mining Chaps, Bal-Maidens, &c.  
 (NOTE: A bal-maiden is a Cornish mining lass - here a maiden of the ballet)

## Scene 1 "The Act"

Scene: The village of Polparrot (in Cornwall). Rosy's semi-detached palatial residence is seen left.  
 Enter chorus of Gossips, Bal-Maidens & Inhabitants

CHORUS: Sing ho! Sing hey! All mediaeval we.  
 Sing ho! Sing hey! and a roundelay, sing ancient Poetree.  
 Sing hey! - good day! and marry come up! say we.  
 Sing dumpty dum! So sorry for some!  
 Likewise, ah miserie!  
 Trala, tralai, trala!  
 Sing hoity toity! Somebody sigh!  
 Trala, tralai, trala!  
 Sing hey! (it's all my eye!)  
 GOSSIPS: He, he! He, he! It's all my eye.

[Enter AUNT JOANNA

## RECITATIVE &amp; SONG - JOANNA

JOANNA:

Nay, genteel maidens, you sing neither wisely nor too well;  
 This is not an aesthetic opera - Belay, I say, belay.

Now, behold! no more the case is one of pale and peaky faces,  
 Obviously bilious traces -

CHORUS: Affectation strange.

JOANNA:

We no longer sing the praises of the buttercups and daisies,  
 Olive greens, or creamy *fraises* -

CHORUS: How the fashions change!

JOANNA:

Patter singing still the craze is,  
 Not so Anglo-Saxon paces, or Elizabethan phrases -

CHORUS: Modern minstrel-sy!

JOANNA:

And in music-hally places any croker laughter raises,  
 So good music goes to blazes! Mercy! but it's dry!

CHORUS: *Let good music go to blazes! - Mercy! but it's dry!*

Sing ho! - sing hey! &c. (JOANNA gesticulating and asserting, "This is *not* an aesthetic opera!").

1 GOSSIP: Oh! have you heard? What *do* you think, my dears? Aunt Joanna and Old Daddy were seen kissing, last night, in the dusk, with the light behind 'em. After that he's *pledged to pop* the question, (gossips chuckle).

JOANNA:

Go along with you! A pack of *paupers*. I would rather go to the workhouse than be supported by a respectable charity, (*with contempt*) and be paid for mischief-making.

1 GOSSIP: Mind your own business, minx! I was never so insulted by a lady, before or since, in all my life, which I don't call *you one*. (JOANNA weeps).

JOANNA (hysterically): O, my dear! How *can* you *say* such a thing?

1 GOSSIP: Who began it?

JOANNA: I was just going to tell you the news -

GOSSIPS (eagerly): News! What news?

JOANNA: Oh, yes! it's "friends" fast enough, when scandal is wanted. But wild horses will not drag it from me now.

1 GOSSIP: There, there! We won't say any more about your insulting us. Make it up, dear. (Gradually brings JOANNA round).

JOANNA: Well, promise faithfully you will tell *no one* - (mysteriously) My niece, Rosy, is a-courting Robin.

GOSSIPS: Oh! Oh! We knew that, months ago.

JOANNA: The audience did not know it. But there's more. (Gossips crowd round again). The Captain of the Katherine Wheal, Dick Leward, who was carried off by the press-gang a month ago, has returned from sea. More yet, Sir Gaspard Rougegorge is down in these parts. Beware of him, for he is accursed. (Chorus shudder).

GOSSIPS: How so?

JOANNA: Listen.

#### THE ALLEGED CUSS - Song and Chorus

JOANNA

Sir Gaspard's earliest ancestor

Came over with Villiam the Conqueror;

A model he of chivalree

But only one pleasure in life he saw -

To employ his wealth, and ruin his health,

In persecuting his mother-in-law.

CHOR: To employ, &c.

He used to burn the midnight oil

Inventing crimes, with infinite toil.

He stole he wig, upset her gig,

Or would insist on calling her "madam".

I do aver there never were

Such deeds, till now, from the days of Adam.

CHOR: We do aver, &c.

She died at last the poor ladye.

To all his race a legacee

She left - no less, no more than this:-

To commit one daily crime. But then

One crime per diem (Excuse the rhyme!)

Is a meagre allowance for full-grown men.

CHOR: One crime, &c.

[Exit GOSSIPS & Chorus. Enter ROSY, with clothes basket, from palatial residence.

#### POPULAR SONG - ROSY

ROSY: I want you all to know

What my story is; and so

In a confidential way

You shall hear what people say.

Rosy is my name, trala!

Flirting is my game, trala!

The boys are fond of me, you bet!

They sigh so mournfullee, and fret;

And vow I am their sweetest pet,

And a duck of a darling thing.

They take me to the Zoo,

And I draws them on, I do -

Their familiaritee

Its the very thing for me.

Then they call me tootsicums,

Say my feet are footsicums,

My cheek is rosy-posy-a;

My nose a nosy-posy-a;

They vow I'm "jam", because I am

Such a duck of a darling thing!

(Graceful dance)

[JOANNA at back, imitating ROSY, and knitting all the while).

JOANNA: Whither away, dear Rosy! Up to your old larks, eh!

ROSY: What's that to you?

JOANNA: Such a temper! It's her only fault-

Never so fair a Rose was born,

But never a Rose without a *Thorne*.

What have you here! (looking at basket)

ROSY(in a breath): A few practical jokes for the unsuspecting villagers including some cast-off linen for the Home for Indignant Gentlewomen a dozen addled eggs for the curate a bottle of fine old fruity port and water for the Asylum for Constitutional Idiots and for the little cripple girl a noopanopstick and a squeaking Jack-in-the-Box that once bought never squeaks again.

JOANNA: Not so fast my love. Count your stops, to yourself. One for a comma; two for a semi-colon; three for a colon; and four for a full stop. Have you won a proposal from Robin yet?

ROSY: Not yet (one), Aunt (one, two, three, four). He is a slippery card (one, two); and it is hard to bring him to the point (one, two, three, four).

JOANNA: Enough. Tell the audience your history.

ROSY (dramatically) Hung -

JOANNA: Who was hung?

ROSY: You will be, some day. Ha! ha! Hung - in a Britannia metal dish-cover, with handle and screws complete, size three, to the knocker of the workhouse door -

JOANNA: Well, what *was* hung? Who is the subject of hanging? No you, I'm sure. I'll be hanged if I can follow it.

ROSY: Be patient, do. The nominative case is suspended.

JOANNA: Hung, indeed.

ROSY: Silence, Aunt. Hung in a Britannia metal dish-cover to the knocker of the workhouse door, with naught that I could call mine own - it was before I could speak - save a change of baby-linen, and an Encyclopaedia in twenty-four volumes, little wonder -

JOANNA: Little wonder, indeed! Where's the nominative, dear? Fallacy somewhere.

ROSY: Little wonder if *I* -

JOANNA: Regardless of grammar.

ROSY: Little wonder if I have always regarded that work -

JOANNA: What work? the hanging? the tin work? the layette? or the Encyclopaedia?

ROSY: The Encyclopaedia, of course. Little wonder if I have always regarded that work as a voice -

JOANNA: What! a voice in twenty-four volumes! Voluminous accents those!

ROSY: Little wonder if I have always regarded that work as a voice from the tomb.

JOANNA: *To whom?*

ROSY: *To me*. Aided by a valuable article, entitled "How to live on nothing a year", and signed by "One who has done it, and saved out of it," I, a poor foundling, have learnt to support myself and you, my aunt, without any visible means of subsistence.

JOANNA: Then we are vagabonds.

ROSY: No. I am only a fasting girl. [Exit JOANNA]

[Enter ROBIN, playing on a penny whistle, like Strephon in "Iolanthe" (tune like "The Campbells are coming").

ROSY: Good morrow, good lover.

ROBIN: Mistress Rosy! (Makes a bolt for the wings. ROSY catches him).

ROSY: I wished to say - it's fine.

ROBIN: It is - it's all very fine - and large. But I've an engagement.

ROSY: You are engaged to me.

ROBIN: Not in these boots!

ROSY: They are quite good enough for me. Tip-top-boots. Where are you going?

ROBIN: Hunting.

ROSY: You are a farmer? You don't look it. Are you going to ride over your own crops?

ROBIN: I should soon come a cropper if I did. I am a farmer - worse luck! I grow tobacco and jam. Times is real bad. Don't half like the look of things. Nothing for the unemployed to do, except go about singing, you know, and hunting, and claim compensation for disturbance.

ROSY: You do not fail to go and enjoy yourself in your private capacity at fetes, balls and hops?

ROBIN: I do. I make hay while the sun shines.

ROSY: And sow your wild oats in all your spare moments. This, then is your regard for the rotation of the crops. Why don't you try and *be something* in the City?

ROBIN: What's the good? Trade is awful just now. The money market is beastly tight, when it is not disgustingly loose. Bulls and bears are always running about in the Stock Exchange. Silver is going down and there is a lac(k) of rupees in every Indian Bank. There is a continuous (Paternoster) *Row* at the end of Cheapside. New hats are worn *out* the first day, and old ones are sent to the block. Builders build over their means, and houses are falling everywhere. Meat is dear, and Poultry <sup>1</sup> goes a very little way. Hungry city clerks are all driven to eating houses.

ROSY: What of that? That's nothing. Why, in Parliament itself the most eminent statesmen spend all their time eating their own words to make a livelihood. I should like to be a farmer's wife.

ROBIN: Much better marry an earl and content yourself with being simply a lady of title.

ROSY (weeping) Oho! oho! I would rather get £10,000 damages than sink so low.

ROBIN: Poor little maid. Poo 'ickle sing. (stroking and patting her) Go home then. That's a good girl (as to a dog) Go home! *Go home!*

[Exit ROSY]

What a confoundedly queer thing it is that all the gals fall in love with me at first sight. And I can't think why! Can it have anything to do with my calves?

[<sup>1</sup> *Poultry* is the name of a very short street in the City of London. Ed.]

#### PATTER SONG - ROBIN

I know very well that I haven't much voice,

But I always know my part;

The characters I play don't afford a varied choice,

But I always know my part.  
 For the actor who once hesitates  
 Is lost and this necessitates  
 A thorough-paced proficiency in art;  
 And although I don't speak loudly,  
 Still I must maintain most proudly  
 That I always know my part.

You may notice that my song contain a jolly lot of words,  
 And I always know my part;  
 I sing upon one note while the band is playing chords,  
 And I always know *their* part.  
 The lines are very clever,  
 So I use my best endeavour  
 To get them all up properly by heart;  
 And I pose in limb and feature  
 As a most eccentric creature,  
 'Cos I always know my part.  
 I am always self-contained, and I bite my words out short  
 (For I always know my part);  
 I never act too much, and I never rant or snort,  
 But I always know my part.  
 Some silly folks are saying  
 That the house where I am playing  
 Ought to change its cast and make another start;  
 But none from floor to roof, or  
 Even grand old Dr. Hueffer,  
 Says that I don't know my part.

[Enter OLD DADDY

OLD DADDY: Did your baronetcy please to want me?

ROBIN: Aha! That reminds me. Twenty years ago -

OLD DADDY: Oh, yes. I know all about that.

ROBIN: But the audience don't know that I am a mad baronet- that is, a bad marionette - I mean a bad baronet - in disguise. Hush! I will tell them *all*.

OLD DADDY (in a stage whisper) Stay sir, stay. This will never do. It is against all the traditions of the stage to engage in direct conversation with your audience.

ROBIN (in a loud whisper) Is this your place, or is it mine? Am I the King of France or am I not? Can I not do as I like in the *Tooleries*? And if I may not make a strictly confidential communication to my audience, I should like to know whose audience I may make it to? My name is not Robin Redbreast, but - but - Rougegorge!

#### SONG - ROBIN

Pray who's the most popular Prince of the day?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 Is he handsome and generous, wise and gay?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 Does he live in the hearts of the people dear?  
 Does he work like a nigger and all for a mere  
 Sixty or seventy thousand a year?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 Yes, wouldn't I like to know!  
 No, wouldn't you like to know!

Pray who is the man with the gift of the gab?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 Who will spout from a platform, a train or a cab?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 Is it true that he has a Conservative brother?  
 Does he give the great Markis a good deal of bother?  
 Don't they call him the grand old something or other?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 Yes, wouldn't I like to know!  
 No, wouldn't you like to know!

Pray, what is the name of that Statesman bold?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 Who turns his screws into solid gold?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 The democrats all he doth gaily cajole  
 With an orchid stuck in his button-hole.  
 Oh, what *is* the name of that worthy soul?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know?  
 Yes, wouldn't I like to know!  
 No, wouldn't you like to know!

Pray, who is the actor that crossed the sea?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 With his whole Shakespearean companee?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 He goes for the love of his art I'm told.  
 But his visits repay him a hundred fold.  
 Is it true that he cares not a rap for the gold?  
 Oh, wouldn't you like to know!  
 Yes, wouldn't I like to know!  
 No, wouldn't you like to know!

OLD DADDY: Enough, enough, dear master. You will betray yourself. Even now a fresh danger threatens. Your talkative foster-brother, Captain Dick Leward, has just returned from sea, and will appear as soon as he gets his cue. [Exit.

ROBIN (melodramatically) Aha! My bulluved foster-berruther! Na, na - itte cannotte be. (Goes to wings and shakes hands with invisible personage). Hello, old chap, how are ye? Come in, come in. What's that? Eh? No, it's all right. Come along.

[Enter DICK LEWARD

CORNISH SEA SONG - DICK LEWARD

Us zailed away on the thirty-virst o' May  
 Pull away, my boys, pull away!  
 But us come back zoon, on the thirty-virst o' June -  
 Pull away, my boys, pull away!  
 Pull away, my boys, yoho!  
 Us b'aint gone far, when a storm struck she,  
 And overboard of course when our little Billee!  
 Zo us zaid, wi' a zigh, as a' floated by -  
 Pull away, my boys, pull away!  
 Zo us come back zoon, on the thirty-virst o' June,  
 Pull away, my boys, pull away!  
 Us had only been away zince the thirty-virst o' May -  
 Steadily, my boys, pull away!  
 Zo steadily, my lads, yahoo!!

ROBIN: You've not been long at sea, Dick. Short service system, I suppose.

DICK: Aw, my dear. Our skipper zoon zaid as how he'd had enough of a land-lubberly chap like I, what couldn't I learn the difference 'twixt a fore-stay and a to'-gall'n-m'st. Zo he put I ashore again, double-quick. And a gude job tew! How be yew? Squared it up with Miss Rosy yet? Eh, mate?

ROBIN: Not I, indeed! I'm bothered to death with her. I don't want her. She sticks to me, like a leech. All is not jam that sticks.

DICK: I'd zoon take her off your hands, if so be she'd have me. She's a fine lass.

ROBIN (eagerly): Then go in Dick, and win. Trust your heart, my lad, and it will never fail you. (Hats off).

DICK: Do you think I'll dew, my dear.

ROBIN: Certainly. (feeling him like a horse). You're all right. Sound as a bell. Have a run for your money, Dick. Gemini! here she comes.

[Enter ROSY with chorus and Gossips

ROBIN (with DICK holding on to his sleeve): Mistress Rosy!

ROSY (looking up and down and everywhere, but not at DICK and ROBIN) Did someone presume to address us?

DICK (aside) Aw, dear! I durstn't go on a-courting she.

ROBIN: Here's Dick Leward, in love with you.

GOSSIPS: They are going to be married by banns, before the year is out.

DICK (his shoulders working up and down) Aye, mistress. I'se loved ye from a babby.

GOSSIPS: He nursed her on his knee when she was *so* high.

ROSY (to DICK): We knewest not that thou didst desire us in wedlock, or in veriest truth we should not have hearkendest unto this poor man's suit. (pointing to ROBIN).

GOSSIPS: Doubtless, he has filed a petition in the Bankruptcy Court.

ROSY: For beholdest, he is one of the lowliest of men, and a tiller of the soil, whilst thou artest a Captain.

DICK: Well zaid, lass.

ROBIN (to gossips): I beg permission to make a personal statement. My finances are *not* in an unsatisfactory condition.

GOSSIPS: He expects to make money by going through the Bankruptcy Court.

ROBIN: And I have at no time paid my addresses to Mistress Rosy.

GOSSIPS: He is married already to some other woman.

ROBIN: All other statements, than my own, in relation to these subjects, are inaccurate and wholly unauthorised.

GOSSIPS: We are not to believe a word he says.

DICK (to ROSY): Don't have nothing to dew with that vagabone again, mistress. He thinks nothing of making affidavits.

GOSSIPS: Oh! Do you hear that? He swears awful!

DICK: He's no teetotaler, like I.

GOSSIPS: He drinks like a fish. Brandy, too. We knew it.

ROBIN: Be quiet, will you! I may be a swearer and a drunkard, but I don't allow anyone but myself to tell me so.

DICK: And it isn't I as would begin to hint such things against your honour.

ROBIN: Thankye, Dick. You're a true friend. Take her and be happy. Mistress, you'll have a fine husband in Dick. He can dance a hornpipe, and get more applause than a first-class tenor.

GOSSIPS: He has had six lessons at a dancing academy.

ROBIN: Look, too, at his fine strawberry marks. (DICK objects).

GOSSIPS: He has not been duly vaccinated.

ROSY: You are very ready - nay, anxious - to give this good man to me.

ROBIN: I am. You are my friend. I will give you a warranty with him.

ROSY: Humph! (Takes ROBIN by the sleeve: Aside): Now this is to be a bargain, you say?

ROBIN: Certainly. You get him dirt cheap.

ROSY: Then what *is* the matter with him?

[Exeunt ROBIN, DICK and ROSY, arguing in dumb show. Enter THREE SODGERS.

SONG and Chorus - THREE SODGERS

1st SODGER: Soldier Johnnies three, anyone can see,

In the Guards are we, proud of our descent.

Sound of limb and lung, nerves not yet unstrung,

Speak the mother tongue! Ain't we eloquent?

Yes, yes, lardy-dardy-da.

CHORUS: No, no.

2nd SODGER: Jews and tailors storm, make it very warm,

Trade is not good form, that is evident.

Impecunious duns may make a fuss -

What is that to us? We are quite content.

Yes, yes, lardy-dardy-da.

CHORUS: Oh! Oh!

3rd SODGER: Here's a pretty go! Gladstone there, you know -

We don't care a blow! Tory Government.

Politics are rot, let 'em go to pot,

We would rather not be intelligent.

Yes, yes, lardy-dardy-da.

CHORUS: No, no.

SODGERS: Let us go and fight the nigger in the east.

He's not a very plucky sort of beast.

Yes - we'll go and pull a trigger

At the chicken-hearted nigger,

At the chicken-hearted nigger in the east.

CHORUS: Yes, they'll go, &c.

SODGERS: Yes, we'll go and fight the niggers in the east.

For we're not afraid of niggers in the least.

And it is a great temptation

To go in for annexation, to go in for annexation in the east.

CHORUS: And it is, &c. (Breakdown)

[Enter SIR GASPARD, in a gorgeous dressing-gown and smoking-cap.

SIR G: Oh why am I moody and glum?

CHORUS: Can't guess.

SIR G: And why do I waggle my thumb?

CHORUS: Confess.

SIR G: You'll admit that it is rather rum -

CHORUS: Why yes.

SIR G: To have a stiff neck and to stamp.

But why do I walk about *so* -

CHORUS: Good shape.

SIR G: Or stand on one leg and a toe

CHORUS: And drape -

SIR G: And wobble my eyes to and fro?

CHORUS: And gape?

SIR G: Or work with my eyebrows and champ?

My dancing is graceful and sound -

CHORUS: Well, well -

SIR G: And where are such calves to be found?

CHORUS: Pall Mall.

SIR G: But why are my elbows so round?

CHORUS: Big swell!

SIR G: And my muscular legs *wide* apart?

Oh when am I husky and hoarse?

CHORUS: Don't know.

SIR G: When the fog's in my gullet, of course.

CHORUS: Just so.

SIR G: I am glad its not anything worse -

CHORUS: Go to!

SIR G: For I make such a very good Bart.

[SIR GASPARD smiles and chorus exit screaming, SODGERS march off in response to a sign from SIR GASPARD. Funny drill business.

SIR G: Poohoor chihildren! How they lohoathe meh-meh whose hands are steeped in infameh, but whose heart is as the heart of a littel chihild! What a terrible thing it is to be restricted to one crime a day! To be good is easy. To be thoroughly bad wants ingenuity; but to play *my* part successfully requires an effort of genius.

[Enter DICK

DICK: Good day, your honour.

SIR G: How now, inhabitant?

DICK: Plaze your honour, give your consent to my marriage with the best maid in the town.

SIR G: And what is her name, pray?

DICK: It's Mistress Rosy, your honour.

SIR G: She is not mine to give away.

DICK: True, your honour, but folks likes to be asked, ye see.

SIR G: I refuse my consent. I will carry her off myself.

DICK: Hold! Stop! avast heaving! belay there. Mistress Rosy is *my* sweetheart, and only across my corpse shall *your* honour approach hers.

SIR G: Aha! come on! (they produce half-a-dozen weapons each and fight melodramatically).

DICK (down) Aw, my dear, I'm properly beat. Tell my gal I'm killed in a fair fight, and -

SIR G: A terrible thought strikes me. Is it a fair fight? I am a real baronet while he is but a humble villain. But, no matter! I must commit my daily crime. Here goes!

DICK: Stop a bit. Your honour is not permitted to commit two crimes in the same day. If you slay me, you may not run away with Rosy.

SIR G: Truhue! I cannot abduct the maiden today. But I will do so tomorrow.

DICK: Nay, sir. Remember "tomorrow never comes!"

SIR G: Foiled again. And yet - and yet - today is Monday. I will carry her off on Tuesday.

DICK: But, sir, when Tuesday comes it will be *to-day*.

SIR G: Enough, enough! I will chance that. Die, villain!

DICK: No, no! Not yet. Heark' ye to my dying confession.

SIR G: Take care you don't confess too much.

DICK: It is *not* a fair fight. Your honour is a fraud. It is my duty to expose you. You are not a baronet, but a plain lieutenant, while I am a handsome captain.

SIR G: You lie, rascal!

DICK: You had an elder brother, Roothven -

SIR G: Pronounced "Riven" if you please.

DICK: He lives!

SIR G: Aha!!! Can this be truhue? (DICK rises)

DICK: I know it sartin. He is my foster-brother, and lives in this village, under the name of Redbreast.

SIR G: Redbreast, Rougegorge, Rougegorge, Redbreast. I can detect no analogy between the names.

DICK: No sir, of course not. You wouldn't - being no scholar.

SIR G: Then, thank my stars, I am freed of my awful burden!

DICK: Yes, your title and estates.

SIR G: Free to gain an honest livelihood.

DICK: By your own exertions - if you can.

SIR G: Then - why, then you are my own long-lost foster-brother-in-law! Let me see the strawberry marks upon your arm - not necessarily for publication you know, but as a guarantee of good faith. (DICK bares his arm) It's all right. Come to my arms!

(DICK beckons. Gossips, Sodgers and Chorus return, headed by ROBIN, ROSY and JOANNA.

SIR G: Behold Sir Roothven, the real and unadulterated Baronet!

ROSY: Art thou indeed a Bart.?

ROBIN: I art, worse luck.

ROSY: Oh, Roothven, I am thine!

ROBIN: If you are indeed mine, I shall have pleasure in giving you away to Dick.

GOSSIPS: She has "given herself away" this time (ROSY sulks.

TRIO & Chorus - DICK, SIR GASPARD and ROBIN

DICK: There was a young Bart. of the West Countree -

A flaw in his title there seems to be -

A long-lost elder brother is found,

Who swore on oath he was under the ground.

I'll readily bet it,

He'll never regret it,

He'll never regret it, as I do.

CHORUS: Ritooral ooral-ooral-ooral-ooral-ooral ido.

SIR G:

This is my foster brother-in-law,

I was the Bart. but I withdraw

My claim to this same Baronetcy,

And here's the Bart. as is to be.

Since I'm betrayed

To save a maid

I lay my blade aside, oh!

CHORUS: Ritooral &c.

ROBIN: I am the perjured Bart. in sooth -

My foster-brother has told the truth -

And here's my cuss come up, although

I thought I'd buried it long ago.

I am, yours truly,  
J.L. Toole-y,  
Rooral-ooral i-do.

CHORUS: Ritooral, &c.  
(Dance)

END OF THE ACT

Scene 2 "The Deed"

SCENE: Chamber of Horrors in Rougegorge Castle. Family portraits on the walls. Lay figures, in armour and uniform, and other family skeletons, here and there. Enter ROBIN and DADDY, most melodramatically. They are dishevelled, and look haggard. ROBIN wears SIR GASPARD's dressing gown.

ROBIN: This is a painful state of things, Daddy.

OLD D: It is indeed.

ROBIN: How am I today?

OLD D: Not so well as yesterday. Slept badly. No appetite. More feverish than ever.

ROBIN: Is the daily bulletin of my health published yet?

OLD D: No sir. Your physician has not yet called for his daily fee. When he comes, he will walk in slowly, and shake hands with you *thus*. (Offers a flabby hand). He will say gently, "My dear sah, how are you today? Sit down, I pray. Let me look at your tongue. Thank you." (Feels ROBIN's pulse) "Humph, Sleep well? Eat well? Any fever? Dear, dear." He will then look around for writing materials, and write: "Bulletin, 10am. The distinguished baronet passed a bad night. No appetite. Fever increasing. Signed, JEREMY DIDDLE, M.D." He will hand this to me, and say to you, "Good day, my dear sah. Hope to find you better tomorrow. Continue the mixture, if you please." (Turns to go away, and hold out his hand behind him for fee.)

ROBIN: Have I committed a crime today?

OLD D: No, sir. I wish *you* had.

ROBIN: When the medical gentleman has signed the bulletin he will be a convenient victim. Put a *bullet in* to him.

OLD D: Oh, sir! I shudder to think of the number of crimes for which we are becoming responsible.

ROBIN: I wonder when we shall celebrate our Jubilee. Remember the doctor, Daddy.

OLD D: Shall we poison him with a glass of water from the dining room?

ROBIN: Our water is all boiled and filtered.

OLD D: Oh! No wonder it is nasty!

ROBIN: It is getting late. Are you in readiness for the deed?

OLD D: I don't like it, sir. Indeed I don't. Can we not put off our business till 11pm?

ROBIN: No, no. Think how awful 'twould be if the crime were forgotten, or if there were no victim handy for me but yourself! I will, however, give you an alternative to the doctor. Carry off some old gossip from the village - Old Hannah, for instance - or a few mothers-in-law. They'll none of them be missed.

OLD D: I will. I will.

ROBIN: Daddy. I must get into Parliament somehow. Once there I could introduce a bill, in constitutional fashion, to abolish ancestors.

OLD D: The means, alas! won't justify the end.

And haste is most undignified. Attend.  
When anything is urgent, you should wait.  
And sleep on it for years. Then agitate.  
And get a Royal Commission. Their report  
Of course is duly shelved, until some sort  
Of Bill is framed. The Lords will "chuck it out",  
Not understanding what it's all about.  
And when the Bill at last becomes the law,  
The lawyers twist it inside out, by jaw.  
You see your proper course.

ROBIN: Meantime it's found

The man you stirred to save is very drowned,  
And by the time his family's in crape,  
You'll chuck him out a line of old *red tape*.

OLD D: Quite so. You are a politician born.

You ought our second chamber to adorn.

ROBIN: Away! Insult me not. Hitherto I have hoodwinked my ancestors. If I murder the Queen's English one day, I found a grammar school the next. If I am wedded to two opinions at one moment, I am immediately divorced from one of them. If I steal a march on a friend in the morning, I do him good by stealth in the afternoon. Yesterday I possessed myself - no matter how - of the portrait of an eminent actor. This morning I presented it to the National Gallery. This afternoon, rather than carry on with Rosy Posy, I carry her off. Tomorrow I will send her home, and pay her cab fare.

OLD D: Remember your honour, it's outside the radius [Exit.

ROBIN: It seems ages since I entered on this very responsible engagement. I have had enough of it. I will renounce my title and its daily curse, once and for all-ancestors or no ancestors.

[The stage darkens for a few seconds. When it becomes light again, portraits and figures are seen to have become animated. A figure in armour warms his hands, like a cabby. A tobacconist's Highlander takes snuff. The bust portraits have become full-sized heads with marionette bodies. Among them are caricatures of Mr. W.S. Gilbert, Sir A. Sullivan, and Mr. D'Oyly Carte.

CHORUS OF ANCESTORS

What is this we hear? Miserable mortal!  
Once you've passed the portal  
Of this castle we're compelled to see your duty done:  
And therefore we have hither run.  
We shall your gross contempt of court

Most conscientiously report.  
 The personage we represent is known to be a fiery gent.  
 Therefore, beware! Apologise if you are wise.  
 Take care!  
 If he *won't* apologise, land him "one" between the eyes.  
 If that does not answer, he  
 Shall have his head in Chancery.  
 Woe betide him! Won't we hide him!  
 Won't we punch him, bang and scrunch him,  
 Plant the blows upon his nose  
 Till the purple claret flows!  
 Won't we lick him, flick him, kick him;  
 Won't we thrash him, mash him, gash him,  
 Hash him, dash him, bash him, smash him,  
 If he won't apologise.  
 If he, if he, wont a-, wont a-, -polo-, -polo-, pologise;  
 If he wont a-, won't apolo-  
 If he won't apologise!

SONG - SIR GILBERT

When first, my good friends, I was called to the Bah,  
     Said I to myself said I,  
     Of the judges and juries "what donkeys you ah!"  
 Said I to myself said I  
     One day from a booby I purchased a brief,  
     (With which he threw in a new red handkerchief)  
     I got my first fee, for defending a thief,  
 'Fending a thief, - 'fending a thief,  
     They gave him "six months," I admit, to my grief -  
 And I can't think why!  
 (Sir ARTHUR and Sir D'OYLY much amused)  
     Well, finding I did not succeed at the Bah-  
 Said I to myself said I  
     I will furnish libretto for light opera-  
 Said I to myself said I  
     With the aid of a popular *musician*  
     I wrote by the yard, and my pieces all ran!  
     Now, I've made all the money I possibly can,  
 Possibly can, possibly can.  
     Yet they say I am such a satirical man  
 And I can't think why.  
 (Sir ARTHUR and Sir D'OYLY screwed up with laughter)

SONG - SIR ARTHUR

If you want a *receipe* for that musical mystery  
 Known to the world as a "popular tune"  
     Take some of the favourite ballads of History,  
 Learn them by heart - you will master them soon.  
 Harmony, counterpoint, thorough-bass - what are they?  
 All very well for grand music. But, there!  
 In regard to the settings of songs we call "patter", they  
 Only consist of three chords and an air.  
     CHORUS: Harmony, counterpoint, &c.  
 And when you have boiled down a typical ballad  
 (Slices of comic song won't be amiss),  
 Then add a good dressing of love to your salad,  
 A thunderstorm, he and a she, and a kiss.  
 Remember to pause on a loud supertonic -  
 Who cares if the sentiment's utterly false?  
 Then, sharpening your note - with a pose histrionic -  
 You work yourself up to your motive - a waltz.  
     CHORUS: Harmony, counterpoint, &c.

Sir Gb (to ROBIN): You're a pretty olive branch, young baronet. So far from limiting yourself to the one crime prescribed by your sainted ancestress, you have ruthlessly - nay, Roothvenlessly - cut your allowance down to no crimes at all.

Sir A: We hoped to find you a chip of the old block. (ROBIN winces at mention of the block). We are wofully disappointed. Last week was a maiden over - not even one maiden abducted - no *runs off*.

ROBIN: But last week was an unusual week. Monday was Bank Holiday; Tuesday was Shrove Tuesday; then came Ash Wednesday; followed by Ascension Day and Good Friday; Saturday, if I remember aright, was Christmas Day; and Sunday was my day out.

Sir D: An unusual week, indeed; crammed full of cram.

ROBIN: Well, anyhow, crams are as good as crimes. As to this week I have daily cursed my curse. That's bad!

Sir Gb: A crime 'tis found to be, to commit a perjuree,

But it's scarcely thought ill-bred to tell  
 A cram, cram, cram.  
 Sir A: You may talk of "big, big D's," as often as you please,  
 But the fine is half-a-crown if you say -  
 (Drum, drum, drum)  
 Now, sir, please to understand that if you fail to commit your daily crime, we shall at once give information to the police regarding a certain little matter.  
 ROBIN: What matter?  
 Sir Gb: That little murder of yours -  
 ROBIN: I repeat, what matter? I only shot an organ grinder. It was a crime, and yet a justifiable one.  
 Sir D: The penalty for which is the gallows.  
 ROBIN: But I did it under provocation.  
 Sir Gb: If so, it was not a satisfactory crime.  
 ROBIN: It satisfied me - and it was enough for him. He did not complain.  
 Sir Gb: It is not enough for us. Unless you engage at once to commit handsome daily crimes in future, we shall apply for a warrant against you at Rawborough Street Police Court.  
 ROBIN: Aha! You have over-reached yourselves. You have threatened to accuse me of a murder in order to extort further crimes from me. Fools! You must not threaten me with criminal proceedings. The law will allow you to place the case in the hands of the *nearest* solicitor. You may summons me, prosecute me; get a judgement with costs and levy execution; you may get an injunction against me; you may take out an originating summons in the Court of Appeal; you may make a bankrupt of me; you may have me examined, remanded, imprisoned, and ruined; tried, condemned, and executed; but - thanks to our glorious Constitution - you may not, you must not *threaten* me.  
 Sir A: Threaten you!  
 Sir D: We wouldn't do such a thing for worlds.  
 Sir Gb: We merely mentioned the fact. So farewell!

[Exeunt ANCESTORS

ROBIN (frantically) Was ever a mortal in such a fix! What is to be done?  
 [Enter DICK and ROSY (dressed like country cousins) and SIR GASPARD (as a man who has come down in the world) leading MARG'ET in tow.  
 ROSY (to ROBIN, jubilantly) Soho! pretty one!  
 ROBIN: No, Miss. This is not Soho. Yellow 'bus at the corner will take you there.  
 ROSY: Trifle with me not. I have you in my power at last.  
 ROBIN: I am not aware of it.  
 DICK: You see, your honour, when you first gave her to me, you was below me, from a matrimonial point o'view. Now you're a baron-knight, and it's my duty to resign her to you.  
 ROBIN: But I don't want her.  
 DICK: All the more reason, your honour. Whenever you doesn't know which is your duty, choose the ugly course.  
 ROBIN: I will do so. She shall be flung into my deepest dungeon - regardless of expense. What ho! within, varlets. (no reply). What ho! (no reply). Then I will seize her myself without varlets.  
 DICK: Never! Stand back! Behold - the flag that braved a thousand years! (They arrange their aprons and ties into a Union Jack).  
 ROBIN (examining it): Dear, dear. Who would have thought it? It doesn't look more than a hundred years old.  
 ROSY: It isn't.  
 DICK: Look here, mates. History be danged! Stick to the sentiment.

[Enter DADDY with JOANNA

DADDY: Master, the deed is done!  
 ROBIN: What deed? (aside) I have had a narrow squeak of committing one crime too many.  
 DADDY: The maiden is here.  
 ROBIN: You don't say so!  
 DADDY: See for yourself, sir.  
 ROBIN: Baronets never see for themselves.  
 JOANNA (to ROBIN, in excited accents): O you warmint! Just let me get at you. I'll warm you!  
 ROBIN: Aunt Hannah! [*sic. Ed.*] This is not what I expected.  
 JOANNA: Of course not. This is an accident, I suppose, or an oversight - a slip, or a blunder.  
 ROBIN: Blunder, indeed.  
 JOANNA: Come a step closer, and I'll play five finger exercises on your pretty face. I'll comb your hair for you, you miscreant, and I'll break every bone in your body. Whoop! I'll dust your jacket, sir! (She chases ROBIN, DADDY stands in her way).  
 [Exeunt ROBIN and DADDY

SULLIVANESQUE QUINTETTE

O, woman, meet for kisses sweet,  
 And weaknesses generical;  
 O, womankind, so rarely blind  
 To influences clerical.  
 O, woman, quick at feeling sick,  
 And other things chimerical;  
 How much more prone, than telephone,  
 To changes atmospherical.  
 O, woman, how adroit art thou  
 At argument hysterical;  
 How shall we blaze thy wicked ways  
 In summary numerical!  
 O, woman, when pursued by men  
 All gentleness bespeaks they brow;

If they forget thee, Allah! then

A breach of promise plaintiff thou.

[Scene between DICK and GASPARD, ROSY & MARG'ET. Absurd dances.

[Enter ROBIN, jubilantly, followed by OLD DADDY, GOSSIPS and Chorus.

ROBIN: Hurrah! Hurrah!

SIR G: He has an idea.

GOSSIPS: He will write a comic opera up to it.

SIR GILBERT (suddenly appearing with other Ancestors) An idea once occurred to me, but that was *Ages Ago*.

ROBIN: Then don't let it occur again please. Listen! I have made an application to Mr. Stansfield, at the Rawborough Street Police Court. If I experience any further trouble from my ancestors he will grant a summons against them. They will, if necessary, be bound over to keep the peace, and only be liberated on their own recognizances - if they have any.

SIR A: Then I understand that the reigning Baronet is for ever released from the salutary duty of limiting himself to one crime a day?

ROBIN: Mr. Stansfield said that was so.

DUET - ROBIN & SIR GASPARD

BOTH

Mr. Stansfield said that was so.

FINALE

SONG & CHORUS

ROSY: He and she, of high degree,

Upper ten, and lowly men,

Peer, plebeian, sing the paeon,

Sing the paeon, sing the paeon,

Peer plebeian, sing the paeon,

Play the merry shawms.

CHORUS: Peer, plebeian, sing &c.

JOANNA: Scrape the 'cello, deep and mellow,

Grind the sturdy hurdy-gurdy,

Swell each chest, and blow your best

With euphoniums.

CHORUS: Swell, &c.

ROBIN: Bow, ye masses, bang cuirasses,

Split your laces, crack your braces,

Blast the trumpets, BUST the drums.

Down the curtain comes.

CHORUS: Blast, &c.

CURTAIN