

RUDDIGORE DIALOGUE AUDITION PIECES

1. Robin/Ruthven

From ACT 1:-

RICHARD embraces ROSE.

Bridesmaids. "Hail the bridegroom - hail the bride Let the nuptial knot be tied -

Robin, (*interrupting angrily*) Hold your tongues, will you! Now then, what does this mean?

Richard. My poor lad, my heart grieves for thee, but it's like this: The moment I see her, and just as I was a-goin' to mention you name, my heart it up and it says, says it, "Dick, you 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 -

Robin. Will you be quiet! Go away! (*chorus make faces at him and exit*) Vulgar girls!

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

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

Rose, (*to ROBIN*) Oh, but, sir, I knew not that thou didst seek me in wedlock, or in very truth I should not have hearkened unto this man, for behold, he is but a lowly mariner, and very poor withal, whereas thou art a tiller of the land, and thou hast fat oxen, and many sheep and swine, a considerable dairy farm, and much corn and oil!

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

Rose. Still, it may be that I should not be happy in thy love. I am passing young, and little able to judge. Moreover, as to thy character, I know naught!

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

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

Rose. Yet methinks I have heard that sailors are but worldly men, and little prone to lead serious and thoughtful lives.

Robin. 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 hornpipe is the talk of the fleet! (*RICHARD dances a few steps.*)

Robin. There! That's only a bit of it.

Richard. Thankye Rob! That's well spoken. Thankye Rob!

Rose. But it may be that he drinketh strong waters that do bemuse a man, and make him even as the wild beasts of the desert!

Robin. 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 sleeve*) No, no - I won't hear a word against Dick!

From ACT2:-

Robin. This is a painful state of things, Gideon Crawle!

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 advisor to the greatest villain unhung! Now, sir, to business. What crime do you propose to commit today?

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

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

Robin. No - not that - I know I'm a bad Bart., but I'm not as bad a Bart, as all that.

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

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

2. Dick Dauntless

RICHARD embraces ROSE.

Bridesmaids. "Hail the bridegroom - hail the bride Let the nuptial knot be tied -

Robin, (*interrupting angrily*) Hold your tongues, will you! Now then, what does this mean?

Richard. My poor lad, my heart grieves for thee, but it's like this: The moment I see her, and just as I was a-goin' to mention you name, my heart it up and it says, says it, "Dick, you 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 -

Robin. Will you be quiet! Go away! (*chorus make faces at him and exit*) Vulgar girls!

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

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

Rose, (*to ROBIN*) Oh, but, sir, I knew not that thou didst seek me in wedlock, or in very truth I should not have hearkened unto this man, for behold, he is but a lowly mariner, and very poor withal, whereas thou art a tiller of the land, and thou hast fat oxen, and many sheep and swine, a considerable dairy farm, and much corn and oil!

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

Rose. Still, it may be that I should not be happy in thy love. I am passing young, and little able to judge. Moreover, as to thy character, I know naught!

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

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

Rose. Yet methinks I have heard that sailors are but worldly men, and little prone to lead serious and thoughtful lives.

Robin. 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 hornpipe is the talk of the fleet! (*RICHARD dances a few steps.*)

Robin. There! That's only a bit of it.

Richard. Thankye Rob! That's well spoken. Thankye Rob!

Richard. Ax your honour's pardon but -

Sir D. Ha! Observed! And by a mariner! What would you with me fellow?

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

Sir D. I don't know them.

Richard. And I make so bold as 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.

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

Sir D. My honour does not have a heart of that description, but I have a picture gallery that presumes to take that liberty.

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

Sir D. It had.

Richard. Who should have inherited your title and with it, it's cuss.

Sir D. Aye! But he died - Oh Ruthven!

Richard. He didn't.

Sir D. He did not?

Richard. He didn't. On the contrary, he lives in this here very village, under the name of Robin Oakapple, and he's a-goin' to marry Rose Maybud this very day.

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

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

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

Richard. That's what my heart says. It says, "Dick", it says (it calls me Dick acos it's entitled to take that liberty), "That there young gal would recoil from him if she knew 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'.

3. Sir Despard

Richard. Ax your honour's pardon but -

Sir D. Ha! Observed! And by a mariner! What would you with me fellow?

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

Sir D. I don't know them.

Richard. And I make so bold as 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.

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

Sir D. My honour does not have a heart of that description, but I have a picture gallery that presumes to take that liberty.

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

Sir D. It had.

Richard. Who should have inherited your title and with it, it's cuss.

Sir D. Aye! But he died - Oh Ruthven!

Richard. He didn't.

Sir D. He did not?

Richard. He didn't. On the contrary, he lives in this here very village, under the name of Robin Oakapple, and he's a-goin' to marry Rose Maybud this very day.

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

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

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

Richard. That's what my heart says. It says, "Dick", it says (it calls me Dick acos it's entitled to take that liberty), "That there young gal would recoil from him if she knew 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.

Sir D. We have been married a week.

Mar. One happy, happy week!

Sir D. Our new life -

Mar. Is delightful indeed!

Sir D. So calm!

Mar. So pure!

Sir D. So peaceful!

Mar. So unimpassioned! (*wildly*) Master, all this I owe to you! See, I am no longer wild and untidy. My hair is combed. My face is washed. My boots fit!

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

Mar. A gentle district visitor!

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

Mar. I have! (*wildly*) Master, 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*)

Sir D. 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!

Sir D. 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?

Sir D. Because it's too jumpy for a sick room. Mar. How strange! Oh, Master! Master! - How shall I express the all-absorbing gratitude that - (*about to throw herself at his feet*)

Sir D. Now! (*warningly*)

Mar. Yes, I know dear - it sha'n't occur again, (*he is seated - she sits on the ground by him*) Shall I tell you one of Mad Margaret's odd thoughts? Well, then, when I am lying awake at night, and the pale moonlight streams through the lattice 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, "Basingstoke" - it might recall me to my saner self. For, after all, I am only Mad Margaret! Daft Meg! Poor Peg! He! he! he!

Sir D. Poor child, she wanders! But soft - someone comes - Margaret - pray recollect yourself - Basingstoke, I beg! Margaret, if you don't Basingstoke at once, I shall be seriously angry.

Mar. (*recovering herself*) Basingstoke it is!

Sir D. Then make it so.

4. Adam

From Act 2:

Robin. This is a painful state of things, Gideon Crawle!

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 advisor to the greatest villain unhung! Now, sir, to business. What crime do you propose to commit today?

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

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

Robin. No - not that - I know I'm a bad Bart., but I'm not as bad a Bart, as all that.

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

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

Adam. It would be simply rude - nothing more. Now if you were to seize Rose Maybud and confine her in the lowest dungeon beneath the castle moat, that would be disgraceful indeed. But soft - they come!

5. Sir Roderick

RODERIC enters from his picture

Sir Rod. What is the matter? Have you carried her off?

Robin. I have - she is there - look at her - she terrifies me!

Sir Rod. (*looking at HANNAH.*) Little Nannikin!

Hannah, (*amazed.*) Roddy-doddy!

Sir Rod. My own old love! Why how came you here?

Hannah. This brute - he carried me off! Bodily! But I'll show him! (*about to dash at ROBIN.*)

Sir 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.

Robin. Now I hope this will be a lesson to you in future, not to -

Sir Rod. Hold your tongue, sir.

Robin. Yes uncle.

Sir Rod. I'm very much annoyed. Have you given him any encouragement?

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

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

Sir Rod. You go away.

Robin. Yes uncle.

Exit ROBIN.

Sir Rod. Little Nannikin!

Hannah. Roddy-doddy!

Sir Rod. This is a strange meeting after so many years!

Hannah. Very. I thought you were dead.

Sir Rod. I am. I died ten years ago.

Hannah. And are you pretty comfortable?

Sir Rod. Pretty well - that is - yes, pretty well.

Hannah. You don't deserve to be, you bad, bad boy, for you behaved very shabbily to poor old Stephen Trusty's daughter. 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!

6. Rose Maybud

RICHARD embraces ROSE.

Bridesmaids. "Hail the bridegroom - hail the bride Let the nuptial knot be tied -

Robin, (*interrupting angrily*) Hold your tongues, will you! Now then, what does this mean?

Richard. My poor lad, my heart grieves for thee, but it's like this: The moment I see her, and just as I was a-goin' to mention you name, my heart it up and it says, says it, "Dick, you 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 -

Robin. Will you be quiet! Go away! (*chorus make faces at him and exit*) Vulgar girls!

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

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

Rose, (*to ROBIN*) Oh, but, sir, I knew not that thou didst seek me in wedlock, or in very truth I should not have hearkened unto this man, for behold, he is but a lowly mariner, and very poor withal, whereas thou art a tiller of the land, and thou hast fat oxen, and many sheep and swine, a considerable dairy farm, and much corn and oil!

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

Rose. Still, it may be that I should not be happy in thy love. I am passing young, and little able to judge. Moreover, as to thy character, I know naught!

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

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

Rose. Yet methinks I have heard that sailors are but worldly men, and little prone to lead serious and thoughtful lives.

Robin. 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 hornpipe is the talk of the fleet! (*RICHARD dances a few steps.*)

Robin. There! That's only a bit of it.

Richard. Thankye Rob! That's well spoken. Thankye Rob!

Rose. But it may be that he drinketh strong waters that do bemuse a man, and make him even as the wild beasts of the desert!

Rose. A maiden, and in tears? Can I do aught to soften thy sorrow? This apple - (*ROSE offers an apple. MARGARET examines it and rejects it.*)

Mar. No! (*mysteriously*) Tell me, are you mad?

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

Mar. That's well! Then you don't love Sir Despard Murgatroyd? All mad girls love him. I love him. I'm poor Mad Margaret - Crazy Meg - Poor Peg! He! he! he! he! he! (*chuckles*)

Rose. Thou lovest the bad baronet of Ruddygore? Oh, horrible - too horrible!

Mar. You pity me? Then be my mother! The squirrel had a mother, but she drank and the squirrel fled! Hush! They sing a brave song in our parts - it runs somewhat thus; (*sings*) "The cat and the dog and the little puppee Sat down in a - down in a - in -". 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. Nay! It is the accusative after the verb.

Mar. True, (*melodramatically*) I've come to pinch Rose Maybud!

Rose, (*aside, alarmed*) Rose Maybud!

Mar. Aye! I love him - he loved me once. But that's all gone. Fisht! He gave me an Italian glance - thus (*business*) and made me his. He will give her an Italian glance, and make her his! But it shall not be, 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 fain not 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! If I thought that, I would treat you as the auctioneer and the land-agent treated the ladybird - I would rend you asunder!

Rose. Nay, be pacified, for behold I am pledged to another, and lo, we are to be wedded this very day!

Mar. Swear me that! Come to a Commissioner and let me have it on affidavit! I once made an affidavit - but it died - it died - it died! 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!

7. Mad Margaret

From Act I:-

Rose. A maiden, and in tears? Can I do aught to soften thy sorrow? This apple -

ROSE offers an apple. MARGARET examines it and rejects it.

Mar. No! (*mysteriously*) Tell me, are you mad?

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

Mar. That's well! Then you don't love Sir Despard Murgatroyd? All mad girls love him. I love him. I'm poor Mad Margaret - Crazy Meg - Poor Peg! He! he! he! he! he!
(*chuckles*)

Rose. Thou lovest the bad baronet of Ruddy gore? Oh, horrible - too horrible!

Mar. You pity me? Then be my mother! The squirrel had a mother, but she drank and the squirrel fled! Hush! They sing a brave song in our parts - it runs somewhat thus;
(*sings*)

"The cat and the dog and the little puppee
Sat down in a - down in a - in - "

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. Nay! It is the accusative after the verb.

Mar. True, (*melodramatically*) I've come to pinch Rose Maybud!

Rose, (*aside, alarmed*) Rose Maybud!

Mar. Aye! I love him - he loved me once. But that's all gone. Fisht! He gave me an Italian glance - thus (*business*) and made me his. He will give her an Italian glance, and make her his! But it shall not be, 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 fain not 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! If I thought that, I would treat you as the auctioneer and the land-agent treated the ladybird - I would rend you asunder!

Rose. Nay, be pacified, for behold I am pledged to another, and lo, we are to be wedded this very day!

Mar. Swear me that! Come to a Commissioner and let me have it on affidavit! I once made an affidavit - but it died - it died - it died! 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!

From Act 2:-

Sir D. We have been married a week.

Mar. One happy, happy week!

Sir D. Our new life -

Mar. Is delightful indeed!

Sir D. So calm!

Mar. So pure!

Sir D. So peaceful!

Mar. So unimpassioned! (*wildly*) Master, all this I owe to you! See, I am no longer wild and untidy. My hair is combed. My face is washed. My boots fit!

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

Mar. A gentle district visitor!

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

Mar. I have! (*wildly*) Master, 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*)

Sir D. 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!

Sir D. 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?

Sir D. Because it's too jumpy for a sick room.

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

Sir D. Now! (*warningly*)

Mar. Yes, I know dear - it sha'n't occur again, (*he is seated - she sits on the ground by him*) Shall I tell you one of Mad Margaret's odd thoughts? Well, then, when I am lying awake

at night, and the pale moonlight streams through the lattice 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, "Basingstoke" - it might recall me to my saner self. For, after all, I am only Mad Margaret! Daft Meg! Poor Peg! He! he! he!

Sir D. Poor child, she wanders! But soft - someone comes - Margaret - pray recollect yourself - Basingstoke, I beg! Margaret, if you don't Basingstoke at once, I shall be seriously angry.

Mar. (*recovering herself*) Basingstoke it is!

Sir D. Then make it so.

8. Dame Hannah

Robin. Dame Hannah! This is - this is not what I expected.

Hannah. Well sir, and what would you with me? Oh, you have begun bravely - bravely indeed! Unappalled by the calm dignity of blameless womanhood, your minion has torn me 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 this poniard (*producing a very small dagger*) shall teach ye what it is to lay unholy hands on old Stephen Trusty's daughter.

Robin. 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!

Hannah. (*Wildly.*) Am I a toy - a bauble - a pretty plaything - to grace your roystering banquets and amuse your ribald friends? Am I a gew-gaw to while away an idle hour withal, and then be cast aside like some old glove, when the whim quits you? Harkye, sir, do you take me for a gew-gaw of this description?

Robin, (*appalled.*) Certainly not - nothing of the kind - anything more profoundly respectful -
Hannah. Bah! I am not to be tricked by smooth words, hypocrite!

Hannah. But be warned in time, for there are, without, a hundred gallant hearts whose trusty blades would hack him limb from limb who dared to lay unholy hands on old Stephen Trusty's daughter!

Robin. And this is what it is to embark on a career of unlicensed pleasure!

HANNAH, who has taken a formidable dagger from one of the armed figures, throws her small dagger to ROBIN.

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

Robin, (*in an agony of terror.*) Don't! don't look at me like that! I can't bear it! Roderic! Uncle! Save me!

RODERIC enters from his picture

Sir Rod. What is the matter? Have you carried her off?

Robin. I have - she is there - look at her - she terrifies me!

Sir Rod. (*looking at HANNAH.*) Little Nannikin!

Hannah, (*amazed.*) Roddy-doddy!

Sir Rod. My own old love! Why how came you here?

Hannah. This brute - he carried me off! Bodily! But I'll show him! (*about to dash at ROBIN.*)

Sir 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.

Robin. Now I hope this will be a lesson to you in future, not to -

Sir Rod. Hold your tongue, sir.

Robin. Yes uncle.

Sir Rod. I'm very much annoyed. Have you given him any encouragement?

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

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

Sir Rod. You go away.

Robin. Yes uncle.

Exit ROBIN.

Sir Rod. Little Nannikin!

Hannah. Roddy-doddy!

Sir Rod. This is a strange meeting after so many years!

Hannah. Very. I thought you were dead.

Sir Rod. I am. I died ten years ago.

Hannah. And are you pretty comfortable?

Sir Rod. Pretty well - that is - yes, pretty well.

Hannah. You don't deserve to be, you bad, bad boy, for you behaved very shabbily to poor old Stephen Trusty's daughter. 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!

9. Zorah

Enter DAME HANNAH from cottage.

Hannah. Nay, gentle maidens, you sing well but vainly, for Rose is still heart-free, and looks but coldly on 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!

Zorah. 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!