



AUDITIONS INFORMATION – RUDDIGORE – 2018

Musical Director: Rod Mounjed
Director: Dean Sinclair Associate Director & Choreographer: Sarah Pearce

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Auditions for principal roles in *Ruddigore* will take place on
Fri 20th, Mon 23rd & Thu 26th April 2018
in the Smith Auditorium Lyric Theatre, Shore School, North Sydney.

Audition bookings are NOW OPEN online at <http://gsos.simplybook.me>
For further information about audition bookings, email: info@gsosydney.com.au

Note: Auditions for *new chorus/ensemble* members will be held at the start of rehearsals on Tues 19th June. If you are interested in joining the chorus, please email us with your details and a contact number.

RUDDIGORE - PERFORMANCE DATES & VENUES 2018

2pm, Sunday, 23 September
Anita's Theatre, **THIRROUL**

2pm & 7:30pm, Saturday, 29 September
Soldiers' Memorial Hall: Railway Street, **BUNDANOON**

8pm Friday, 5 October
8pm Saturday, 6 October
2pm Sunday, 7 October
8pm Friday, 12 October
2pm Saturday, 13 October
2pm Sunday, 14 October
Smith Auditorium Lyric Theatre: Shore School, **NORTH SYDNEY**

AUDITIONS FOR PRINCIPAL ROLES

When making your audition booking, you will be asked to nominate the primary role that you wish to be considered for. On the day of the audition, you will be able to nominate a second preference of role should you wish to.

Singers will be asked to perform, *ideally* from memory, specific pieces of music from *Ruddigore*. Harmony parts may also be asked for, where they are relevant in the excerpts below. Candidates will also be asked to recite passages of dialogue from the show. The dialogue passages for each role are given *further down on this document*. The singing audition requirements for each role are as follows:

<u>ROLE</u>	<u>SONG</u>	<u>No. in score</u>
Robin Oakapple (Baritone)	My boy, you may take it from me	No. 7
	I know a youth**	No. 4
	My eyes are fully open (1 st verse)**	No.24
Richard Dauntless (Tenor)	I shipped, d'ye see	No.6 (pp 42 Schirmer)
	The battle's roar is over**	No. 8
	In sailing o'er life's ocean wide**	No. 10
Sir Despard Murgatroyd (Baritone)	Oh why am I moody and sad	No. 13
	I once was a very abandoned person**	No. 23
	My eyes are fully open (3 rd verse)**	No. 24
Sir Roderic Murgatroyd (Baritone/Bass-Baritone)	When the night wind howls	No. 20
	There grew a little flower**	No. 26
Old Adam Goodheart (Baritone/Bass-Baritone)	I once was as meek	No. 16
Rose Maybud (Soprano)	If somebody there chanced to be	No. 3
	The battle's roar is over**	No. 8
	Happily coupled are we**	No. 17
Mad Margaret (Mezzo Soprano)	Cheerily carols the lark	No. 11
	I once was a very abandoned person**	No. 23
	My eyes are fully open (2 nd verse)**	No. 24
Dame Hannah (Mezzo Soprano/Contralto)	Sir Rupert Murgatroyd	No. 2
	There grew a little flower**	No. 26
Zorah and Ruth (Soprano)	Fair is Rose (from Zorah's solo)	No. 1 (pp 18 Schirmer)

** Denotes secondary item/s for the role which we ask auditionees to be familiar with – particularly where there is *harmony* singing – as they may be asked to perform them (not necessarily from memory)

A plot summary of the operetta is available here....

http://www.gsarchive.net/ruddigore/html/plot_sum.html

Ruddigore, Vocal Ranges and Character Descriptions

Robin Oakapple (*Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd*)

Playing age 18-35, Singing Range: Light Baritone, low B flat (A if possible) to E above middle C.

Character: Robin starts the show as a self-effacing, modest farmer; and finishes as much the same. And whilst his character switches from “good” to “evil” between Acts, he manages to be remarkably unconvincing as a villain. The role requires excellent comic timing and some fast patter-singing – and possibly a subtle speech impediment in the dialogue.

Richard Dauntless

Playing age 25-40, Singing Range: Tenor, up to a high B flat

Character: Richard (Dick) is a rough-and-ready sailor with a talent for hornpipe dancing, and a taste for things larger than life. He’s a charmer who has an eye for the ladies. An ability to adopt a Cornish (or another English dialect) accent would be ideal for this role.

Sir Despard Murgatroyd

Playing age 25 - 35+, Singing Range: Baritone, low A to E above middle C

Character: Despard undergoes a character transformation at the Act break. In Act 1, he is decidedly villainous. In Act two, however, his sinister nature takes a puritanical, vicar-like turn.

Sir Roderic Murgatroyd

Playing age 40+, Singing range: Baritone/Bass-Baritone; low Ab > D above middle C.

Character: Despard and Robin’s evil predecessor as Baronet of Ruddigore: a ghost who threatens Robin with death in unspeakable agony if he does not commit his daily crime. Appears in Act 2 only. He sings ‘When the night wind howls’, one of the most celebrated songs in the G&S repertoire.

Old Adam Goodheart

Playing age 45+, Singing Range: Bass, Low E flat (below the bass staff) to D above middle C

Character: In Act 1, he is Robin’s most devoted servant - and in Act 2, a villain (yet still endearing) who relishes his new life as ‘evil henchman’. With only the briefest of singing moments, this is a wonderful character role.

Rose Maybud

Playing age 17-25, Singing range: Lyric Soprano, 2 octaves to top B flat

Character: A primly perfect young lady (though perhaps not as naïve as she appears) driven by a mania for Victorian manners and a desire for materialistic wealth. She is guided in life, to an absurd degree, by a book of etiquette.

Mad Margaret

Playing age 30+, Singing Range: Mezzo, low A to F two above middle C

Character: A woman damaged by unrequited love. Simultaneously tragic and comic and somewhat susceptible to mood swings and manic episodes.

Dame Hannah

Playing age 50+, Singing Range: Mezzo/Contralto, low A flat – E two above middle C

Character: A lady of the village who delivers the lurid exposition song at the beginning of the opera but turns out to be the love interest of the (deceased) Sir Roderic. She is sensible, but can also stand up in a fight. She might also have a certain 'panto dame' style about her.

Zorah and Ruth

Playing age 18-35+, Singing Range: Soprano, with easy G

Character: Professional bridesmaids. Zorah has solo singing lines, so please audition for both roles if you are interested in either. An ability to adopt a cockney (or other English dialect) accent would be ideal for these roles.

NOTE: It is not necessary to audition for the small male speaking-only roles (ghosts); these will be cast in rehearsal.

AUDITION READINGS

Reference: Full libretto available here....

http://www.gsarchive.net/ruddigore/html/rg_home.html

Robin Oakapple & Richard Dauntless

ROB. Richard!

RICH. Robin!

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

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

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

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

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

and how little I deserve it.

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

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

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

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

Robin & Old Adam

ROB. This is a painful state of things, Old Adam!

ADAM. Painful, indeed! Ah, my poor master, when I swore that, come what would, I would serve you in all things for ever, I little thought to what a pass it would bring me! The confidential adviser to the greatest villain unhung! Now, sir, to business. What crime do you propose to commit to-day?

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

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

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

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

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

Old Adam (2)

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

ROB. Hush! As you love me, breathe not that hated name. Twenty years ago, in horror at the prospect of inheriting that hideous title, and with it the ban that compels all who succeed to the baronetcy to commit at least one deadly crime per day, for life, I fled my home, and concealed myself in this innocent village under the name of Robin Oakapple. My younger brother, Despard, believing me to be dead, succeeded to the title and its attendant curse. For twenty years I have been dead and buried. Don't dig me up now.

ADAM. Dear master, it shall be as you wish, for have I not sworn to obey you for ever in all things? Yet, as we are here alone, and as I belong to that particular description of good old man to whom the truth is a refreshing novelty, let me call you by your own right title once more! (*ROBIN assents.*) Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd!

Baronet! Of Ruddigore! Whew! It's like eight hours at the seaside!

ROB. My poor old friend! Would there were more like you!

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

Richard Dauntless (& Sir Despard)

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

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

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

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

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

SIR D. It had.

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

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

RICH. He didn't.

SIR D. He did *not*?

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

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

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

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

RICH. That's what my heart says. It says, "Dick," it says (it calls me Dick acos it's entitled to take that liberty), "that there young gal would recoil from him if she knowed what he really were. Ought you to stand off and on, and let this young gal take this false step and never fire a shot across her bows to bring her to? No," it says, "you did *not* ought." And I won't ought, accordin'.

Sir Despard (1)

SIR D. Poor children, how they loathe me – me whose hands are certainly steeped in infamy, but whose heart is as the heart of a little child! But what is a poor baronet to do, when a whole picture gallery of ancestors step down from their frames and threaten him with an excruciating death if he hesitate to commit his daily crime? But ha! ha! I am even with them! (*mysteriously*) I get my crime over the first thing in the morning, and then, ha! ha! for the rest of the day I do good – I do good – I do good! (*melodramatically*) Two days since, I stole a child and built an orphan asylum. Yesterday I robbed a bank and endowed a bishopric. To-day I carry off Rose Maybud and atone with a cathedral! This is what it is to be the sport and toy of a Picture Gallery! But I will be bitterly revenged upon them! I will give them all to the Nation, and nobody shall ever look upon their faces again!

Sir Despard (2)

DES. We have been married a week.

MAR. One happy, happy week!

DES. Our new life –

MAR. Is delightful indeed!

DES. So calm!

MAR. So unimpassioned! (*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!

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

MAR. A gentle district visitor!

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

MAR. 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.*)

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

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

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

MAR. Why not?

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

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

DES. Now! (*warningly*)

MAR. Yes, I know, dear – it shan't occur again. (*He is seated – she sits on the ground by him.*) Shall I tell you one of poor Mad Margaret's odd thoughts? Well, then, when I am lying awake at night, and the pale moonlight streams through the latticed casement, strange fancies crowd upon my poor mad brain, and I sometimes think that if we could hit upon some word for you to use whenever I am about to relapse – some word that teems with hidden meaning – like "Basingstoke" – it might recall me to my saner self. For, after all, I am only Mad Margaret! Daft Meg! Poor Meg! He! he! he!

DES. Poor child, she wanders! But soft – some one 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!

DES. Then make it so.

Sir Roderic (1)

SIR ROD. Humph! These arguments sound very well, but I can't help thinking that, if they were reduced to syllogistic form, they wouldn't hold water. Now quite understand us. We are foggy, but we don't permit our fogginess to be presumed upon. Unless you undertake to – well, suppose we say, carry off a lady? (*addressing Ghosts.*) Those who are in favour of his carrying off a lady? (*All hold up their hands except a Bishop.*) Those of the contrary opinion? (*Bishop holds up his hands.*) Oh, you're never satisfied! Yes, unless you undertake to carry off a lady at once – I don't care what lady – any lady – choose your lady – you perish in inconceivable agonies.

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

SIR ROD. Very good – then let the agonies commence. (*Ghosts make passes. ROBIN begins to writhe in agony.*)
ROB. Oh! Oh! Don't do that! I can't stand it!
SIR ROD. Painful, isn't it? It gets worse by degrees.
ROB. Oh – Oh! Stop a bit! Stop it, will you? I want to speak. (*SIR RODERIC makes signs to Ghosts, who resume their attitudes.*)
SIR ROD. Better?
ROB. Yes – better now! Whew
SIR ROD. Well, do you consent?
ROB. But it's such an ungentlemanly thing to do!
SIR ROD. As you please. (*to Ghosts*) Carry on!

Sir Roderic (2)

ROD. My own old love! Why, how came *you* here?
HAN. This brute – he carried me off! Bodily! But I'll show him! (*about to rush at ROBIN*).
ROD. Stop! (*To ROBIN*) What do you mean by carrying off this lady? Are you aware that once upon a time she was engaged to be married to me? I'm very angry –very angry indeed.
ROB. Now I hope this will be a lesson to you in future not to –
ROD. Hold your tongue, sir.
ROB. Yes, uncle.
ROD. Have you given him any encouragement?
HAN. (*to ROBIN*) Have I given you any encouragement? Frankly now, have I?
ROB. No. Frankly, you have not. Anything more scrupulously correct than your conduct, it would be impossible to desire.
ROD. You go away.
ROB. Yes, uncle. (*Exit ROBIN.*)
ROD. This is a strange meeting after so many years!
HAN. Very. I thought you were dead.
ROD. I am. I died ten years ago.
HAN. And are you pretty comfortable?
ROD. Pretty well – that is – yes, pretty well.

Rose Maybud (1)

HAN. Whither away, dear Rose? On some errand of charity, as is thy wont?
ROSE. A few gifts, dear aunt, for deserving villagers. Lo, here is some peppermint rock for old gaffer Gadderby, a set of false teeth for pretty little Ruth Rowbottom, and a pound of snuff for the poor orphan girl on the hill.
HAN. Ah, Rose, pity that so much goodness should not help to make some gallant youth happy for life! Rose, why dost thou harden that little heart of thine? Is there none hereaway whom thou could'st love?
ROSE. And if there were such an one, verily it would ill become me to tell him so.
HAN. Nay, dear one, where true love is, there is little need of prim formality.
ROSE. Hush, dear aunt, for thy words pain me sorely. Hung in a plated dish-cover to the knocker of the workhouse door, with naught that I could call mine own, save a change of baby-linen and a book of etiquette, little wonder if I have always regarded that work as a voice from a parent's tomb. This hallowed volume (*producing a book of etiquette*), composed, if I may believe the title-page, by no less an authority than the wife of a Lord Mayor, has been, through life, my guide and monitor. By its solemn

precepts I have learnt to test the moral worth of all who approach me. The man who bites his bread, or eats peas with a knife, I look upon as a lost creature, and he who has not acquired the proper way of entering and leaving a room is the object of my pitying horror. There are those in this village who bite their nails, dear aunt, and nearly all are wont to use their pocket combs in public places. In truth I could pursue this painful theme much further, but behold, I have said enough.

HAN. But is there not one among them who is faultless, in thine eyes? For example – young Robin. He combines the manners of a Marquis with the morals of a Methodist. Could'st thou not love *him*?

ROSE. And even if I could, how should I confess it unto him? For lo, he is shy, and sayeth naught!

Rose Maybud (2)

ROSE. Can I do aught to relieve thine anguish, for it seemeth to me that thou art in sore trouble? This apple – (*offering a damaged apple*).

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

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

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

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

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

ROSE. (*referring to book*). “An engaged young lady should not permit too many familiarities.” (*aloud*) Once! (*RICHARD kisses her.*)

Mad Margaret (1)

MAR. (*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! (*chuckling*).

ROSE. Thou lovest the bad Baronet of Ruddigore? 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 a –” I forget what they sat down in, but so the song goes! Listen – I’ve come to pinch her!

ROSE. Mercy, whom?

MAR. You mean “who”.

ROSE. Nay! it is the accusative after the verb.

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

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

MAR. Aye! I love him – he loved me once. But that’s all gone. Fight! 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 land-agent treated the lady-bird – 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!

Mad Margaret (2)

DES. We have been married a week.

MAR. One happy, happy week!

DES. Our new life –

MAR. Is delightful indeed!

DES. So calm!

MAR. So unimpassioned! (*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!

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

MAR. A gentle district visitor!

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

MAR. 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.*)

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

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

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

MAR. Why not?

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

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

DES. Now! (*warningly*)

MAR. Yes, I know, dear – it shan't occur again. (*He is seated – she sits on the ground by him.*) Shall I tell you one of poor Mad Margaret's odd thoughts? Well, then, when I am lying awake at night, and the pale moonlight streams through the latticed casement, strange fancies crowd upon my poor mad brain, and I sometimes think that if we could hit upon some word for you to use whenever I am about to relapse – some word that teems with hidden meaning – like "Basingstoke" – it might recall me to my saner self. For, after all, I am only Mad Margaret! Daft Meg!

Poor Meg! He! he! he!

DES. 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!

Dame Hannah / Zorah / Ruth

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

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

RUTH. This is, perhaps, the only village in the world that possesses an endowed corps of professional bridesmaids who are bound to be on duty every day from ten to four – and it is at least six months since our services were required. The pious charity by which we exist is practically wasted!

ZOR. We shall be disendowed – that will be the end of it! Dame Hannah – you're a nice old person – *you* could marry if you liked. There's old Adam – Robin's faithful servant – he loves you with all the frenzy of a boy of fourteen.

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

ALL. To whom?

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

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

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

HAN. My child, he was accursed.

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

HAN. The curse is on all his line, and has been ever since the time of Sir Rupert, the first Baronet. Listen, and you shall hear the legend:

Dame Hannah (2)

HAN. Well, sir, and what would you with me? Oh, you have begun bravely – bravely indeed! Unappalled by the calm dignity of blameless womanhood, your minion has torn me from my spotless home, and dragged me, blindfold and shrieking, through hedges, over stiles, and across a very difficult country, and left me, helpless and trembling, at your mercy! Yet not helpless, coward sir, for approach one step – nay, but the twentieth part of one poor inch – and this poniard (*produces a very small dagger*) shall teach ye what it is to lay unholy hands on old Stephen Trusty's daughter!

ROB. Madam, I am extremely sorry for this. It is not at all what I intended –anything more correct – more deeply respectful than my intentions towards you, it would be impossible for any one – however particular – to desire.

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

ROB. And this is what it is to embark upon a career of unlicensed pleasure! (*DAME HANNAH, who has taken a formidable dagger from one of the armed figures, throws her small dagger to ROBIN.*)

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

END