RUDDIGORE

BASINGSTOKE
IT IS!

A CAREER OF
UNLICENSED
PLEASURE

FAIR IS ROSE
AS THE BRIGHT
MAY DAY

WE ONLY CUT RESPECTABLE
CAPERS

Chapter X
RUDDIGORE

Owing perhaps to *The Mikado*'s great success, Sullivan became more amenable to continuing his collaboration with Gilbert. *The Mikado*'s long run gave the composer time to engage in what he mistakenly considered his real forte: oratorios and other serious compositions. He also engaged in a good deal of travel and socializing with the upper crust. Gilbert found time to develop a non-lozengian libretto, a parody of old-time blood-and-thunder melodramas, which he titled *Ruddygore*. The new opera opened at the Savoy on January 22, 1887. Almost anything following *The Mikado* would suffer by comparison, and *Ruddygore* most certainly did. Audiences and critics were less than enthusiastic. Gilbert and Sullivan quickly effected some revisions, among which was a change in the spelling of the title to *Ruddigore* —considered less offensive to genteel English tastes. The opera then ran for 288 performances, which was not a bad record—except in contrast to *The Mikado*'s 672.

Ruddigore's place in the hearts of Gilbert and Sullivan devotees is akin to *Princess Ida*'s. Although the opera is among the less well known, it bears repetition and will seemingly always be popular among more experienced Savoyards.

CHARACTERS AND SETTING

Gilbert gives the time as "Early in the nineteenth century." For reasons to be explained later we can infer that the time must have been no later than 1805.

Ruthven [Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd]: This is an old Scottish family name that should be pronounced "Rivven," except as noted at the start of the second act. The name has dark overtones. In 1566 William, fourth baron Ruthven, was involved in the murder of David Rizzio, Mary, Queen of Scots's secretary and suspected lover. Worse yet, in 1600 the Earl of Gowrie, whose family name was Ruthven, kidnapped James VI of Scotland. In retribution, the Scottish Parliament passed an act stating "that the surname of Ruthven sall now and in all tyme cumming be extinguischit and aboleissit for euir." The law was subsequently relaxed for one branch of the clan. For further details see *Gowrie Conspiracy* in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (55).

Ruthven was also the name of the vampire in Polidori's novel *The Vampyre* (1819) and two derivatives: Planché and Nodier's play *The Vampire* (1820), and Marschner's opera *Der Vampyr* (1828).

Oakapple: An oak apple is a gall or swelling on oak leaves. May 29 is designated as Oak Apple Day in England, celebrating the Restoration (1660), that being the birthday of Charles II, who, after losing the Battle of Worcester, hid from Cromwell's Roundheads in an oak tree (85). That happens also to be the date of Gilbert's death (in 1911).

Foster brother: Foster brothers are unrelated boys raised by the same family.

Adam [Old Adam Goodheart]: Bradley (22) believes the name and character are "modelled on Adam, the elderly servant in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*."

Dame [Dame Hannah]: Here is a term with many implications. It might be applied to a noble lady or simply the mistress of a household. It might be a title for the wife or widow of a knight or baronet (37). Our Hannah, however, was more likely addressed as "Dame" simply because she was a well-liked and highly regarded middle-aged woman.

Baronet: Quoting J.C.G. George Esq. FSA (Scot), Garioch Pursuivant of Arms (71): "In the United Kingdom a baronet ranks above a knight and below a baron. Unlike a knight his title is hereditary but although he is of the nobility he has no seat in the House of Lords. The word is probably derived from the 'banneret' or square flag carried by the Knights Banneret as distinct from the Knights Bachelor who carried penon shaped flags terminating in a

point or points. The rank was officially instituted in 1611 when, under the Letters Patent dated 29th May of that year, thirteen knights and five esquires were created Baronets."

Some students of the Savoy operas have noted that Sir Roderic Murgatroyd was the 21st Baronet of Ruddigore. That made Robin the 22nd and Sir Despard the 23rd. Since the time frame from first to last baronet could not have exceeded 194 years (i.e., 1611, when the rank was established, until 1805), the average incumbency works out to be less than a decade. That seems unrealistically short to some pernickety critics. George (71) defends Gilbert. He observes that there were 22 Popes during the period 1605-1830, much like the period in question. He adds, "Nor is it a question of generations. Brothers and/or cousins of the same generation can, and not infrequently do, succeed to titles held by senior members of the same generation." To this I can add the further observation that the travails of the Murgatroyd Baronetcy were enough to drive any man to an early grave — or to an escape like that of Robin's. If you are willing to believe that ancestors can step out of picture frames, you can easily believe there were 23 baronets in 200 years.

Rederring: Imaginary fishing village in Cornwall; generally taken as a pun on *red herring*.

Cornwall: A county on the southwest coast of England, chiefly known for Penzance and its Pirates. Goodman (87) informs us that "although administered as a county, Cornwall is proud of being an independent duchy belonging to the Prince of Wales in his alternative title of Duke of Cornwall."

ACT I

Endowed [an endowed corps of professional bridesmaids]: Financially supported by some kind of formally established investment.

Duck [duck them in his lake]: One form of testing if a woman was a witch was to tie her to a pole and plunge her into the water. If she were a witch her witchcraft would prevent submergence. Otherwise she would merely drown and the authorities would be obliged to apologize to her bereaved family. Towns with civic pride set up permanent ducking stools for this ceremonial.

Village green: A communal grass-covered plot typically centered in an English village.

Palsied [A palsied hag]: Afflicted with palsy; trembling.

Ween [what took place, I ween]: Think, fancy, imagine, or believe—one by one, or all at once.

O'erplied [until, with guilt o'erplied]: Short for *overplied.* One meaning of *ply* is to take some form of persistent action. Sir Rupert, in short, was overcome by his guilty conscience arising from his many crimes.

Cloyed [with sinning cloyed]: Surfeited—which is a funny way of saying fed up. "Cloy" is one of Gilbert's favorite words. Be sure to commit it to memory.

Wont [as is thy wont]: An archaic term for habit.

Lo [Lo, here is some peppermint rock]: Look, see, or behold!

Peppermint rock: Pepermint flavored hard candy. It usually comes in cylindrical form, perhaps an inch in diameter and a foot long. You find them for sale as souvenirs at seaside resorts.

Gaffer: A nice old rustic fellow, generally in need of false teeth. Supposedly derived from *grandfather* or *godfather*. It was a common prefix to the name of elderly men in rural communities. Walters (194) says it is the male counterpart of *Dame*.

Hereaway [Is there none hereaway whom thou couldst love?]: In these parts.

Verily [verily it would ill become]: Archaic for *truly*, or *in truth*.

Sorely [thy words pain me sorely]: Archaic for *grievously*.

Dish-cover [Hung in a plated dish-cover to the knocker of the workhouse door]: Stell (179) explained that a dish-cover is one of those dome-shaped metal covers placed over plates or platters to keep the food hot and steaming until ready to be eaten. Rose Maybud's dish-cover was presumably silver-plated. With that kind of a bassinette, she might just as well have been set adrift among the bullrushes. But that's a different story.

Workhouse: A place where poor people were lodged and given work. Workhouses were little better than jails. Residents were in social disgrace.

Monitor [my guide and monitor]: "Something that serves to remind or give warning" (158).

Precepts [By its solemn precepts]: Instructions intended as rules of conduct, especially moral behavior.

Bites his bread: In those days a refined person would not be caught picking up a slice of bread and biting off a chunk. No. One was expected to break off a wee bit and pop it into one's mouth in an inconspicuous manner.

Marquis {MAR-kwis}: In Britain, a nobleman ranking next below a duke.

Hallowed [the hallowed name of Robin]: Past participle of *hallow*, meaning sacred.

Passing [It is passing fine]: The term is ambigious. It can mean *passably* (i.e., moderately), or *surpassingly*. Take your pick.

Fain [I would fain consult you]: Like to.

Ban [the ban that compels all who succeed to the baronetcy]: Curse.

Tom-Tit [his ship the Tom-Tit]: A small bird of the tit family, possibly a blue tit (something like a chickadee). As in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Gilbert is deriving fun from the British Navy's inclination toward giving their fighting ships awe-inspiring names. Nelson's fleet at the battle of the Nile, for example, included ships named *Goliath*, *Audacious*, *Minotaur*, *Theseus*, and *Majestic*. More fun is derived from the reminder of Ko-Ko's pathetic little bird.

Welkin [Let the welkin ring]: Heavens.

Shipped [I shipped, d'ye see, in a Revenue sloop]: Sailed as a member of the crew.

Revenue sloop: A patrol boat that cruises along the coast to discourage smugglers who are intent upon evading customs and excise duties (taxes).

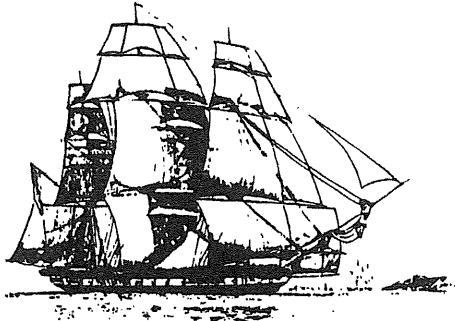
Cape Finistere: There is a Cape Finistere near the northwest tip of Spain. McElroy (129) argues convincingly that it seems more likely that Richard is referring to

Finistère, the westernmost department (political division) of France's Breton peninsula. That is a far more logical place for a British revenue sloop to be cruising and for a French frigate to be encountered.

Going free [A Frenchman going free]: Sailing downwind.

Mounseer [the bold Mounseer]: A colloquial term for a Frenchman, derived from a poor pronunciation of *monsieur* (mister).

Frigate [But she proved to be a Frigate]: A fast naval craft of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, ship rigged and heavily armed on one or two decks. By *ship rigged* we mean that the ship had three masts all rigged with square sails.



Ports [and she up with her ports]: The expression means that the other ship opened the hinged covers over the gun ports—those being the little square apertures in the ship's side out of which they poked the cannon. See page 49, Item No. 12.

Thirty-two [And fires with a thirty-two]: A cannon that fires a 32-pound cannon ball.

Parley-voo: A slang term for a Frenchman, derived from the early French lesson's "Parlez-vous français?" (Do you speak French?)

Sartin [She is sartin for to strike]: Certain.

Strike: Strike her colors, i.e., haul down her flag, i.e., surrender.

Fal-lal [to fight a French fal-lal]: A derisive term implying affectation in dress and manner (112).

Lubberly [It's a lubberly thing for to do]: Lubber is seagoing parlance for a clumsy or inexperienced sailor. Here it means cowardly. Relates to *landlubber*, and *looby*, a heavy, clumsy fellow.

Helm [So we up with our helm]: When you "up the helm" you move the tiller up wind, which turns the bow of the ship away from the wind so she scuds. See next entry.

Scuds [we scuds before the breeze]: Sail down wind—usually at a good speed.

Froggee [Froggee answers with a shout]: Derisive term for a Frenchman, derived from the popular impression of the Gallic overindulgence in frogs' legs.

Hornpipe: A vigorous solo dance once popular among sailors.

Jawin' tackle [I'll just stow my jawin' tackle and belay]: This simply means that he will stop talking. {As expounded upon in our chapter for *H.M.S. Pinafore*, tackle should be pronounced TAY-kill; but there is less reason for it in this context, and the meaning might be more obvious if it were spoken in the usual lubberly way: TACK-ill.}

Belay: Make fast or stop.

'Vast heavin' [But 'vast heavin', mess-mate]: Stop sighing. 'Vast is short for *avast*, which is a seaman's way of saying Stop! The word is thought to come from the Dutch *houd vast*: hold fast (187).

A-cockbill [What's brought *you* all a-cock-bill?]: Out of sorts. There are two explanations of this term. One relates to the condition of an anchor when it turns on its side and does not dig into the mud as it should. The other relates to the old custom of tipping a ship's yard (i.e., a spar at the top of a sail) out of its usual horizontal position as a sign of sorrow, usually when the ship was about to be scrapped.

To'-gall'n'm'st {tah-GAL-en-mist} [strong as a to'-gall'n'm'st]: Topgallant mast: the third mast segment above the deck. See page 49, Item No. 13.

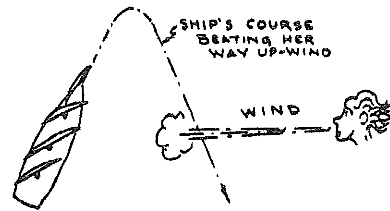
Fore-stay [taut as a fore-stay]: Part of the standing (i.e., non-moving) rigging of a ship, which prevents a mast from falling back. See page 49, Item No. 2.

Barrowknight [and a barrowknight to boot]: Dialectal for *baronet*.

Diffident [I'm timid, Dick; shy—nervous—modest—retiring—diffident]: There! Gilbert has defined it for you.

Binnacle light [with a clear conscience for your binnacle light]: Compass light.

Bowline {BO-len} [sail ten knots on a bowline]: To make good progress even when beating up wind. Sailing on a bowline means sailing close-hauled. Ten knots would be a little over eleven miles per hour, which is not bad for a revenue sloop.



Becalmed under my lee [when she's becalmed under my lee]: Read when I'm in a position to speak to her.

Fish [fish you two together]: To splice or join, i.e., marry.

Bumptious [bumptious self-assertiveness]: Rude, pushy, quarrelsome, and overly self-oriented. Not at all like you, dear reader.

Bos'n's mate {BO-sun's mate}: A sailor's way of saying "boatswain's mate." A *boatswain* is a non-commissioned officer who supervises work on deck or in rigging, usually as ordered by a higher ranking officer. A boatswain's mate is his assistant.

Addled [And hampered and addled]: Confused.

Crichton {CRY-tun} [A Crichton of early romance]: James Crichton ("the Admirable Crichton"), a Scottish scholar, adventurer, and linguist of the 16th century. A true genius and a gentleman. A more complete sketch is to be found in Chapter VII, *Iolanthe*.

Stump [You must stir it and stump it]: To boast or swagger, also to make stump speeches (66).

Ovid {AH-vid} [From Ovid and Horace to Swinburne and Morris]: A Roman poet who lived from 43 B.C. to about A.D. 18. For details turn to Chapter VII, *Iolanthe*, under the heading *Ovidius Naso*.

Horace: Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65-8 B.C.): Another famous Roman poet.

Swinburne: Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909): English poet and critic. One of the aesthetes whose mindless followers were lampooned in *Patience*.

Morris: William Morris (1834-1896): Another well-known Pre-Raphaelite. Although best remembered for his designs of furnishings, wall paper, and furniture, he was a poet as well. Like Swinburne, he lived long after the time of the supposed setting for the opera: "Early in the nineteenth century." But, no matter.

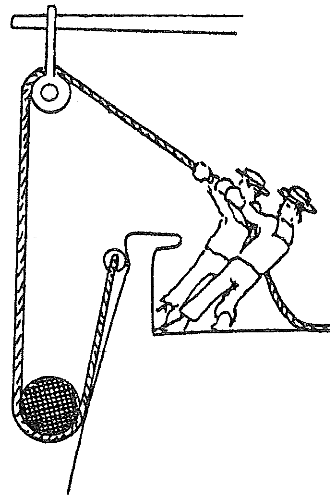
Port Admiral: The naval officer in charge of managing a naval fleet stationed in a given harbor. He would assign mooring locations, arrange for resupplying water and stores, and see to necessary maintenance and repairs.

Tight [she's a tight little craft]: Carefully built, i.e., neat and shapely; in no way resembling a sack full of old shoes.

Lord Nelson [she's fit to marry Lord Nelson]: Viscount Horatio Nelson (1758-1805): England's greatest naval hero, killed in the Battle of Trafalgar. Gilbert specifies that the action takes place early in the 19th century. This reference to Nelson pins the time down to the first few years of that century.

Aback [took flat aback]: Stopped cold. The term comes from the condition of a square-rigged ship when a change in relative wind direction causes the wind to act on the wrong side of the sail and so stop the ship's forward motion. (The ship shown on page 132 is square-rigged.)

Parbuckle [Parbuckle me]: To parbuckle an object, you raise or lower it with ropes that are looped around it. This is rather rough treatment. In modern lingo read, "Fry my hide."



Meet [Is it meet . . . ?]: Fitting and proper.

Chartered [I was chartered by another]: The phrase means that he was acting on behalf of another.

False colours [never sail under false colours]: Don't be hypocritical. The allusion is to the underhanded way in which pirates would fly some respectable flag (rather than the Jolly Roger) so they could approach another ship and take her by surprise.

Blue jacket [the happiest blue jacket in England]: Popular term for a naval seaman, named from the color of their jackets (26).

Admiral of the Fleet [I wouldn't change places with the Admiral of the Fleet, no matter who he's a-huggin' of]: This may be a sly dig at Nelson's shockingly open liaison with Lady Hamilton.

Salute [might I be permitted to salute the

flag]: Euphemism for *kiss*, and the "flag" would be Rose Maybud's cherry lips.

Welter [from tempest's welter]: Related to being tossed about in waves.

Engender [A life-love can engender]: To cause to exist, to create.

Spoke [I have—so to speak—spoke her]: When Dick says he *spoke* Rose, he is using good nautical parlance to say he has communicated with her (46, 158).

Skulk [don't skulk under false colours]: To lurk out of sight in a furtive way.

Oil [and much corn and oil]: This refers to vegetable oil. Stedman (178) reminds us that "corn and oil" is a Biblical reference to agricultural wealth.

Messmate [Thankye, messmate!]: The term *mess* can mean a space where meals are served on shipboard. *Messmates* refers to the group of seamen who eat together. Here Richard is using the term to mean a close friend, a buddy.

Strong waters [he drinketh strong waters which do bemuse a man]: A euphemism for alcoholic beverages.

Bemuse: Befuddle.

Lothario [a regular out-and-out Lothario]: A charming seducer and deceiver. The name is derived from a character in Nicholas Rowe's tragic play *The Fair Penitent* (1703).

Dead-eye [a better hand at turning-in a dead-eye]: A dead-eye is a round block of wood with, usually, three holes drilled through the flat face. They are used in pairs as a crude block-and-tackle to apply tension to the shrouds of a mast. For a picture see Chapter IV, *H.M.S. Pinafore*. "Turning-in" refers to the art of wrapping a rope around the dead-eye and binding it with lighter cord. Fortunately, the plot line is in no way dependent upon your understanding all this esoteric nautical lore. Read on.

Settle [You mean to settle all you've got]: Prestige (154) explains: "This refers to a marriage settlement, wherein the husband will give his wife a life interest in his property when she becomes a widow."

Tack [Hearts often tack]: Change direction. To tack means to zigzag upwind. See entry for "Bowline" on page 133.

Strain [its latest strain]: You may interpret this as "its latest order."

Cot [Cheerily carols the lark over the cot]: Cottage.

Whisht!: Hush!

Bowers [he wanders through its bowers]: Arbors or shady recesses.

Cytherean {sith-er-EE-en} [Cytherean posies]: Related to Cythera, the ancient name for the Greek island of Cerigo, famous for a temple of Aphrodite (Venus). Thus Cytherean posies are flowers gathered to advance an affair of the heart.

Fisht! [But that's all gone. Fisht]: An

otherwise meaningless word but said in a sibilant way expressive of rapid motion, like *w h o o s h!* (164).

Italian glance [He gave me an Italian glance—thus]: Halton (91) claims the "expression originated in the person of Machiavelli, an Italian, noted for being unscrupulous, crafty and cynical." Stedman (177) says that a character in Mrs Radcliffe's novel *The Italian* sparked a line of Gothic villains with mesmeric eyes. This became a stock characteristic in Gilbert's time. Indeed, he used it in at least two of his plays. Wilson (205) proposes "a suggestive, melodramatic look." Hyder (102) believes "it refers to an emotional, melodramatic, mesmeric, and even romantic look." Kesilman (111) and Knight (112) hold similar views. Asimov (9) supposes it to be a romantic look. The old D'Oyly Carte Opera troupe underscored the term with a dramatic flourish, holding cape in front of face with one arm and pointing melodramatically with the other. The term *glance* implies but a fleeting look, but that need not be taken too literally. In truth, of course, Margaret tends to babble incoherently, so directors are free to interpret the expression any way they choose and so are you.

Land-agent [I would treat you as the auctioneer and land-agent treated the ladybird]: A person retained by a landowner to manage an estate, collect rents, etc. (164).

Lady-bird: The little beetle we Americans call a ladybug. Are these lines intended to make sense? I doubt it. So does Asimov (9). Kravetz (115) believes Gilbert is parodying Ophelia's lines in *Hamlet*.

Commissioner [Come to a Commissioner and let me have it on affidavit]: Evans (62) explained that a Commissioner is a solicitor "especially empowered by the Lord Chancellor to administer an oath to an affidavit." Goodman (87) adds that court officers and notary publics can also fulfill the function. The full title is Commissioner of Oaths.

Affidavit: A written statement signed under oath.

Bucks and Blades: One definition of a *buck* is "a man of spirit or gaiety of conduct." As for a *blade*, well he is "a roysterer; a gallant; a sharp keen fellow; a free and easy, good fellow. (Probably from BLADE, a sword, a soldier . . . .)" (66).

Sated [With flattery sated]: Filled to capacity, stuffed.

Intramural [From charms intramural!]: Indoors, or within city walls.

Elysian [Is simply Elysian]: Pertaining to the part of the classical Greek underworld reserved for the blessed (32).

Amaryllis [Come, Amaryllis, come, Chloe and Phyllis]: Amaryllis is a classical name for a rustic sweetheart.

Chloe: Chloe was the shepherdess beloved by Daphnis, "and hence a generic name in literature for a rustic maiden—not always of the artless variety" (26).

Phyllis: Phyllis is another name associated with an Arcadian setting. The word comes from the Greek for *green bough*.

Tillage [The sons of the tillage]: Farm land. The *sons* of the same are young agricultural laborers.

Clodhoppers: Rustic boors.

Drovers: Those who drive sheep or cattle to market. Also those who sell the animals.

Hedgers: Those who cultivate and trim hedges. Hedges are often used in place of fences. The aim is to make them, as the old expression goes, "horse high, bull strong, and pig tight."

Carters: Those who drive carts.

Keepers: Those who care for flocks, i.e., shepherds.

Trice: One meaning of the word is a rope-and-pulley arrangement. Since one form of catapult was powered by twisting heavy ropes, I suppose Gilbert was justified in stretching *trice* to mean *catapult*.

Steeped [steeped in infamy]: Soaked, saturated.

Infamy: Public disgrace, ill fame.

Bishopric [endowed a bishopric]: The diocese or office of a bishop (158).

Nation [I will give them all to the Nation, and nobody shall ever look upon their faces again]: Probably refers to the National Portrait Gallery in London. Walters (194) says museums and galleries have a reputation of keeping large stocks of paintings in storage. Goodman (87) says portraits are sometimes given to the Crown as equivalent payment for death duties. Such acquisitions may end up gracing the dimly-lit corridors of civil service buildings. Shepherd (168) reports having heard *Smithsonian* substituted for *Nation* in some productions. That may seem out of place, but at least American audiences would understand the joke. MacPhail (122) recommends having Sir Despard say "National Portrait Gallery" instead of "Nation."

Doldrums {DOLE-drums, or DOLL-drums} [becalmed in the doldrums]: A belt of calms astride the equator. Colloquially a state of mental depression.

Quarter-deck orders: Orders from a naval officer and not to be debated. The quarter-deck of a ship was the area of the upper deck generally reserved for officers.

Stand off and on [Ought you to stand off and on]: To vacillate or dither. In nautical parlance, to tack in and out along the shore.

Bring her to [and never fire a shot across her bows to bring her to]: Stop her advance. Figuratively, to warn her.

Thraldom [the hideous thraldom]: Serfdom.

Fiddle-de-dee [To shirk the task were fiddle-de-dee]: Foolish, not open to serious consideration. Shipley (170) says the word derives from the Italian Fedidio, Fe di Dio (by the faith of God) and is used as an ironic equivalent of "you don't say so!"

Teem [teem with glee]: Overflow.

Gavotte: An old dance somewhat like a minuet but less stately.

Enjoyed [His rightful title I have long enjoyed]: One meaning of *enjoy* is "to have the use of." That fits the context far better than the usual meaning of the word.

Rated [But when completely rated]: Established.

Bart [When I'm a bad Bart]: Baronet. One of the standard abbreviations for baronet that would be appended to the full name, thus: "Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, Bart." An alternative abbreviation is "Bt." Next time you write to a baronet be sure to keep this in mind. "Dear Bart" won't do.

Taradiddles [I will tell taradiddles]: Fibs or yarns. Relatively innocuous little lies (66).

Falsest of fiddles: Splendaciously mendacious (with a tip of the hat to Rudyard Kipling).

Sententious [my morals sententious]: Expressed as maxims. Stuffy.

Pound [A pound to a penny]: Refers to the unit of British currency, the pound sterling. A pound in those days was worth 240 pennies (pence). The expression seems to relate to the odds in a wager.

Boon: A favor granted.

Man of descent: Someone of noble, or at least notable, family.

Lea [that bloom on the lea]: Meadow.

Deed [Who's signing a deed]: A legal document. "The reference here is to a mortgage deed, or deed of assignment, signed by a debtor in favour of a creditor" (154).

ACT II

James I [from the time of James I]: His name is familiar to us as the royal sponsor of the best known version of the Bible. He was the only child of Mary Stuart and reigned as king of Scotland (as James VI) from 1567 until his death, in 1625. In 1603, upon the death of Elizabeth I, he took the English throne as well. He was once aptly described as "the wisest fool in Christendom." He was one of the targets of the Gunpowder Plot, with which the name of Guy Fawkes is closely tied.

Roué [Sir Ruthven, wearing the haggard aspect of a guilty roué]: A dissolute person. (Some texts substitute "Robin" for "Sir Ruthven.")

Elision [With greater precision—without the elision]: Perhaps we need to repeat Sir Ruthven's entire stanza:

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

An elision is the omission of a vowel, consonant, or syllable—or even an entire word or words. This can be argued, but I believe the lines "With greater precision (Without the elision)" apply both to reinserting *Ruthven* between *Sir* and *Murgatroyd* and to pronouncing *Ruthven* as spelled, rather than as "Rivven." The latter pronunciation, incidentally, is considered correct in Scotland.

Valley-de-sham: *Valet-de-chambre*, i.e., personal servant. Only in comic operas do we find a pure and blameless peasant who can afford one of these.

Steward [As steward I'm now employed]: Estate manager.

Dickens [The dickens may take him]: A euphemism for the devil. Shakespeare

used the word in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (66).

Paramount [a . . . man's oath is paramount]: Of supreme importance.

Creep under my lee: Come under my protection.

Immure [would immure ye in an uncomfortable dungeon]: Imprison. Did you need to be told that the dungeon would be uncomfortable?

Union Jack: The national flag of the United Kingdom, comprising the superimposed crosses of St. George, St. Andrew, and St. Patrick. *Jack* has many meanings, one of which is a flag flown on a ship to show her nationality.

Solicitous [we're solicitous very]: Eager and concerned.

Subterfuge [an unworthy subterfuge]: A slippery way of wiggling out of a difficult situation.

Cloying [from your cloying guiltiness]: Satiated, perhaps even disgustingly so.

Poltroon: A wretched coward. It may be derived from the French *poltron* or the Italian *poltro*, both meaning lazy (37).

Squeamer: Gilbert's creative word meaning a person who is squeamish, i.e., easily shocked or sickened.

Hearsèd [Dead and hearsèd, all accursèd!]: Carried off in a hearse. This is from one of the first-night choruses no longer used (3).

Spectre: A ghost or apparition.

Chimney cowls: Hooded tops for chimneys.

Funeral shrouds: Winding sheets for corpses, and popular every-night attire for ghosts.

Footpads [when the footpads quail]: Robbers who travel the highways on foot. One meaning of *pad* is a highwayman (158).

Fen [the mists lie low on the fen]: Low marshy land or bog.

Mop and a mow [Away they go, with a mop and a mow]: "Gestures and grimaces" (37). Brewer (26) adds that *mop* comes from the Dutch *mopken* to pout. Farmer and Henley (66) agree that a *mop* is a grimace and they quote Shakespeare (from *The Tempest)* "Each one tripping on his toe,/ Will be here with mop and mow."

Ladye-toast: One meaning of *toast* is "a lady whose popularity is acknowledged by frequent toasts in her honour" (37). Why the appended *e* in *ladye*? Sir Roderic confesses later that he is foggy and that is the only excuse that I can produce. Some observers (162, 178, 194) think Gilbert wanted to make it look archaic.

Lantern chaps [With a kiss, perhaps, on her lantern chaps]: "Long thin jaws, giving a hollow appearance to the cheek" (140).

Bank Holiday [Monday was a Bank Holiday]: A British civil holiday, then recently instituted by Parliament (87).

Fox [On Thursday I shot a fox]: We all know what a fox is. What Americans may not appreciate is the seriousness with which English landed gentry are likely to take their fox hunting. As Burleigh (28) explains, the hunters, on horseback, gallop along after the hounds, who in turn chase a fox with the intent of catching it and tearing it to pieces. Shooting a fox, in the eyes of such huntsmen, is little less than criminal.

Forged his banker [I didn't say I forged his banker—I said I forged his cheque.]: In those days the only place you could cash a check—or do anything else with it—was at the bank where you had an account. Therefore, forging a check for a fellow who had

no bank account was about as innocuous a deed as one could imagine. Robin is merely sidestepping the issue by saying he didn't forge his banker (meaning, of course, his banker's signature).

Syllogistic form: A formal line of reasoning comprising two premises, major and minor, and a conclusion.

Gideon Crawle [Gideon Crawle, it won't do]: This name is found in place of Old Adam in some older editions of the libretto. Allen (3) explains that on opening night Gilbert had Old Adam change his name in the second act to go with his altered character. Shortly after that, however, Gilbert changed his mind and scratched out all references to Gideon Crawle, including a verse explaining the switch in the duet that opens the second act. He missed this one reference, however, and some editors and publishers slavishly kept it in until at least 1959, thus mystifying whole generations of Savoyards (76).

Compunction [Away, Remorse! Compunction, hence!]: Pity or scruple.

Hence: Go away, begone!

Note: The next five entries are from a first-night song (3) now long deleted. It comes between the time Old Adam is sent to carry off a maiden and the entry of Despard and Margaret, mad-woman, retired.

Lemon squashes [I played on the flute and drank lemon squashes]: "A drink made from the juice of a lemon, with soda-water, ice, and sometimes sugar" (141).

Macintoshes: Waterproof garments made of two layers of cloth glued together with something like rubber cement. Named after the inventor, Charles Macintosh (1766-1843).

Satyr {SAY-ter, to rhyme with first-rater.} [My ways must be those of a regular satyr]: In this context, a lecher.

Cropper [If I now go a cropper]: Experience a downfall.

Tip-topper [he who was once an abandoned tip-topper]: An abandoned tip-topper is a member of the upper crust who is given over to vice.

Another note: The next eleven entries are from another version of the same song found in many of the newer versions of the libretto (76, 78) but seldom sung in performance.

Old Bailey [On a regular course of Old Bailey]: Refers to London's Central Criminal Court, taking its nickname from the street on which it is located. Consult Goodman (85) for some significant historical details.

Prigging [There's postage-stamp prigging]: Petty thievery. Taking home stamps from the office.

Thimble-rigging: The old shell game, a swindle using three thimbles and a pea.

Three-card delusion at races: The OED (140) defines three-card trick as "a trick popular with race-course sharpers, in which a queen and two other cards are spread out face downward, and bystanders invited to bet which is queen." The game is called Three-Card Monte in America. As in England, the bystander has no chance of winning. Now you know. Don't try it.

Squires [Ye well-to-do squires, who live in the shires]: Country gentlemen, landed proprietors ranking just below a knight.

Shires: Counties, such as Hampshire, Berkshire, Lancashire, and Yorkshire. Also defined as "the counties in the Midlands in which [fox] hunting is especially popular" (158). Joseph (106) associates the term with any rural areas in the provinces.

Athenaeums [Who found Athenaeums and local museums]: Scientific or literary clubs.

Tradey [all things that are tradey]: A presumably made-up word pertaining to shopkeepers.

M.P.s [Ye supple M.P.s, who go down on your knees]: Members of Parliament.

Indite [as your leaders indite]: Write or say.

Snuff [You don't care the snuff of a candle]: One definition of *snuff* is "the charred or partly consumed portion of a candlewick" (158), i.e., a thing of no value. An alternative interpretation could be "You are unwilling to do even such a trivial thing as snuffing out a candle."

Blameless dances: In Victorian England some extreme social reformers condemned *all* dancing as improper. Despard and Margaret know they are skating on thin ice.

Spleen and vapours [Suffering much from spleen and vapours]: Melancholy and nervous weakness.

Linen-drapers [She didn't spend much upon linen-drapers]: Retailers who deal in fabrics and other dressmakers' supplies. Stedman (178) and Goodman (87) say they also used to sell ladies' underwear, or "body linen." There are two reasonable inferences. One is that Margaret went around in rags. The other is that she was scantily clad. Maybe both interpretations are valid. Kravetz (115) notes that Jessie Bond, who created the role of Mad Margaret, came on stage dressed in rags. Moreover, with arms and feet bare, she would have been considered scantily clothed in those days.

Dab [Now I'm a dab at penny readings]: Expert. Supposedly a corruption of *adept* (66).

Penny readings: Quoting Jessie Bond (121): "At that time what were called 'Penny Readings' and 'Sixpenny Readings'—mixed entertainments of music, recitations, and readings—were popular institutions in almost every town and village of England, and excellent were the programmes provided for those small sums." (She explains all that because she herself gained early performing experience in a sixpenny reading.) Goldberg (84) tells us that George Grossmith was a highly successful penny reader with the YMCA until Gilbert induced him to create the role of John Wellington Wells. For our new initiates, Jessie Bond was a leading soubrette at the Savoy for many years, creating the roles of Hebe, Edith, Lady Angela, Iolanthe, Melissa, Pitti-Sing, Mad Margaret, Phoebe, and Tessa. George Grossmith created the comic leads from John Wellington Wells to Jack Point, inclusive. Those are still referred to as the "Grossmith roles."

National School [In fact we rule a National School]: A school for the poor, one of a group founded in 1811 for education in the principles of the Established Church (105). On the first night, the expression was *Sunday School* (3). Directors of American productions might want to revert to that.

District visitor [you are now a district visitor]: A church worker who helps a clergyman in pastoral visits (37).

Eschew [eschew melodrama]: Abstain from.

Barley-water [and give them tea and barley-water]: Thin barley soup. One recipe of the day called for two ounces of pearl barley boiled in a quart of water. After that it was strained and a small piece of lemon peel added. Knight (112) says it was used to soothe fevers. It was also credited "as a medicament in the treatment of diarrhea in infants" (158). The OED (141) says it is "a drink made by the decoction of pearl barley; used as a demulcent. (*Decoction*: an extract from boiling down. *Demulcent*: a soothing substance.) Don't mistake it for the modern concoction, a fruit cordial of stronger constituency.

Deadly nightshade [a bowl of deadly nightshade]: a poisonous plant.

Latticed [latticed casement]: A *lattice* is a net-like framework made up of bars crossing one another diagonally.

Casement: A hinged window.

Basingstoke: A prosaic town southwest of London. Goodman (87) describes it as "horribly modern and faceless." Some authorities have proposed hidden meanings in the word, but I find none of them at all convincing. I think the fun is in the utter lack of meaning. Margaret is delightfully daft.

Profligacy {PROFF-lig-ah-see} [your horrible profligacy]: Shamelessly immoral behavior.

Ratepayer [a pure and blameless ratepayer]: One who pays his local taxes.

Zenith [the very zenith of their fullness]: The highest point.

Behests [I *will* refuse to obey their behests]: Commands.

Oration [and make him an oration]: A formal speech.

Twopence-halfpenny {TUPP-ence-HAY-pinny}: You know what it is, but did you know how to pronounce it?

Mad as any hatter: This expression was made popular by Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865). Although the expression dates back at least thirty years before that (64). It presumably has its roots in a former felt hat-making process. (The mercurous oxide that was used often led to St. Vitus's dance.) There are other possible origins, but Gilbert was probably thinking of Alice's Mad Hatter. See Brewer (26) for further elucidation.

Idyll {Rhymes with bridle or fiddle.} [a rather interesting idyll]: Two definitions from Collins (37): "a narrative or descriptive passage written in an elevated and highly finished style; a picture of simple perfection and loveliness." The usually preferred pronunciation is like *idle*, but in this context the alternative should be used.

Indiwiddle: A way of mispronouncing *individual* so that it rhymes with idyll. Walters (194) suggests it would have been a Victorian's affected way of saying the word.

Patter [this particularly rapid, unintelligible patter]: All G&S fans known what a patter song is, but do you know the origins of the word? It is a term for muttering or chattering in a monotone with the brain in neutral (66). It also has theological roots as explained in Chapter III, *The Sorcerer*, just below the entry for "Unified."

Minion: A servant or any subordinate, often used in the sense of being a henchman.

Stiles [over stiles]: Steps over a fence or wall.

Poniard: A slender dagger.

Miscreant: A vile, unprincipled wretch. Anyone who is behind in his or her dues to the local G&S society.

Lower {Rhymes with sour.} [When the tempest 'gan to lower]: Threaten.

Mickle [But his gallantries were mickle]: This one is not too clear. *Mickle* is an old Scottish term meaning much, great, or many. It has often been misconstrued and given the opposite meaning, even in some dictionaries. The old Scottish proverb "A wheen o' mickles mak's a muckle" (26) implies the same reversal. In the present context, we are almost sure that Gilbert used it in the sense of being small—as was certainly the case as Phoebe sings it in *The Yeomen of the Guard*. What is vital to

remember is that Gilbert wanted a word to rhyme with fickle, pickle, sickle, and trickle.

Sickle: A crescent-shaped reaping blade with a short handle. Gilbert really means a *scythe*, which is akin to a sickle but is bigger and requires two arms rather than one to swing. The scythe is the traditional implement shown in pictures of the Grim Reaper.

Tantamount [tantamount to suicide]: Equivalent in significance, i.e., amounts to.

Note: The final entries are found in some, but not all, versions of the libretto.

Mousie in the fable: Knight (112) explains that this refers to one of Aesop's fables. In it a mouse disturbed a sleeping lion. The lion was about to eat the mouse but laughed and let him go when the mouse offered to aid him in the future. Later, when the lion was captured and bound up, the mouse gnawed the ropes and freed him.

Pipe . . . eye [why I do not pipe my eye]: Cry (26, 66, 141, 158). You can imagine fitting one's eyes with pipes to bring in a goodly supply of tears.

Filly [happy the filly]: Female horse.