

MARTHA

Music by
Friedrich von Flotow

English Version by
Donald Pippin
(1982, 1994)

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Anne	Lady Harriet (Martha)	Maid of Honor to Queen
	Nancy	Her companion
	Plunkett	a farmer
	Lionel	his adopted brother
Harriet's	Sir Tristram Mickleford	an old admirer of Lady
	The Sheriff of Richmond	

Courtiers, farmers, servant girls, and hunters

Martha

von Flotow

English Version by Donald Pippin

ACT I

A German opera based on a French ballet that takes place in a colorful far-away wonderland of romance, adventure and excitement, called England. Queen Anne is on the throne -- an era of relative peace and prosperity, nonetheless a time of glaring contrasts. The distance between the classes is immense, sacrosanct and unbridgeable. It is an extremely good idea to be born rich, and well positioned. The alternatives are too awful even to think about. A man has few options; a woman has none.

Lady Harriet is one of the fortunate few, close to the court, maid of honor to the Queen, and it is her pastel boudoir that provides the setting for Act One. And what a pretty place it is -- elegant without being ostentatious, rich not gaudy, its furnishings in impeccable taste, though some might quibble and call it over-refined. For all of its charms there seems to be an element missing.

And what of the person lucky enough to live here? She would seem to be the person who has everything -- youth, beauty, charm, intelligence, wealth, position -- so why is she dissatisfied? Why does her life that seems so full yet feel so empty, even with the added good fortune of a close friend like Nancy? Why do the adoring tributes daily showered upon her by a host of suitors yield only indifference, melancholy, boredom --- even annoyance?

What is the missing ingredient? Ask Nancy.

*Scene: Time and Place: circa 1710, in and around Richmond, England
Lady Harriet's apartment. She is surrounded by solicitous friends.*

CHORUS Lady, why so melancholy,
 Why so languid, so blasé?
 Why so bored and blasé?
 Why so down on fun and folly
 That you drive them both away?

 Youth and wealth, renown and beauty,
 Tender tokens of regard,
 You accept as out of duty;
 None can stir your heavy heart,
 Oh none can stir your heart.

NANCY Youth and wealth, renown and beauty,
 Looks of sweet regard,

NANCY and CHORUS You accept as out of duty;
 None can stir your heart.

NANCY Flowers Sir Tristram sent to please you ...

HARRIET Bright bouquets I cannot bear.

NANCY See this sparkling diamond bijou ...

HARRIET Shut the lid, too harsh the glare!

NANCY But ...

HARRIET Go!

NANCY and CHORUS Lady!

HARRIET No more! Leave me here alone to weep,
 Pleasure I would freely share,
 But sorrow to myself I'd keep.

CHORUS Lady, why so melancholy,
 Why so languid, so blasé?
 Why so bored and blasé?
 Why so down on fun and folly
 That you drive them both away?

 For youth and wealth, renown and beauty,
 Tender tokens of regard,
 You accept as out of duty;
 None can stir your heart.

HARRIET Oh, leave me,
 Leave me here alone to weep;
 Oh, leave me here alone.

CHORUS Come, she would be alone.
(The friends leave.)

NANCY Ah, Milady!

HARRIET Let me languish, I implore you!

NANCY Tell me why?

HARRIET No cause at all!

NANCY Fine excuse! I'll answer for you.
 I suspect ... The tender call ...

HARRIET I, in love?

NANCY You're no exception!
 When Cupid draws, we ladies swoon and fall.

 With your beauty, charm and brilliance
 All the world is at your feet.
 Not a man among the millions
 Could resist a prize so sweet.
 Half a hundred any day
 Would gladly wipe those tears away.

HARRIET Why should I desire their praises?
 Love despised is worse than death.
 Melting words and gallant phrases —
 Those to me are waste of breath.

NANCY Dukes and barons fawn and flatter;
 Princes worship and adore ...

HARRIET I repeat, they little matter,
 For I find them all a bore.

NANCY (Here I spot the crucial factor:
 Boredom is ever but a sign.
 And unless I can distract her
 She will wither on the vine.)

HARRIET Ah, my life grows ever blacker:
 I know not for what I pine.
 Splendor, pomp, display and swagger —
 These are no concern of mine.

NANCY Parties, tournaments and dances

They prepare for you alone;
Banquets, where a knight advances
To proclaim you for his own;
Through the county every man says
He adores you;
But your heart is made of stone.

HARRIET These are praises vain and hollow;
Of these joys I want no part.
Neither Mars nor fair Apollo
Can console my brooding heart.

Delights of court and castle
I have found both dull and drear;
For a little while they dazzle,
But they fade and disappear.

NANCY Though from men you turn in boredom,
Yet the answer's all to plain;
Far too long have you ignored 'em:
You must fall in love again.

(Three menservants appear.)

FIRST SERVANT Madame, Sir Tristram Mickleford.

SECOND SERVANT Noble peer and honored Lord.

THIRD SERVANT Carriage, coach and stable master.

HARRIET (With a head of solid plaster.)

TRISTRAM *(enters)*
Lovely lady, charming cousin —
Maid of honor to the queen —
My regards I boldly venture ...

HARRIET (Still the tiresome old routine!)

NANCY (Romeo of yesteryear!)

TRISTRAM You must tell me ...

HARRIET You must ask me ...

TRISTRAM Did you sleep quite well, my dear?
And I trust your health today is good?

HARRIET Answer for me.

NANCY Quite, Milud.

TRISTRAM For amusement, name your pleasure,
I shall leave the choice to you!
Baited bears, or donkey races? ...

NANCY Donkeys! Are you competing too?

TRISTRAM Promenading?

HARRIET Thanks, but later.

TRISTRAM Pony riding?

HARRIET (Poor old fool!
His chagrin will be the greater,
But his passion I must cool.)

HARRIET & NANCY

 Could there be a knight more gallant?
For conceit he earns the crown.
But I fear his only talent
Is to play the courtly clown.

TRISTRAM My resolve grows ever stronger,
Soon to claim her for my own.
She can hold out little longer,
Oh, the best man's always won.

 My resolve grows ever stronger:
She shall be my own.
She can hold out little longer,
Such finesse I've shown.

 I have got her! She is smitten —
Most attractive man in Britain!
Soon I'll claim her for my own.

 A fencing bout?

HARRIET Go bring my fan.

TRISTRAM Maybe boating?

HARRIET My smelling salts!

NANCY (I detect waning passions already!)

HARRIET So cold! I feel a draft.
Shut the window, close the doors.

TRISTRAM Hunting?

HARRIET It's getting warm. Some air! The window!

TRISTRAM Open?
HARRIET Of course!
NANCY (Thus our Lordship stays in form.)

(Servant girls are heard outside.)

CHORUS Servants, we merrily
Step along with a song,
Come what may, on our way,
To the place we belong.

Light of heart, we depart
Hoping each to seek and find
For reward, bed and board
And a master fair and kind.

HARRIET Who is that?

NANCY So brave and cheerful!

TRISTRAM Brave? Bah! Noise I can't abide!

NANCY Inside they're glad.

TRISTRAM Who cares what they feel inside?

HARRIET Those who sing are seldom sad.

NANCY They are bound for Richmond Fair.
Off they go, with spirits high.
There the servants, up for auction,
Seek a farmer who will buy.

Some with flowers in their hair,
Others in their Sunday clothes,
They go laughing to the Fair —
After that, God only knows.

TRISTRAM How uncouth!

HARRIET An old tradition.
How I love their merry mood!
Incognito, let us follow,
Mingle with the multitude.

TRISTRAM Most improper!

HARRIET Thank you kindly,
For you've now made up my mind:

It must be fun if you oppose it.

TRISTRAM And I thought you so refined!

HARRIET Nancy, get my peasant jupe
From the recent masquerade.

TRISTRAM Ah, Madame! How low you stoop!

HARRIET No, a harmless escapade!
Quick! Hurry up!
Come along, old snob.
Martha, Nancy, and ... Sir Bob!

TRISTRAM Not so fast ... Who is Bob?

HARRIET & NANCY Three guesses who! Three guesses who!

TRISTRAM Me? Oh no! Count me out!

HARRIET What? Tristram!
I thought your love so true!
But now I start to doubt.
You are sorry? I believe you.
And to prove that I forgive you,
Here's a flower just to show.

(Coquettishly gives him a nosegay.)

Now, my lively, lovely Nancy,
Teach my Lord a peasant dance.

TRISTRAM I am not an acrobat.

HARRIET Learn to be uncouth and clumsy;
Any man can master that!

NANCY *(showing him the steps)*
Rough and ready, hale and hearty,
Forward, backward, bend the knee.
You'll be fit to join the party
With a little help from me.

TRISTRAM *(tries to dance)*
Hop and skip?

HARRIET Let's have action!

TRISTRAM Too absurd!

HARRIET Give it a turn.

TRISTRAM I'm a Lord!

NANCY That's no objection!

TRISTRAM I'm a Lord!

NANCY But even Lords can sometimes learn.

HARRIET & NANCY
 La, la, la ...

TRISTRAM Tra la la, ... (*aside*) I, a lord!

HARRIET What a talent!

NANCY What a figure!

HARRIET What a talent!

TRISTRAM I must stop, I'm nearly dead.

HARRIET Not so dainty!

NANCY Lots of vigor, lots of vigor!

TRISTRAM Twenty pounds at least I've shed.

HARRIET Not so dainty!

NANCY Lots of vigor, lots of vigor!

HARRIET & NANCY
 Bravo, bravo, you're improving,
 See, it only goes to show.

TRISTRAM I must stop, I'm nearly dead.
 Oh why, oh why can't I say no?

HARRIET & NANCY
 Very good, very good!
 Superb, tip-top!
 Bravo, Sir Bob! Bravo!

TRISTRAM Too absurd, I've got to stop.
 No, I can't go on. No, no, no!

From this rarified atmosphere, the scene changes to its opposite: noise, booths and banners, bustle and merriment -- Richmond Fair, the place where servant girls annually come literally to auction off their services in hopes of a year's employment; where the farmers come to eye the merchandise and to make their

bids, and where the sheriff lays down the law: “Every contract firmly stands once the money changes hands.” And this is where our two highborn ladies, on a whimsical impulse, in rustic garb, now come to have the time of their lives masquerading as peasantry, until they find themselves unexpectedly swept into the action, as it swirls them along towards a jolting surprise.

Scene: The market place at Richmond, set up with tents, tables, booths etc. Farmers and their families await the opening of the fair and the arrival of the servant girls who seek to be hired for a year.

FARMERS

Come, girls, everyone!
The fair begins, so join the fun.
Trim, neat, go to greet
The motley crew that bids for you.

Wear your finest bib and tucker,
Trim your nails and comb your hair;
Long before it's time for supper
You'll depart for who knows where.

Done! Cries the auctioneer,
And off you go to work a year.
Done! Cries the farmer and
He takes the servant by the hand.

Done! Cries the servant when
It's settled with the men.
And so the money's paid,
And happy the farmer and maid.

Girls, put on your finest wear
And come to Richmond Fair.
Girls, put on your finest wear
To see the fair.

Come on! Oh come along to Richmond Fair.
Come on! Welcome, all, to Richmond Fair!

(The servant girls arrive.)

GIRLS

Servants, we merrily
Step along with a song,
Come what may, on our way,
To the place we belong.

Light of heart, we depart,
Nell and Nan and Jill and Joan,
Partial to farmers who
Do not work us to the bone.

If indeed we succeed,
Nell and Nan and Jill and Joan,

We will get toil and sweat,
But a place of our own.

FARMERS Girls, you've walked many a mile;
Take it easy for a while.

GIRLS Heaven knows,
We would welcome now some rest and repose.

FARMERS Right this way.
Step right this way.
The fair's already going strong.

GIRLS So come what may,
We're on our way,
To seek the place where we belong.

FARMERS Come, girls, everyone!
The fair's begun, so join the fun.
First, best get some rest
To stay in tune this afternoon.
Come, the fair's already going strong.

(Lionel and Plunkett appear as the crowd disperses.)

PLUNKETT How they prattle, how they chatter!
Here they gather, old and young;
Lots of mirth and little matter
In the battle of the tongue.

Well, my brother,
Have you chosen someone spry, robust, and strong?

LIONEL Why so soon?

PLUNKETT So soon? It's urgent.
We must find a servant fast
For the farm that mother willed us
Just before she breathed her last.

LIONEL Angel of heaven!
She loved me like her own.

PLUNKETT Oh, a saint that none could match!
You and I know best of any,
For she brought us up from scratch.
You the foster child,
She showered with a mother's tender love.
I, her son, uncouth and wayward —
I'm the one that got the cuff.

LIONEL Best of brothers!

PLUNKETT Poor old fellow!
Not another human tie!
Cousin, brother, friend and neighbor —
All of these combined am I.

LIONEL Long before I can remember
You have shared your home with me;
With affection warm and tender,
You have been my family.

At your farm, my banished father
Found the peace, before denied.
Still in mourning for my mother,
Here within your arms he died.

PLUNKETT Who he was — his rank and station —
Of his name we've not a clue.
All he left for indication
Is the ring he gave to you.

"Should there come a time of danger,
Show it to the Queen," said he.
"She'll at once afford protection —
Save it for emergency,
Only dire emergency."

LIONEL "Seek contentment close to nature."
This he practiced all his life.
"Live and die a simple farmer,
Far away from worldly strife."

BOTH Grasping not for gold nor splendor,
Pleased with all that each day brings,
Such a wealth we'd not surrender
For the pomp and power of kings.

(The bell rings, the crowd gathers, and the sheriff enters.)

CROWD The fair has started with the bell;
Here come the lordly personnel,
So gather round and listen well:
The sheriff has lots to tell.

SHERIFF Make way for the Magistrate;
Bow in honor of the great.

CROWD Hail the mighty Magistrate.

SHERIFF Hear the law of late decreed;
Pay attention while I read.

CROWD Let us hear the sheriff read.

SHERIFF "We, Anne, ruler of Great Britain" —
Hats off! Be civilized!
Weigh well what the Queen has written —
"By royal title authorized,
Hereby solemnly declare
This the law of Richmond Fair:
Girls here seeking a position,
Hopeful servants up for hire,
Each are bound to this condition:
They must serve one year entire.
Every contract firmly stands
Once the money changes hands."
Clear enough?

CROWD We follow, we follow!

SHERIFF Good! Girls, let's hear what you can do.
Molly Pitt, we'll start with you.

FIRST GIRL I can sew, sir,
Like a pro, sir!
I am nimble
With a thimble,
I can keep the kitchen,
Starch 'n stitch 'n
Also bake and brew.

SHERIFF Worth four guineas! Who will offer?

FARMER She's a bargain, I will have her.

SHERIFF Done! Polly Smit, our next recruit ...

SECOND GIRL For a starter,
Even smarter,
I am neat 'n quick, can
Pluck a chicken,
Salt a pork 'n
Pop a cork in
Record time to boot.

SHERIFF Worth five guineas! Who will chance her?

FARMER She's for me! Done!
There's your answer!

SHERIFF What can you do, Betsy Witt?

THIRD GIRL Oh, forget her!
I am better.

I can spin or cook a dinner,
Water, weed the garden,
Trim the yard 'n
That's but half of it!

SHERIFF

Kitty Bell and Liddy Well,
And Nelly Box and Sally Fox.

FOUR GIRLS

Good at all chores
In or outdoors,
I can darn your socks
Or feed the flocks.
I'm bright 'n fast 'n
Built to last 'n
Stronger than an ox.

VARIOUS GIRLS

I can darn, sir,
Clean a barn, sir,
Wax the floor and save you money for
At market I can target
Every bargain in the store.

You will find that children mind me;
Little babies I adore.
At the market I can target
Every bargain in the store.
And in case you need a wife
I am guaranteed for life.

Wide awake, sir,
I can bake, sir.
I am handy making candy.
I can haul the logs
And call the hogs
And be of use
When time to cook the goose.

I can sweep 'n sheer the sheep
Both in my sleep;
And in case you need a wife
I am guaranteed for life.

I bake pies that take the prize;
Also big on roasted pig.
And in case you need a wife
I am guaranteed for life.

SHERIFF

A louder din I've never heard!
I simply can't make out a word!

FARMERS

Good for you, then!
If it's true then

You can bake and brew
And make a stew
And take a prize with cherry pies
I'm sure you'll more than do.

Done! Now the bargain's struck.
Done! Now it's up to luck.
Done! Now the money's paid.
Done! Now you've got a maid.

(Lady Harriet and Nancy, both in peasant garb, enter, Sir Tristram tagging along.)

HARRIET Forward, Bob! Or must we drag you?

NANCY Bob, Sir Bob! Why such a frown?

TRISTRAM Precious Bob! A bloody martyr!
I shall never live this down.

HARRIET & NANCY
How exciting! How inviting!
What a merry place to be!

TRISTRAM How I'd like to go in hiding;
What if someone else should see?

PLUNKETT *(eyeing Lady Harriet and Nancy)*
Jove! A pretty pair of pickin's!

LIONEL So refined, and pleasing, too.

PLUNKETT Too refined to feed the chickens.

LIONEL But indoors ...

PLUNKETT There they would do.

TRISTRAM See those rustic yokels gaping. Come away!

HARRIET & NANCY
Now, Bob, behave!

TRISTRAM From the gross there's no escaping. Let's go!

HARRIET & NANCY
 No, no, no!

HARRIET I am not your slave!
 I shall serve you, sir, no longer!

TRISTRAM How insane! Now do be still.

NANCY Farmer Bob, though you're the stronger,
 Do not force her 'gainst her will.

HARRIET I shall seek another place!

PLUNKETT (*interfering*)
 A blot upon the human race!
 No, no, of course you mustn't force her!
 What a scandal and disgrace!

NANCY & LIONEL
 No, no, of course you mustn't force her;
 What a scandal and disgrace!

HARRIET Oh, what recourse if he should force me,
 But to seek another place?

PLUNKETT We have brought the dog to heel.
 Girls! On you he has no claim.
 Choose a master more genteel!

TRISTRAM What outrage!

HARRIET & NANCY
 What a game!

GIRLS (*crowding around Tristram*)
 I can sew, sir,
 Like a pro, sir!
 Neat and nimble
 With a thimble,
 I can spin or cook a dinner
 Trim the yard 'n
 Weed the garden;
 I can bake 'n
 Fry a steak 'n
 Take the prize
 For cherry pies and
 Starch 'n stitch 'n
 Keep the kitchen
 Darn your socks 'n
 Feed the flocks 'n

I can sweep 'n shear the sheep 'n
Wax the floor 'n further more
I go to market where I target
Ev'ry bargain in the store.
Just in case you need a wife
I'm also guaranteed for life.

HARRIET & NANCY

What a revel! I'm a-tingle!
Oh, the fun to mix and mingle
In the presence
Of the peasants
As they tussle him about.

TRISTRAM

Oh, the devil! I'm a-flutter
Worse than evil tongue can utter!
Most unpleasant
Are these peasants
As they jostle.
I want out!

PLUNKETT & LIONEL

They can sew, sir,
Like a pro, sir,
Neat and nimble
With a thimble,
Each a winner,
They can spin or
Cook a dinner.
Handsome, too!
Pick the one that pleases you.

HARRIET *(to Nancy)*

My dear! They are all afire!

NANCY

How they look you through and through!

PLUNKETT *(indicating Nancy)*

Jove! There's the one I'd like to hire!

LIONEL *(looking at Lady Harriet)*

Why not take the other, too?

HARRIET

Look! They try to summon courage!
What could farmers talk about?

NANCY

Pigs and poultry!

PLUNKETT *(to Lionel)*

Nothing to it! Go ahead! Go ahead!

LIONEL

I'd rather not.

PLUNKETT You're a fool! Be brave like me.
 (he steps forward)
 Well, ma'am ... Well, ma'am ... Hm!

NANCY His tongue is tied.
 Let us go ... at once!

HARRIET I'm more than ready.

LIONEL *(in despair)* They are leaving!

PLUNKETT I'm such a dunce!

BOTH Hm! Hm! Hm!

HARRIET & NANCY
 Bold indeed! Though not at all alarming.
 Let's proceed, and travel on our merry way.
 So naive, they should go back to farming;
 How they try, but know not what to say.

PLUNKETT & LIONEL
 Never have I seen a girl so charming;
 Fair as Eve, and milder than the month of May.
 Eyes so sweet, and manner so disarming.
 My delight I'm helpless to convey.

PLUNKETT Gather courage ... Worth a gamble!
 Girls, you suit us well. Fair is fair!
 Do your work without a grumble
 And you'll get the best of care.

LIONEL Best ... of care.

HARRIET You want to hire us?

NANCY Ha,ha, ha, ha!

LIONEL You laugh?

PLUNKETT Well and good!
 Work is not so apt to tire us
 When performed in merry mood.

HARRIET Fancy us ...

NANCY Hard at work!

PLUNKETT *(to Nancy)*
 You will clean the stable,
 And milk the goats and feed the geese.

(to Harriet)

You will cook and tend the table,
Dig the garden ...

LIONEL Brother, please!
Such a fragile thing should never
Be exposed ...

PLUNKETT Ah, well! Whichever ...

You'll receive for yearly wages
Fifty crowns and two days' leave,
Plus a jug of beer on Sundays
And plum pudding Christmas Eve!

HARRIET Who'd refuse such lavish rations?

NANCY Far beyond my expectations!

PLUNKETT & LIONEL Done!

HARRIET & NANCY Yes, done.

PLUNKETT & LIONEL
Done! and here's your fee.
(they toss them some money)
Let's be off and speedily!

HARRIET & NANCY
Bold indeed! Perhaps a bit alarming.
Let's proceed and travel on our merry way.
Let us leave, and send them back to farming;
Out to buy, they even offer pay.

Rather fun, rather fun,
But enough of the game.
Though a harmless little game,
Let us go the way we came.
Though a harmless little game,
We'd better go the way we came. Away!

PLUNKETT & LIONEL
Never have I seen a girl so charming,
Fair as Eve and milder than the month of May.
Eyes so sweet and manner so disarming;
My delight I later shall convey.

All is done, all is done,
So it's off and away.
No more reason we should stay;
Take the girls and let's away.
No more reason we should stay;

So take the girls and let's away. Away!

TRISTRAM *(returns, the servant girls still clustering around him)*
There! You're welcome to the money,
Only give me peace at last.
Lord! What's happened? Not so funny!
(to Harriet and Nancy)
Come with me!

PLUNKETT Sir, not so fast!

HARRIET & NANCY
Take us home!

PLUNKETT Your home's with us!

LIONEL You both agreed.

PLUNKETT You took the fee.

LIONEL That you did. You're ours!

HARRIET *(to Sir Tristram)*
Hush! I'm ruined if this story gets around the court.

NANCY *(to Sir Tristram)*
Hush! She's ruined if discovered;
None will come to her support.

TRISTRAM Away!

HARRIET & NANCY
Let's be off!

PLUNKETT & LIONEL
A moment! A moment!
We have hired you for one year!

TRISTRAM Holy smoke!

PLUNKETT You can argue with the sheriff,
But the law is plain and clear.

TRISTRAM Miserere! Miserere! Miserere!

SHERIFF Every contract firmly stands
Once the money changes hands.

CROWD Every contract firmly stands
Once the money changes hands.

HARRIET, NANCY, PLUNKETT & LIONEL
So the contract firmly stands!

CROWD
Maybe awful,
But it's lawful!
Listen, honey, you took money,
And from what I hear,
It's clear, my dear,
You're stuck for one whole year.

HARRIET & NANCY
How simply awful that it's lawful!
A mistake, I see, to take the fee.
From what I hear, oh dear, oh dear!
We're stuck for one whole year.

TRISTRAM
How simply awful if it's lawful!
Though it baffles me, they took the fee.
From what I hear, oh dear, oh dear,
They're stuck for one whole year.

PLUNKETT & LIONEL
Though maybe awful, still it's lawful.
And as all agree, you took the fee,
And from what I hear, it's clear, my dear,
You're stuck for one whole year.

CROWD
Stuck! Not a doubt of it!
Stuck! No way out of it!
Stuck! Stuck! Stuck!

Girls, off! On your way!
There's nothing left to do or say.
Mind your master and
Extend to him a helping hand.

The fee once paid,
The law must be obeyed.
Law of the land!

End of Act I

ACT II

The feminine touch that may have seemed a bit cloying in Scene One is conspicuously absent in Scene Three -- a simple farmhouse, roughhewn and rugged, basic-basic, its few amenities consisting largely of a spinning wheel, a sturdy cooking stove and an assortment of mops and brooms. Escorted by their new employers, it is here that our two delicately nurtured blossoms arrive, after a most exhausting and bewildering day, in which they have unwittingly hired themselves out for what promises to be a no less exhausting year ahead.

Scene: The farmhouse of Plunkett and Lionel. They are returning from the fair with Lady Harriet and Nancy.

PLUNKETT and LIONEL

We're home! This place is ours,
So step inside the door.

HARRIET and NANCY

Oh, two more wilted flowers
You've never seen before.
The consequence appalling
Of our stupid joke.
To leave, and in a hurry!
I'll not survive a year
In such an atmosphere.

PLUNKETT and LIONEL

A modest, country dwelling
For plain and simple folk ...
Be calm, and have no worry.
You'll learn to like it here.
To bed! We all should hit the sack!
At dawn comes brush and broom.

HARRIET and NANCY

Oh, woe is me! Alas, alack!
A nightmare, I presume;
For us prepare the tomb.

PLUNKETT and LIONEL

No need to fret or worry;
You'll learn to like it here.

HARRIET and NANCY

To leave and in a hurry!
I'll not survive a year
In such an atmosphere.
Oh woe is me,
I can't go on.
I simply cannot go on.

PLUNKETT and LIONEL

To bed! We all should hit the sack.
For here the work begins at dawn.

NANCY

So woe begone, I can't go on.

PLUNKETT

Girls, there's the room you'll share.

HARRIET

Good night!

NANCY

Good night!

PLUNKETT Oh, not so fast!
 There is supper to prepare.

HARRIET and NANCY
 Would this moment were my last!

LIONEL They're exhausted, have a heart.

PLUNKETT You would spoil them from the start.

NANCY *(to Lady Harriet)*
 (See what comes of playing games.)

PLUNKETT By the way, what are your names?

HARRIET and NANCY Names?

LIONEL Come, tell us.

PLUNKETT Speak up ... we're not ogres.

HARRIET *(hesitantly)* My name is Martha.

LIONEL Martha?

HARRIET Yes!

PLUNKETT *(to Nancy)*
 Well, and you?

NANCY (What shall I answer?)

PLUNKETT You don't remember?

NANCY Ju - li - a.

PLUNKETT Julia! The haughty Roman!
 Julia! The aristocrat!
 Grand Madame! Oh, lofty lady —
 Take my overcoat and hat.

NANCY Do it yourself.
 (She throws them on the floor.)

PLUNKETT Hell and damnation!

LIONEL She's upset ... be diplomatic ...
 Soft and sweet ... here, let me show ...
 Martha, dear ... be kind and take ...

HARRIET *(spoken)* NO!

LIONEL I must be hard of hearing —
Can servants answer so?
Such bold disdain and daring
Are hardly apropos.

PLUNKETT I must be hard of hearing —
Can servants answer so?
Such bold disdain and daring
Have surely got to go.

NANCY Uncouth and overbearing!
He cannot treat me so;
Though far from bold and daring,
We have to make a valiant show.

HARRIET Though not so domineering,
He cannot treat me so.
By cold disdain unsparing
I'll have to keep the man in tow.

PLUNKETT Go and get the spinning wheel;
No time for leisure.

HARRIET Spinning? Spinning?

NANCY Surely not!

LIONEL But of course!

PLUNKETT Do you think you are visiting for pleasure?

HARRIET Ha, ha, ha, ha, spinning!

NANCY Ha, ha, ha, ha, spinning!

PLUNKETT (*imitating*)
Ha, ha, ha, ha, spinning!
Just between me and you,
Is there nothing you can do?
And you dare expect good wages?
Fetch the wheel!

HARRIET and NANCY
How he sputters, how he rages!

LIONEL Brother, not so hard and stern.

PLUNKETT Hell! We're back to basic training.

HARRIET Hopeless!

NANCY Hopeless!

LIONEL What?

PLUNKETT Sit down! You'll learn!

HARRIET and NANCY
 (*frightened*) Yes, sir.
 (*they sit at the wheels*)

PLUNKETT Turn until it goes purr, purr, purr.

NANCY It doesn't turn.

HARRIET It doesn't turn.

PLUNKETT Purr, purr, purr ...

LIONEL Once the wheel begins to hum,
 Guide the thread with your thumb.

HARRIET and NANCY
 Oh, I give up, it doesn't come.

PLUNKETT and LIONEL
 Turn it!

HARRIET and NANCY
 Hopeless! No talent!
 Hopeless! Can't. No use.

PLUNKETT and LIONEL
 Draw! Turn it! Faster! Now spin!

LIONEL Make an effort.

PLUNKETT Now spin!

HARRIET and NANCY
 No use!
 (*to Plunkett*)
 Why don't you show us how?

PLUNKETT All right, you win.

 (*sits at the wheel*)
 Turn the wheel to start it whirring,
 On the pedal lightly tread;
 When you hear the merry purring,
 Feed the flax and draw the thread.

NANCY So adept, he starts it whirring,

Hercules with dainty tread!
See him with a hand unerring
Feed the flax and draw the thread.

PLUNKETT Purr, purr, purr, purr!

HARRIET How delightful! Very simple!
 With his thumb he guides the spindle!

PLUNKETT and LIONEL
 Can you do it?

HARRIET and NANCY
 Now we can!

PLUNKETT and LIONEL
 You will try it?

HARRIET and NANCY
 So much fun!

PLUNKETT and LIONEL
 As you see, there's nothing to it,
 Once you know that you can do it.

ALL Ha, ha, ha, ha ...

PLUNKETT and LIONEL
 Turn the wheel to start it whirring,
 On the pedal lightly tread;
 When you hear the merry purring,
 Feed the flax and draw the thread.

NANCY So adept, I start it whirring,
 On the pedal lightly tread;
 See me with a hand unerring
 Feed the flax and draw the thread.

(Nancy overturns the spinning wheel and runs out, followed by Plunkett.)

HARRIET Nancy! Julia! Don't leave me!
 Ha, alone, without a friend!
 If only she had stayed!

LIONEL Stay here, Martha.
 Are you timid, or afraid?

HARRIET Of you? Of course ... I'm not.

 He appears polite and gentle,
 Neither crude nor cavalier;
 Why then do I start to tremble,

Just because he stands so near?

LIONEL Such a lovely charm of manner,
So enchanting, yet sincere,
That my heart begins to hammer,
And just because she stands so near.

Dear, I'm not a cruel master,
Never surly nor severe,
And you need but name your pleasure ...

HARRIET (All alone she leaves me here,
All alone she leaves me here.)

LIONEL Martha, I cannot conceal it;
There is something I must say;
From the moment that I saw you ...

HARRIET (Oh, how long she stays away!
Oh, how long she stays away!)

LIONEL Martha, Martha!

HARRIET He grows bolder.

LIONEL I've a heart both tried and true ...

HARRIET Sir, you're far too good a master;
As a maid, I'll never do.

LIONEL Never do? Never do?

HARRIET Absurd and shallow,
I can only sing and play.
Otherwise, I'm good for nothing.
Let me go, I'm good for nothing.

LIONEL No, I would die,
I would die were you away.

HARRIET Sir!

LIONEL No! If you care not for labor,
You shall sing the whole day long!
Let the tune inspire your neighbor:
We can toil to your song.
Sing for me now ...

HARRIET I've forgotten ...

LIONEL Something sweet and from the heart,
Sing a song of days gone by.

HARRIET Not now!

LIONEL (*seizes some flowers she is wearing*)
 Your bouquet I'll keep if you deny.

HARRIET My faded rose!

LIONEL Even part ...

HARRIET You wish?

LIONEL I beg ...

HARRIET Well ... a servant should comply.

'Tis the last rose of summer,
Left blooming alone;
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone.
No flower of her kindred,
No rosebud is nigh,
To reflect back her blushes,
Or give sigh for sigh.

I'll not leave thee, thou lone one!
To pine on the stem;
Since the lovely are sleeping,
Go, sleep thou with them.
Thus fondly I pluck thee
That thy beauty I may save,
And keep thee forever
When I lie in my grave.

BOTH And keep thee forever
 When I lie in my grave.

LIONEL Martha!

HARRIET Sir!

LIONEL I fell in love
 With your eyes that burn so bright!
 Your enchanting grace and beauty
 Flood my heart with joy and light! Martha!

HARRIET Stop, sir!

LIONEL Since the moment I saw you first ...

HARRIET Say no more!

LIONEL Martha!

HARRIET No, no!

LIONEL Martha!

HARRIET No!

LIONEL My dear!

HARRIET No!

LIONEL My dear!
Ah, take the hand and heart I offer.
Be my wife and accept my love
With all I have.

HARRIET (Heaven help me!)

LIONEL Yours forever ...

HARRIET (He is pleading!)

LIONEL At your feet I fall.

HARRIET Sir! Sir! Sir!
And on your knees, too!
Ha! My laughter you must pardon —
Ha, ha, ha! Now do get up.

LIONEL I shall raise you to my level;
I can change your lowly rank.

HARRIET Overlook my lack of breeding?
Sir, you're marvelously frank!

LIONEL She mocks the love I offer,
And turns it down in scorn;
She revels while I suffer,
And leaves my hopes forlorn.

Too proud to let me love her,
To share my simple lot!
Yet she alone, none other,
Can heal my broken heart.

HARRIET I grieve to see him suffer;
My heart for him is torn.
The love that he would offer
Is not a prize to scorn.

He's bound to find another

Less cold and hard of heart.
The sooner I am far away,
The sooner well forgot.

LIONEL Too proud to let me love her,
Or share my simple lot!
Yet she alone, none other,
Can heal my wounded heart.

HARRIET The sooner well forgot.

LIONEL So must my dream depart.

(Plunkett returns, leading Nancy by the arm.)

PLUNKETT Just because I wasn't looking!
Barely do I turn my back,
When the kook, instead of cooking,
Burns the copper kettle black.
For a servant so provoking
I would recommend the sack!!

NANCY Disappear! When I get angry,
I am wilder than a cat.

PLUNKETT Oh, the devil! But the catch is —
I admire a girl like that.

NANCY Martha!

PLUNKETT Come! Now what's the matter?
Why the tired, droopy head?
Trust tomorrow will go better!
Run along, it's time for bed.

(The clock strikes midnight.)

EACH IN TURN Twelve o'clock!

LIONEL *(to Martha)*



Go to sleep, and yet with sorrow for the love you hold so light, ah!

When we meet again tomorrow
Be more tender ... so, good night.

NANCY Off to bed, to dream in sorrow
Of escape and speedy flight.
Pray to God that by tomorrow
We'll be gone ... so, good night.

PLUNKETT Off to sleep, but not in sorrow,

For I like you well despite.
Mind you mend your ways tomorrow,
Little lady! Say good night.

HARRIET With a heart too full of sorrow
For a love I can't requite,
I can only hope tomorrow
Offers comfort ... so, good night.

ALL Pleasant dreams and good night.

(Lionel exits with Plunkett, who locks the door.)

HARRIET Nancy!

NANCY My lady!

HARRIET We are stranded.

NANCY We cannot stay!

HARRIET We must flee!

NANCY They have left us here unguarded ...

HARRIET Yes, but under lock and key.

NANCY What a simply awful day!

HARRIET And a night that stretches long ...

NANCY Thank the Lord, they're both good-hearted.

HARRIET One so gentle ...

NANCY One so strong.

HARRIET If the Queen should ever learn ...

NANCY We would never hear the end.

BOTH Ah! Ah!

HARRIET What a sad affair!

(A knock on the window from outside.)

BOTH Ye Gods!

HARRIET Who can it be?

NANCY I am too far gone to care.

TRISTRAM *(from outside)*
Ladies! Ladies!

HARRIET Tristram!

NANCY St. George!

HARRIET *(His frown and fury I deserve the most.)*

TRISTRAM *(entering through the window)*
Well, I declare! Bless me, fancy!
Lady Harriet here with Nancy!

NANCY Hush! Do not disturb our sleeping host.

HARRIET Oh, my friend!

TRISTRAM If you ladies will be patient
I have left my carriage stationed
Near the bend.

HARRIET Let us fly!

ALL Double-quick!

ALL Let us scamper, let us scurry!
Hesitate and we'll be sorry.
Thanks to help from God on high,
We can bid the farm goodbye.

HARRIET Ah, ah, goodbye.
Peaceful farm we say goodbye.

NANCY Oh peaceful farm, goodbye.
Ah, goodbye!

TRISTRAM Ah, goodbye!

(All climb out through the window, and soon the sound of disappearing carriage wheels is heard.)

PLUNKETT *(entering)*
It's enough to try a saint!
Just as I was sound asleep!
Carriage wheels ... What a clatter!
Ha, the window! Something odd,
Something weird!

LIONEL *(enters)*
What's the matter?

PLUNKETT We've been robbed!
Wait ... the girls! Disappeared!

LIONEL They are gone? Oh, my beloved!

PLUNKETT What we get for being nice.

LIONEL Come, we've got to overtake them.
We must pursue!
I'll die without her.

PLUNKETT Ha! I'm not so upset as you.
But it hurts my manly pride
To be taken for a ride.
Neighbors, help us! Hurry! Hurry!

SERVANTS (*rushing in*)
What is all the noise about?
Why the holler, why the whoop?

PLUNKETT Our servant girls have flown the coop.
Comb the country till they're found!
The lucky man will get a pound.

SERVANTS The lucky man will get a pound!

PLUNKETT Get a move on! Hurry! Hurry!

OTHER SERVANTS What is all the noise about?
Why the holler, why the whoop?

PLUNKETT Our servant girls have flown the coop.
Take the horses and the hounds:
The lucky man will get two pounds.

SERVANTS The lucky man will get two pounds.

PLUNKETT On the track of missing beauties,
Comb the forest and the field;
They betray their lawful duties,
And to justice they must yield.

SERVANTS Bound to be well rewarded,
We'll comb forest, ford and field,
Never rest till we've reported
Where the culprits are concealed.

Trust to us, and we'll discover
The place the culprits are concealed.
Hot on the track, we'll hunt all over,
Comb the forest and the field,

Soon to bring them back.

End of Act II

ACT III

Several weeks have gone by since our two ladies escaped from the farmhouse. A sylvan scene unfolds . . . the fringe of a lush forest, a favorite hunting ground of the Queen and her royal entourage. Also the scene of a rustic tavern, with outdoor benches, where local farmers and their buddies come for a few midday rounds of wholesome English beer. Evidently, a place where two widely separate worlds sometimes collide . . .

Scene: Outside a small inn in a woodland setting. Plunkett and friends are seated around a bench.

PLUNKETT What is the gift that lights our shores,
 Inspires our lads to win the wars
 That keep Great Britain free?
 Ah, for the nectar pure and clear,
 Hail to the wholesome glass of beer,
 The brew the British hold so dear —
 So how about one more round on me?

 Ah, hurrah for malt and hurrah for hops,
 We'll drink until the last trickle stops.
 Hurrah, tra la la! Hurrah!

ALL Hurrah!

PLUNKETT What is inside that bountiful jug
 That urges John Bull to give a shrug
 And belt out a song of glee?
 Ah! Beautiful beer, so clear and cold,
 Beverage worth its weight in gold,
 The brew that makes the British bold,
 So how about one more round on me?

 Ha, hurrah for hops and hurrah for malt!
 If I go home sober it's not my fault.
 Hurrah! Tra la la! Hurrah!

ALL Hurrah, hurrah! A hearty cheer for English beer.

(A sound of horns in the distance.)

FRIENDS Hark! The hunting horn is sounding.

PLUNKETT Yes, the Queen, with bow and spear,
 Comes today to hunt the deer,
 In the woods and field surrounding.

FRIENDS Come! We'll see them on their mettle.

PLUNKETT First, the bill I'll have to settle.

(The men leave; Plunkett goes into the inn. Nancy and a group of ladies from the Queen's hunt enter, all in hunting garb.)

HUNTRESSES Women eager for the chase,
We hunt for the hunter, bearing the bow.
Out for love, we set the pace,
Cry on with the sport, ready or no.

With fire and fever in our blood,
The game we hunt had best beware;
Deterred by neither wild nor wood,
With skill we bait the fatal snare.

In secret, though, we hunt the game
Not to capture, but to tame.
Kind of heart, we trap the game
But to touch and tame.

NANCY In my heart I've no room for sorrow;
I know not what it means to despair.
For at twenty one lives for tomorrow
And the sun rises clear, bright and fair.

Yet a voice deep inside I hear:
What does it say, ever so still?
Ah. Love alone is worth a tear!
Ah, sigh for love if sigh you will!

Happy the heart in love content,
For life is a flower and love the scent.
Ah. Love alone is worth a tear,
Says the soft voice I hear.
Sigh for love if sigh you will.
For love. Sigh for love.
Love alone is worth a tear.

Sharp of eye, swift and sly,
Our fair hunter seeks the prey,
And perchance with a glance
She can bring the stag to bay.

Unprepared, those ensnared
Sigh when they behold her face;
In pursuit, she can shoot
To the heart and leave no trace.

NANCY Cupid draws a wicked bow,
 In the dark for a lark,
 But his arrows straightway go
 To the mark.

 Ah, the game that we would meet
 We do not shoot to kill;
 It falls compliant at our feet.
 Observe the art that shows our skill:
 We're never seen to hunt the prey —
 Instead we simply turn the other way.

PLUNKETT *(comes out from the inn)*
 Ah, what dainty fare! A feast!
 I would sample six at least.

NANCY *(aside)* Where, oh where to find my Lady?
 From her friends she stays away,
 Sick at heart, withdrawn and moody
 Ever since that strange and fatal day ...
 Fatal day! ...

(to Plunkett) Pardon, sir ... Can you tell me which ...
 Oh, no!

PLUNKETT Julia here! Good Lord! She's struck it rich!

NANCY *(recovering)* My good friend ...

PLUNKETT No friend of mine!
 Here's a matter for the sheriff,
 Who will lay it on the line.

NANCY Are you mad?

PLUNKETT Did you forget your obligations?

NANCY Ladies, help!

PLUNKETT Come along.

NANCY You are absurd, to say the least.
 Ready, huntresses! Attack!
 Open fire upon the beast!

HUNTRESS Hunt the brute in hot pursuit;
 Get ready the bow, arrow in place.
 Resolute, prepare to shoot,
 Go after the man! On with the chase!

PLUNKETT Pack of demons! Oh, the devil!

Their attack is on the level.
Biting arrows, sharp and steady,
In my flesh I feel already.
By Saint George and Lucifer,
This becomes a massacre.
By the other saints as well,
I must hurry like hell.
I must run like hell.

(Plunkett runs off, pursued by the huntresses)

(Lionel enters, profoundly dejected. He recalls Martha's song.)

LIONEL

"Thus fondly I pluck thee
That thy beauty I may save,
And keep thee forever
When I lie in my grave ..."

Where am I? Too well I know ...
No longer by her side!
She haunts me day and night,
Pursues me in my dreams.
The beauty of her eyes
Turns shadow into light;
She snatches me from hell
To soar in paradise.

Angel on earth, gentle and fair,
Tender creature of light and air,
Mild as the May, soft as the dove —
When I saw, I fell in love.

Until then, all forlorn,
I would sigh for dreams denied;
On that day, hope was born,
And despair I cast aside.

But alas! I was blind,
For the dream was not to stay;
I awoke but to find
That my love had fled away,
Fled far away.

Angel on earth, gentle and fair,
Tender creature of light and air,
Mild as the May, soft as the dove —
When I saw, I fell in love.

Martha! Martha! I implore:
Leave me not in agony.
What you gave, again restore;
Share once more your heart with me.
Ah, Martha! Oh, my love! Share with me.

(He lies down on a bank of turf, and remains absorbed in memories. Lady Harriet and Sir Tristram enter, and remain unaware of Lionel's presence.)

TRISTRAM The Queen would take some rest
 Within this pleasant wood.
 Come, join her ladies.

HARRIET I choose to be alone.

TRISTRAM *(sighing)*
 With me?

HARRIET With you? It matters not to me.
 (With such a friend around
 I am no less alone.)

TRISTRAM Still moody?

HARRIET Go, if sorrow doesn't suit you.

TRISTRAM Away? And leave you here?

HARRIET Precisely! Go!

TRISTRAM I'm going.

(he exits)

HARRIET Quiet wood and lofty meadow,
 Share my secret, dark and deep;
 Sadly here within your shadow
 Let me sit alone and weep.

HARRIET The confusion I have suffered
 May I freely here confess:
 For I spurned the love he offered,
 Though my heart would cry out, yes.

LIONEL So like her voice ...
 (emerging from his reverie)
 Ah, a lady ... of distinction ...

HARRIET Lionel! Here!

LIONEL Martha! Martha!

HARRIET (How am I to get away?)

LIONEL God be praised!
 Oh, the joy again to see you!
 Now I start to live again.

HARRIET (I mustn't.)

LIONEL You stare at me in wonder ...

In your eyes I see disdain.

HARRIET Sir, you've made a mistake.

LIONEL Your image is engraved within my heart.
I'm not fooled by all your splendor.
I know you, my only love!

HARRIET Just a dream!

LIONEL Ha! If I'm dreaming,
May I never, never wake.
But before the dream is ended
Some remembrance I shall take.

HARRIET Go away!

LIONEL No, no, I'm dreaming!
Dreaming, I hold your lovely hand,
And I cover it with kisses —
For a moment you are mine.

HARRIET Sir! I'll not be so insulted!
Leave me! That is a command!

LIONEL No, I spoke but from the heart.

HARRIET You're a clod, a lowly peasant!

LIONEL I? I so lowly?
You forget who I am.
Fine words, coming from a maid!
All along I've been too lenient —
Now the master will be obeyed!

HARRIET (*in terror*) Tristram! Tristram!

TRISTRAM (*from outside*)
I'm coming!

HARRIET Help me! Help me!

TRISTRAM (*rushing in*)
Ah, who dares?

LIONEL I, her master.
Sir, by law she is my servant.
By god above I claim my right!

TRISTRAM You have gone beyond the limit;
Such abuse we shall not stand.
You shall pay for such presumption.

Friends, come over, lend a hand!

CHORUS *(who swarm in)*
This I call a shocking scandal,
Just as we were having fun!
Such intruders we can handle;
Oh, we'll make the rascal run.

HARRIET Ah, no grief can hold a candle,
For I know the wrong I've done;
I myself have caused the scandal,
And 'tis I that must atone.

LIONEL Ah, no grief can hold a candle
For my faith in her is gone.
Never mind the clash and scandal,
Life or death to me are one.

PLUNKETT *(entering)*
Speak, my friend. What's all the fuss?

LIONEL Help me out!

NANCY *(entering)* What's going on?

LIONEL Julia, too!

PLUNKETT Back again.

NANCY What is the matter, Milady?

LIONEL Milady! Now I see!
Her pretended charm and candor
Was but horrid ridicule;
All the while that I responded
I was taken for a fool.

TRISTRAM Tie him up, the man is crazy.

LIONEL Tie me up?

PLUNKETT Tie him up?

HARRIET and NANCY
No, no, not that!

LIONEL Hear me first!
I will tell what happened — then decide.

HARRIET and NANCY
Oh, God! No more!

LIONEL To my house this woman came
As my servant, hired and paid.

CHORUS What?

HARRIET and NANCY
 Ha, ha, ha, ...

TRISTRAM and CHORUS
 Ha, ha, ha, ...

HARRIET Gently, treat him with compassion;
Let the man in peace depart.
He is clearly in delirium,
Though I'm sure he's good at heart.

CHORUS Madman! Madman!

LIONEL Cursed devils!

NANCY Treat him kindly.

PLUNKETT I protest!

TRISTRAM Stay out of this.

LIONEL



That has brought despair and horror
To an all too trusting heart.

Fervent hopes and dreams lie broken,
Crushed beneath a mortal blow;
First deceived and then forsaken,
My despair to you I owe,

Ah, pray that God above may pardon
Her malign and cruel sport,
That has torn my life apart.

HARRIET God above, I pray for pardon
For my rash and cruel sport
That has brought despair and horror
To an all too trusting heart.

Mortal pain, despair and horror!
By my own misguided hands he is hurt.

TRISTRAM Hurry up! No hope of pardon

For a tale without support;
But I blush for shame and horror
At a man so false of heart.

PLUNKETT and NANCY

God alone some day may pardon,
And to Him she must resort.
She has brought despair and horror
To an all too trusting heart.

CHORUS

God forbid that we should pardon
One who so insults the court;
But I blush for shame and horror
At a man so false of heart,
So corrupt and false of heart
That he dares insult the court.

CHORUS Her Majesty the Queen arrives!

LIONEL A ray of hope! The Queen arrives!
(to Plunkett)
Take the ring my father gave me
Just before his final breath.
Show the Queen, and she will save me
From a danger worse than death.

(Members of the Queen's Hunt assemble.)

HUNTERS Morn till night
 'Tis our delight
 Through thicket and thorn
 To follow the horn.

 Dawn till dark
 The dogs do bark
 And go for the game:
 Ready, take aim!

HARRIET and NANCY God of Grace, I pray for mercy;
 End his pain and my despair,
 God of mercy, hear my prayer.

LIONEL God of Grace, I pray for mercy;
 End my pain and my despair,
 God of mercy, hear my prayer.

TRISTRAM For the rascal show no mercy;
 Others then might well beware.
 Show no mercy — all beware!

CHORUS Hale of heart and fleet of foot
 We comb the wood in merry mood,
 Go up the Downs and down the dale
 To find the trail
 And through the meadow and the mire,
 We pursue through brush and briar;
 Through the meadow and the mire,
 Through the brush and briar.

(Lionel is dragged off. Plunkett remains holding up the ring as the hunters exit.)

End of Act III

ACT IV

Here we are, back at the farmhouse. It looks pretty much the same as when we left it, but the lives of its two occupants have changed radically, as well as that of their two former less than satisfactory servant girls,. Lionel's arrest has led to a startling revelation. Adopted as an infant, an orphan of unknown parentage, it turns out that he is in fact the son of a banished nobleman --- a drastic change of status, which I daresay people then took a good deal more seriously than we might nowadays. At any rate, it has freed Lady Harriet to follow her own heart.

Scene: The farmhouse; Lady Harriet is with Nancy.

HARRIET

(to Nancy)

Go, hurry to your friend and tell him of my purpose,
How truly I repent the damage I have done,
And would repair the wrong inflicted on his brother.
Assure him of the love I've cherished all along.

(Nancy exits)

He knows not the guilt and torture
That in secret I've endured,
Through my error was he wounded;
Through my care shall he be cured.
Through me shall he be cured.

Oh, love, grant me the power
By saying yes, by saying yes,
To make his life reflower
With happiness, with happiness.
Through love may he recover
From the pain I've made him suffer.
What joy! Ah, what joy!
To comfort and restore.

For at last I can say freely
That I loved him from the start.
Meek and milder, now I offer
A subdued and loving heart.

To embrace at last the lover
That I adore, that I adore!
The painful past is over,
And I'm his for evermore.
Forevermore, my love.

(Nancy returns with Plunkett.)

NANCY

Milady!

PLUNKETT

Milady!

HARRIET

Loyal friend, did Nancy tell you all?
Do you approve?

PLUNKETT She ... mentioned this and that.
I took in every word,
But wondered as she spoke:
Is this the honest goods,
Or just another joke?

HARRIET But he?

NANCY Sad ... close to tears,
He stares, forlorn and silent ...
He neither speaks nor hears ...
His reason seems to wander ...

HARRIET Away! ... Leave me alone ...
And oh, so gently, gently!
I'll sing a tender air
To ease him from despair.

(Nancy and Plunkett leave)

HARRIET With springtime returning,
The rose in flower,
Comes a fresh, new morning
And a sweeter hour.

Green leaves now flutter
And the day turns bright,
And the bird in the meadow
Sings a song of delight.

LIONEL *(enters)*
She! Ah! Lady Harriet!

HARRIET Lionel!

LIONEL Would you destroy me, tear me apart?
Deceitful woman, with your treacherous siren song!
You'll not ensnare me again with your eyes.
So much for roses! The season is over.

HARRIET Lionel ... Oh hear me!

LIONEL I'm deaf to words.
Too well I know their power to capture.
How sweet the path that leads to sheer despair!
How soft the touch that can wound and shatter!

HARRIET Have you no mercy?

LIONEL How much had you for me,
When you exposed me to scorn and insult?

HARRIET But I return overcome with remorse.
Although I did you wrong,
Do believe I'd not desert you.

I myself contrived to set you free.
For the ring handed you by your father,
His final gift,
From your friend I took
And I carried it to the Queen.
My dear! Oh, joyful news!
Your father was Earl of Derby,
Exiled most unjustly.

LIONEL

Oh, my father!

HARRIET

The Queen, ever gracious,
Longs to repay the misdeeds of the past.
Earl of Derby, she gives you back the title,
Proclaims you the heir of a proud, noble line.

LIONEL

Earl of Derby? I, a noble?

HARRIET

And my own hand
That restores you to rank and glory,
Humbly I offer as a pledge
And a promise of deep love,
Pledge of love and of heartfelt repentance.

LIONEL

That hand ...

HARRIET

I humbly offer
With vows of love and a plea for pardon.

LIONEL

Gentle hand! Is it the same one
That betrayed me in time of need?
Gentle hand! That for a game
Left a tortured heart to bleed?
That abandoned me to suffer,
Turned my soul and spirit black?
That hand which now you offer,
That hand — I give you back!

HARRIET

Dear God!

LIONEL

It is too late.

(My guiding star and sole desire,
To her I gave my heart entire.
Her sparkling eye made day of night;
A single smile bestowed immortal light.)

HARRIET

With ripened love would I atone,
Henceforth to live for you alone.
More whole and pure may joy return!
The fire relit again shall burn.
That sacred fire once more shall burn.

LIONEL No, nevermore can joy return;
The fire put out no more shall burn.

HARRIET Oh, my dear, how much I care!
Do believe and trust my heart!
Lionel, my dear,
Believe and trust my heart!

LIONEL Leave me to my own despair.
You have torn my life apart.

(Lionel rushes out; Lady Harriet sinks into a chair. Nancy and Plunkett enter.)

NANCY Courage, Milady.

PLUNKETT Ha! He rushes off — a pretty how-de-do!
I can see how well you've cured him —
Now he's just as proud as you.

HARRIET There's a way to tame his anger;
I have yet one last resort.
Help me out; true love shall conquer
And the ship come safe to port.

(She exits)

PLUNKETT So, what now?

NANCY Yes, what now? What to do?
First, attend to what is needed
Till her orders are completed.
We must work upon your friend
Till he's willing to unbend.

PLUNKETT But then what?

NANCY Ah, what then?

PLUNKETT After that, what then?

NANCY What then?

PLUNKETT Staring as the ashes smolder,
None to lean upon my shoulder,
And the days grow dark and colder,
I shall sit alone and brood
On my state of solitude.

NANCY Sad to see the ashes smolder,
None to lean upon your shoulder,
And the days grow dark and colder,
As you sit and brood
On your state of solitude.
Ah, so sad!

PLUNKETT All alone!

NANCY Then perhaps ...

PLUNKETT Go on, go on!

NANCY Sir, to cure your melancholy
You must find yourself a wife.

PLUNKETT There's my next-door neighbor Polly
Who has chased me for dear life.

NANCY So there's next-door neighbor Polly,
Who has chased you for dear life.
Marry her.

PLUNKETT Oh, not at once!

NANCY Why delay?

PLUNKETT She's such a dunce!

NANCY Then you'd better find another;
There are plenty to be had.

PLUNKETT Well, there's Anne, the sheriff's daughter;
Frankly, though, she drives me mad.

NANCY So there's Anne the sheriff's daughter
Even though she drives you mad.
Look around.

PLUNKETT But where? But where?

NANCY Is there none?

PLUNKETT I just can think of one ...

There's a lady far above me,
But a most unlikely spouse.
For she'd never stoop to love me,
And she hates my simple house.

Bad at cooking, worse at spinning,
And her needlework is nil;
Yet her ways are oh, so winning!
That I love her come what will.

NANCY I have heard of matches stranger.
Though a far from perfect spouse,
If she loves you she may change her
Mind about your simple house.

So her cooking has no merit,
And her needlework is nil?
If you'll learn to grin and bear it
She might cultivate the skill.

PLUNKETT True?

NANCY I'm certain.

PLUNKETT Oh, my darling!

NANCY Yes?

PLUNKETT No ... not yet!
Lionel comes first, but later
We'll continue our duet.

NANCY Ah!

PLUNKETT Ah, yes!

NANCY A word ...

PLUNKETT Not yet.

NANCY Just a word ...

PLUNKETT We must wait.

NANCY Friendship first and courtship later ...

PLUNKETT Friendship first and courtship later ...

NANCY Maybe though my need is greater ...

PLUNKETT Lady, now his need is greater ...

NANCY You're a sturdy, stubborn fellow ...

PLUNKETT You will turn me sweet and mellow ...

NANCY Why so taunt me if you want me?

PLUNKETT Later on I'll woo;
And then you need but say, "I do".

NANCY Then indeed I'll say "I do".

(they exit)

Magic! The scene again changes. Although we are just outside the farm-house, it would appear that we were miraculously transported back to Richmond Fair.

Here the banners, there the benches for the auction of the wenches. And here a wiser, humbler, sweeter Lady Harriet, completely cured of her melancholy, will carry out her plan for shaking Lionel out of his, by convincing him of her sincerity and her love. In short, by again being “Martha”.

Scene: Outside the farmhouse. The scene is being set up like Richmond Fair, with tents, booths, tables, etc., and a farmer impersonating the sheriff.

CHORUS Here the table, there the benches
 Where we auction off the wenches.
 Seat the sheriff over there,
 Like the scene at Richmond Fair.

 Make a clearing for the farmers
 Come to pick and choose the charmers.
 Wrap the judge in robe of state
 Like a proper magistrate.

HARRIET *(Enters with Nancy.)*
 Friends, you've finished! Sheer perfection!

CHORUS All complete — and ready now for your inspection.
 Tents and tables, stalls and benches, flags and banners ...

 Here we clear a place
 And put the sheriff's chair
 The way it was at Richmond Fair.

 Here the table, there the benches
 Where we auction off the wenches.
 And a clearing for the farmers
 Come to choose the charmers.

 Here we put the sheriff's chair
 Just exactly like the fair,
 The way it was at Richmond Fair.

NANCY He approaches, sad and silent,
 With his friend who leads him onward.

HARRIET Now the gamble!

CHORUS He approaches, sad and silent,
 With his friend who leads him onward.

NANCY *(And how will he react?*
 For her I fear and tremble.)

 Come, my friends, to buy and sell.
 The fair begins — I hear the bell.

GIRLS I can sew, sir,
 Like a pro, sir!

I am nimble
With a thimble,
I can keep the kitchen,
Starch 'n stitch 'n
Also bake 'n brew.

MEN Good for you then!
 If it's true then
 You can bake and brew and
 Make a stew and
 Take the prize
 With cherry pies,
 I'm sure you'll more than do.

Plunkett leads in Lionel.

PLUNKETT Friend, come on! The trumpets flourish.
 Follow me, and pluck up courage.

GIRLS I'm good at all chores,
 In or outdoors,
 I can darn your socks and
 Feed the flocks.
 I sweep and shear the sheep and
 Brew the beer and
 Stew the steer.

LIONEL Ah! Where are we?

PLUNKETT Back at Richmond,
 Where we came to make our offers.

(He brings forward Lady Harriet, who is in peasant costume.)
Say, my sweet, what can you do?

LIONEL Martha! Martha! Is it you?

HARRIET I can abandon a life of leisure,
 Give up pretension and empty pleasure;
 My erring nature I can improve;
 My heart and soul I can surrender
 To him I love.

LIONEL Martha, my own! My own for life!

PLUNKETT *(to Nancy)*
 Well, my pretty! What can you do?

NANCY To begin, sir,
 I can spin, sir ...

PLUNKETT (Who can top her

With that whopper?)

NANCY When my husband bosses me, sir,
I can say, "Go climb a tree."

PLUNKETT Done! That I'll pay to see.
(starts to kiss her.)

NANCY Done! *(gives him a light slap)*
That you get for free.

PLUNKETT Oh, I thank you, love, sincerely,
But for that you'll pay me dearly.

CHORUS Ha, ha, ha, ha. She tells him merely
 That in fact she loves him dearly.
 Ha, ha, ha, ha, ...

HARRIET With springtime returning,
 The rose in flower ...

LIONEL Comes a fresh, new morning
 And a sweeter hour.

HARRIET Green leaves now flutter
 And the day turns bright.

ALL And the bird in the meadow
 Sings a song of delight.

End of the Opera