

BOAT:Aye, Little Buttercup — and well called — for you're the rosiest, the roundest, and the reddest beauty in all Spithead.

ALL:Aye! Aye!

BUT:Red, am I? and round — and rosy! Maybe, for I have dissembled well! But hark ye, my merry friend — hast ever thought that beneath a gay and frivolous exterior there may lurk a canker-worm which is slowly but surely eating its way into one's very heart?

BOAT:No, my lass, I can't say I've ever thought that.

(Enter Dick Deadeye. He pushes through sailors, and comes down.)

DICK:I've thought it often. *(All recoil from him.)*

BUT:Yes, you look like it! What's the matter with the man? Isn't he well?

BOAT:Don't take no heed of *him*; that's only poor Dick Deadeye.

DICK:I say — it's a beast of a name, ain't it. Dick Deadeye.

BUT:It's not a nice name.

DICK:I'm ugly too, ain't I?

BUT:You are certainly plain.

DICK:And I'm three-cornered too, ain't I?

BUT:You are rather triangular.

DICK:Ha! Ha! That's it. I'm ugly, and they hate me for it; for you all hate me, don't you?

ALL:We do!

DICK:There!

BOAT:Well, Dick, we wouldn't go for to hurt any fellow creature's feelings, but you can't expect a chap with such a name as Dick Deadeye to be a popular character — now can you?

DICK:No.

BOAT:It's asking too much, ain't it?

DICK:It is. From such a face and form as mine the noblest sentiments sound like the black utterances of a depraved imagination. It is human nature — I'm resigned.

No. 2^a Recitative — (Buttercup and Boatswain)

BUTTERCUP *(looking down hatchway)*

But tell me who's the youth whose falt'ring feet With dif-fi-cul-ty bear him on his course?

(All dance off except Ralph, who remains, leaning pensively against bulwark.)



(Enter Josephine from cabin.)

JOSEPHINE: It is useless— Sir Joseph's attentions nauseate me. I know that he is a truly great and good man, for he told me so himself, but to me he seems tedious, fretful, and dictatorial. Yet his must be a mind of no common order, or he would not dare to teach my dear father to dance a hornpipe on the cabin table. (*Sees Ralph.*) Ralph Rackstraw! (*Overcome by emotion.*)

RALPH: . . . Aye, lady— no other than poor Rackstraw!

JOSEPHINE: (*aside*): How my heart beats! (*Aloud.*) And why poor, Ralph?

RALPH: . . . I am poor in the essence of happiness, lady— rich only in never-ending unrest. In me there meet a combination of antithetical elements which are at eternal war with one another. Driven hither by objective influences— thither by subjective emotions— wafted one moment into blazing day, by mocking hope— plunged the next into the Cimmerian darkness of tangible despair, I am but a living ganglion of irreconcilable antagonisms. I hope I make myself clear, lady?

JOSEPHINE: Perfectly. (*Aside.*) His simple eloquence goes to my heart. Oh, if I dared— but no, the thought is madness! (*Aloud.*) Dismiss these foolish fancies, they torture you but needlessly. Come, make one effort.

RALPH: . . . (*aside*): I will— one. (*Aloud.*) Josephine!

JOSEPHINE: (*indignantly*): Sir!

RALPH: . . . Aye, even though Jove's armoury were launched at the head of the audacious mortal whose lips, unhallowed by relationship, dared to breathe that precious word, yet would I breathe it once, and then perchance be silent evermore. Josephine, in one brief breath I will concentrate the hopes, the doubts, the anxious fears of six weary months. Josephine, I am a British sailor, and I love you!

JOSEPHINE: Sir, this audacity! (*Aside.*) Oh, my heart, my beating heart. (*Aloud.*) This unwarrantable presumption on the part of a common sailor! (*Aside.*) Common! oh, the irony of the word! (*Crossing, aloud.*) Oh, sir, you forget the disparity in our ranks.

RALPH: . . . I forget nothing, haughty lady. I love you desperately, my life is in your hand: I lay it at your feet! Give me hope, and what I lack in education and polite accomplishments, that I will endeavour to acquire. Drive me to despair, and in death alone I shall look for consolation. I am proud and cannot stoop to implore. I have spoken, and I wait your word.

JOSEPHINE: You shall not wait long. Your proffered love I haughtily reject. Go, sir, and learn to cast your eyes on some village maiden in your own poor rank— they should be lowered before your captain's daughter.

BUT.:How sweetly he carols forth his melody to the unconscious moon! Of whom is he thinking? Of some high born beauty? It may be! Who is poor Little Buttercup that she should expect his glance to fall on one so lowly! And yet if he knew— if he only knew!

CAPT.:(*coming down*): Ah! Little Buttercup, still on board? That is not quite right, little one. It would have been more respectable to have gone on shore at dusk.

BUT.:True, dear captain— but the recollection of your sad, pale face seemed to chain me to the ship. I would fain see you smile before I go.

CAPT.:Ah! Little Buttercup, I fear it will be long before I recover my accustomed cheerfulness, for misfortunes crowd upon me, and all my old friends seem to have turned against me!

BUT.:Oh, no— do not say “all,” dear Captain. That were unjust to one, at least.

CAPT.:True, for you are staunch to me. (*Aside.*) If ever I gave my heart again, methinks it would be to such a one as this! (*Loud.*) I am touched to the heart by your innocent regard for me, and were we differently situated, I think I could have returned it. But, as it is, I fear I can never be more to you than a friend.

BUT.:I understand! You hold aloof from me because you are rich and lofty— and I, poor and lowly. But take care! The poor bumboat woman has gypsy blood in her veins, and she can read destinies.

CAPT.:Destinies!

BUT.:There is a change in store for you!

CAPT.:A change!

BUT.:Aye— be prepared!

No. 14 Duet— (Buttercup and Captain Corcoran) “Things are seldom what they seem”

Allegro

BUTTERCUP

p Things are sel - dom what they seem,

p *ff* *p*

Skim milk mas - que - rades as cream; High-lows pass as pa - tent leath - ers;

[At the end exit Little Buttercup melodramatically.]

Captain. Incomprehensible as her utterances are, I nevertheless feel that they are dictated by a sincere regard for me. But to what new misery is she referring? Time alone can tell!

[Enter Sir Joseph.]

Sir J. Captain Corcoran, I am much disappointed with your daughter.

Hebe. Yes, we are much disappointed with your daughter. We don't think she will do.

Captain. She won't do?

Hebe. No, I'm afraid not.

Sir J. I have urged my suit with as much eloquence as is consistent with an official utterance; but hitherto without success.

Hebe. I endorsed all Sir Joseph's remarks, and added some of my own, but, so far, ineffectually.

Sir J. Cousin Hebe, your interference was well meant, but I do not think you materially assisted my cause.

Hebe. You do not.

Sir J. I do not.

Hebe. Crushed!

Captain. Really Sir Joseph, I can scarcely account for it. Josephine is, of course, sensible of your condescension.

Sir J. Of course.

Hebe. Of course.

Sir J. Don't.

Hebe. Crushed again!

Captain. It may be that your exalted rank dazzles her.

Sir J. True, it may be so.

Hebe. It may.

Captain. She is a modest girl, and her social position is far below your own. It may be that she feels she is not worthy of you.

Sir Joseph. That is really a very sensible suggestion, and displays more knowledge of human nature than I had given you credit for.

Captain. See, she comes. If your lordship would kindly reason with her and assure her officially that it is a standing rule at the Admiralty that love levels all ranks, her respect for an official utterance might induce her to look upon your offer in its proper light.

Sir J. It is not unlikely. I will act upon your suggestion.

Hebe. And I will help you.

Sir J. Captain Corcoran, oblige me by taking this lady away and showing her the wonders of the fore-castle.

Hebe. Crushed!