

Robin Hood
And His
Merry Men
Persons

OR

THE ART OF COMPROMISE

A Brand New and Original Satirical Operetta
Featuring the music of A. S. Sullivan and J. Offenbach

by
Fraser Charlton

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Robin Hood	BARITONE
Rupert, Sheriff of Nottingham	BARITONE
Will Scarlett	TENOR
Virginia (<i>Robin's Girlfriend</i>)	CONTRALTO
Lady Caroline of Wessex (<i>Rupert's Girlfriend</i>)	SOPRANO
Eloise (<i>Rupert's maid-of-all-work</i>)	SOPRANO
Ann Oakleaf (<i>a Merry Person</i>)	MEZZO-SOPRANO
Little John (<i>a Merry Person</i>)	CONTRALTO
Marion (<i>a Merry Person</i>)	BARITONE
Kevin (<i>a Stupid Guard</i>)	BARITONE
Brian (<i>an Even Stupider Guard</i>)	HIGH BARITONE
Chris (<i>a Scrounger</i>)	NON SINGING
Cheryl (<i>a Scrounger</i>)	NON SINGING
Friar Tuck	NON SINGING

Chorus of MERRY PERSONS.

ACT I. - A Glade in Sherwood Forest

ACT II. - One month later

Scene One - A Glade in Sherwood Forest

Scene Two - Exterior of Sherwood Castle, Evening

ACT I
OVERTURE

SCENE - *A glade in Sherwood Forest*

1 a. CHORUS

Music - "For the merriest fellows are we", The Gondoliers

The merriest people are we, tra la,
Who live in equality, tra la,
 With hunting and shooting,
 And thieving and looting,
We're happy as happy can be, tra la!

With rank we have nothing to do, tra la,
And wealth is a thing we pooh-pooh, tra la,
 With singing and dancing,
 And rustic romancing
Our life is both simple and true, tra la!

1 b. DUET - ANN *and* MARION

Music - "In every mental lore", Utopia Limited

MARION We are the bold outlaws
 That live in song and story.
We frequently flout laws
 And fight in battles gory!
We hate the men who say
 That wealth is for the wealthy,
But soon will come the day
 To make them feel less healthy!

When we've the battles won,
 And arguments refuted,
All classes shall be one
 And wealth redistributed!

BOTH This plan we feel will make
 A true and just community,
Where we can all eat cake
 And live in perfect unity!

ANN When you put emphasis
 On making people equal
A simple aim like this
 May have a striking sequel:
Our name was "Merry Men" -
 And face it, there are worse 'uns -
But it has changed since then
 To "Robin's Merry Persons"!

We've lost the masculine,
 Now it's almost unrhyme-able,
But we will not give in;
 No mountain is unclimb-able!

BOTH Although a clumsy word
 Offends our sense of beauty,
A rhyme that is absurd
 Won't stop our moral duty!

MARION The wealthy we rob -
ANN And we don't keep a bob -

MARION We give all to the poor -
ANN Though they always want more -
MARION Our philosophy's strong -
ANN We can never go wrong!
BOTH So we think that our band
Is the best in the land!

1 c. CHORUS

The merriest people are we, tra la,
Who live in equality, tra la,
 With hunting and shooting,
 And thieving and looting,
We're happy as happy can be, tra la!

WILL Has everybody eaten?
ALL We have!
WILL Is anybody satisfied?
ALL No!
WILL Good! That is the way it should be. We must not forget our solemn vow never
to appease our hunger until all men are equal!
ANN And women!
WILL Yes! And women!
ALL Hurrah!
WILL For does not Robin Hood teach us to abhor all luxuries while the poor are still
poor?
ALL He does!
WILL Does he not tell us that hunger only sharpens our moral resolve?
ALL He does!
WILL And are we not all happy to deprive ourselves so that the poor may eat?
ALL We're not!
WILL (*Surprised*). You're not?
ANN No, we're not! We're sick of eating bland, tasteless food and drinking stagnant
water! We want roast boar, great hunks of venison on a spit and char-broiled
cow, served up with pint goblets of vintage wine and huge flagons of real ale!
ALL We do!
WILL But surely you wouldn't throw away your moral principles, the central guiding
force of your life and arbitrator of all your actions, merely for the hollow
pleasures of good food and drink?
MARION Want to bet?
WILL (*Aside*) This looks like it could turn nasty! (*To MERRY PERSONS*). I shall go
and summon our glorious leader and ask his advice. I pray that his wise counsel
shall guide us as successfully as it has done in the past.
*Exit WILL. MERRY PERSONS disperse. ANN, MARION and LITTLE
JOHN come forward.*
LITTLE JO. Well spoken, Ann! You're the only one of us with enough courage to voice the
discontent that we all feel.
ANN Thank you, Little John. It just takes one powerful woman to shatter the fragile
male ego of our "glorious leader". I sense that the tide is now turning against
our beloved Robin Hood.

- MARION** You're right, Ann, as always. You're so brainy and brave and brilliant and beautiful and... and... other nice things beginning with 'B'!
- ANN** Enough of your simpering, Marion. My friends, I feel my time has come. Finally, someone has emerged who can overthrow the phallogocentric hierarchy that controls our band! Someone who can destroy the traditional patriarchal power structures and breathe new life into this outmoded masculine institution! Someone intelligent, strong, ambitious, incredibly popular... and really rather good looking.
- MARION** (*Pause*). No, you've got me there. (*To LITTLE JOHN*). Any ideas?
- LITTLE JO.** I'm not sure. Is it Friar Tuck?
- ANN** No, of course it's not! It's me! Ann Oakleaf - the people's choice for leader!
- Revelation dawns.*
- MARION** Well, *obviously*, but I thought you meant apart from you...
- LITTLE JO.** Yes, it was the "incredibly popular" bit that threw me...
- ANN** Oh, shut up! I must prepare for the moment when I will step forward and take command of the Merry Persons. Until then, I depend on your discretion and total support.
- LITTLE JO.** I'd never betray my oldest friend, Ann, you know that.
- MARION** Oh Ann, as always you have my body, my mind and my heart!
- ANN** Don't be so pathetic, Marion. We must all try and act natural. (*To MERRY PERSONS*). Our gallant leader comes, my friends. Let us all join in a welcoming song to show our loyalty, our support and our love. (*Aside*) Well, at least for the moment!

2a. CHORUS

Music - "All hail, great Judge", Trial By Jury

All hail to Robin Hood,
Who leads our band!
The saviour of the poor
Throughout the land!
All hail!

His arm is strong,
His brain is keen,
His bow is long,
His lute is mean!
All hail!

Enter WILL and ROBIN. ROBIN is immaculately dressed in doublet and green tights with a ridiculously long peaked cap that has an enormous feather.

2b. RECIT. - ROBIN

My loyal band, I trust I find you well?
Your touching words have caused my heart to swell!
To show my gratitude I feel I should
Tell you all once more how I became Robin Hood!

CHORUS (*Spoken*) Oh no, not again!

2c. SONG - ROBIN

Music - "Oh better far to live and die", The Pirates of Penzance

I live a life that's poor and free
But I was born in luxury -
My father had both wealth and rank,
My mother chaired a merchant bank!

But they were dumb when they heard me say
“Why don't we give all our cash away?”
And so I left the family fold
To swash my buckle and be bold!

For my name is Robin Hood!

ALL It is!

Hurray for Robin Hood!

ROBIN And life is really, really good

When you are Robin Hood!

ALL It is!

Hurray for Robin Hood!

I blazed my trail outside the law -
I stole from rich and gave to poor -
And even though it started fights
I took to wearing leaf green tights!
I wore a cap and cropped my hair,
I hung a codpiece - you know where!
I vowed to always fight for good -
And so was born your Robin Hood!

For my name is Robin Hood!

ALL It is!

Hurray for Robin Hood!

ROBIN And life is really, really good

When you are Robin Hood!

ALL It is!

Hurray for Robin Hood!

ROBIN Hey nonny nonny everybody! Are you all ready to play some more jolly japes on the rich today? I've asked the poor over this evening, so we'd better have a stonking pile of goodies for them. So, forsooth, chaps and chapesses, who's for a bit of wizard scrumping? (*Silence*). I say, what's up? Surely you're not tired of the old “rob from the rich and give to the poor” routine, are you?

ANN Frankly, yes. We want more money!

ALL We do!

ROBIN What... to give to the poor?

ANN No! To keep!

ROBIN But that would make us no better than the rich!

ANN We don't care. We offer you a simple choice; either you start letting us keep some of our spoils, or else we're leaving.

ROBIN Gosh, I say, this is all rather sudden! But, tush and pish, surely not everybody is in favour of this change in policy?

ALL Want to bet?

ANN So, “glorious leader”, perhaps you'd like to carefully consider changing the way things are run around here... or else!

ROBIN I'm sorry - or else what?

MARION Exactly! You've had your warning - everybody out! Come along men!

ANN And women!

MARION And women! Give the man some space to think. Let's go!

Exeunt all except ROBIN and WILL.

ROBIN Will, my trusty friend, this is a situation that I had never anticipated. I always trusted my merry band implicitly, and yet they now turn around and strike me across the face. What on earth should I do?

- WILL** You haven't got much choice. If you don't agree to at least some of their demands you'll never be able to help the poor again. I'm afraid compromise is the essence of politics!
- ROBIN** Marry, mass and to't! That it should come to this! I sometimes wish I'd stayed with my family and used more orthodox ways of achieving my aims.
- WILL** At least this way you didn't need an election campaign.
- ROBIN** True, but at what cost? I've only been able to put into action a tiny part of my ambitions. Once the poor of Nottingham were liberated I planned to set up a chain of franchise outlaws to free the rest of England - and from there, who could tell? Od's bodkins, political reform's difficult with fairweather revolutionaries like the Merry Persons! If I hadn't left my parents I could've been the Sheriff of Nottingham by now.
- WILL** But all *our* Sheriff's cares about is lining his own pockets!
- ROBIN** He abuses his power, like all others since the death of King Richard. If *I* was in his position, I would create a Utopia...
- WILL** Oh, come on Robin, ruling's not that simple - what about all the administration, balancing the budget, keeping inflation down...
- ROBIN** Jobs that can be done by dolts! They are just excuses used by incompetents too scared to govern properly. What this country needs is a man of true vision!
- WILL** Or woman.
- ROBIN** Perhaps not in this case...
- WILL** But see, here comes your fiancée, Virginia. Perhaps she can soothe your troubled mind?
- Exit WILL. Enter VIRGINIA. She is somewhat awkwardly dressed as a rustic, looking and feeling distinctly out of place.*
- ROBIN** Hey nonny nonny, Virginia! Marry, the horn of the cuckold is veritably in the saddle of the coxcomb's codpiece!
- VIRGINIA** Oh can it, Robin! Why do you insist on talking in such a ridiculous way? Can't you see that I'm depressed?
- ROBIN** I'm really terribly sorry, my little Ginnikins. Didn't you have enough cabbage gruel for breakfast? I'm sure Friar Tuck could rustle up...
- VIRGINIA** Robin, can't you understand? I hate all of this! I'm sick of living like a pheasant!
- ROBIN** That's "peasant", dear.
- VIRGINIA** I mean pheasant! A peasant lives a life of luxury compared to us. Have you visited the poor lately? Thanks to our efforts they're all setting up their own businesses and buying detached hovels in the suburbs! The other Merry Persons are right - we deserve a better standard of living.
- ROBIN** But Gin-Gins, I thought you liked our rollicking, rowdy and rustic lifestyle?
- VIRGINIA** At first I did. As the daughter of a greengrocer I was desperate to escape from dull lower middle class society. You seemed to offer excitement, danger, purpose... and lots of gold and jewels!
- ROBIN** Which I believe you found.
- VIRGINIA** That's true. Except that the gold and jewels passed through our fingers like water. I expected to be living like an aristocrat - and what have I got? Itchy tunics and cabbage gruel! Oh Robin, it's such a disappointment for a girl!

3. SONG - VIRGINIA

Music - "On the day that I was wedded", The Gondoliers

I grew up as the daughter
Of a very dull old grocer;
Money couldn't have been shorter
Or the breadline any closer,
So I thought my life was static
In our dingy little attic -
I would wed a village lout,
Then grow ugly and get gout!
Till I met you in the village,
When you robbed a squire's carriage,
And, instead of rape and pillage,
You proposed a chapel marriage!
You were posing,
Looking charming.
Your tight hosing
Was disarming!
My heart stopped
When you were near;
No one topped
This buccaneer!
I was amorous-
Ly hoping
For a glamorous
Eloping!

So you swept me off my feet and made for Sherwood at a run -
At last it seemed to me my social climbing had begun!

But my image of your riches
Was a little bit deceiving,
Though you stopped them burning witches,
And you did a lot of thieving,
And your fencing and your fighting
Was exceedingly exciting,
Still it wasn't quite enough
To make up for sleeping rough!
For the cooking is revolting,
And the housework never ceases,
My ambition stopped its vaulting -
Now my hopes all lie in pieces.
Love you kindled
With your strumming,
Love that dwindled
Now I'm slumming!
Dreams aborted
Of more money -
Being thwarted
Isn't funny!
If you're choosing
To live poorer
You'll be losing
Your adorer!

So if I don't get some jewels and get some dresses pretty soon,
You'll find out very quickly you won't have a honeymoon!

ROBIN

I see. Now, let me get this right... If I don't give you some money for luxuries
you won't marry me?

VIRGINIA

Exactly. If *you* don't shell out, *I* won't put out!

ROBIN *(Aside)*. This has not been a good morning! *(To VIRGINIA)*. But, I say, my dear Ginnylumps, can't you...

VIRGINIA No!

ROBIN “No” what?

VIRGINIA I don't like “Ginnylumps”.

ROBIN Virgywurgy?

VIRGINIA No! For God's sake, Robin, why not just call me Virginia. Or Ginny. Everybody else does.

ROBIN But, my little shrubbery, you're not engaged to everybody else.

VIRGINIA No, and I won't be engaged to you much longer if you keep on like this! Look, I'm not prepared to argue about it - either you give *me* some more money or I give *you* this pathetic excuse for an engagement ring.

ROBIN You sadden me, Virginia, but I put your happiness before all. *(Opens purse)*. Oh dear, all I have is one sovereign, but I was going to give it to the poor... *(VIRGINIA grabs it)*. But, tilly-vally, I think you can have it anyway!

VIRGINIA I'm glad that's settled. I'm off to the shops.

Exit VIRGINIA. Enter CHRIS and CHERYL, two scrounging peasants.

ROBIN It seems that the whole world is against me today. Something is rotten in the state of Nottingham...

CHRIS Er... Excuse me.

ROBIN Yes.

CHERYL Er... Hello. We're the poor.

ROBIN What?

CHRIS Well... she's the poor.

CHERYL And so's he.

CHRIS Er... yes. We are, in fact, both poor, and we were wondering if you could make us, well, less poor. Seeing as you're Robin Hood and that...

ROBIN I see. Well, poor people, how much money do you need?

CHERYL Well... We could make do with... What? Half a crown?

CHRIS Ten shillings.

CHERYL Call it a sovereign.

ROBIN A sovereign? Well, that is a jolly large amount of money.

CHRIS Well, we are poor.

CHERYL Very poor.

CHRIS Quite staggeringly poor.

ROBIN Well, what can I say? I really am awfully sorry, but I just gave away my last sovereign to my fiancée.

CHERYL Oh dear. Well, we'll just have to starve to death then. But that's what comes of being poor.

CHRIS Staggeringly poor.

ROBIN Oh gosh! But, I say, you're both strapping young healthy types - haven't you got jobs?

CHERYL Well, we *do* jobs, if you take my meaning.

ROBIN Oh yes. What sort of jobs?
CHRIS Bank jobs, stately home jobs... that sort of thing.
ROBIN Ah, I see! So you're robbers!
CHERYL Well, yes, in a manner of speaking.
ROBIN Jolly dee! And do you rob from the rich and give to the poor?
CHRIS Well, we rob from the rich.
CHERYL We haven't quite got 'round to the "giving it to the poor" stage yet.
CHRIS We mean to, eventually.
CHERYL If we had more funds.
CHRIS Like about a sovereign.
ROBIN I see! Forsooth and ye gads, this all sounds jolly interesting, I can tell you. And if robbers can't rely on other robbers to support them, who can they trust?
CHERYL That's exactly what we thought.
CHRIS Yeah. We can rely on old Robin Hood to give us some dosh because he's so gullible.
CHERYL Honourable!
CHRIS Honourable, yeah.
ROBIN Super! I'll see what I can do. Virginia! Come here a moment, my sweet!
Enter VIRGINIA in a travelling cloak.
VIRGINIA What do you want?
ROBIN Ginnydums, you know that teeny, weeny little coin I just gave you?
VIRGINIA To buy myself some new clothes and jewellery with?
ROBIN Yes.
VIRGINIA The first spending money that you've ever given me?
ROBIN That's the fellow. Look, I was just wondering...
VIRGINIA No!
ROBIN What?
VIRGINIA No, you can't have it back to give to the poor. I'm poor and I'm keeping it.
ROBIN Zounds, Virginia, your base selfishness shocks me deeply. You'd keep that money to spend on frivolous luxuries while poor people are being... poor?
VIRGINIA Yes.
ROBIN Words fail me! I beg you, my love, remember our noble principles and give your money to these starving peasants. After all, they're robbers just like us!
VIRGINIA I know they're robbers. They tried to mug me last week!
CHERYL Sorry, madam. We thought you were a rich person.
VIRGINIA In this get-up?
ROBIN This has gone too far. Virginia, if you won't give them the sovereign willingly... It pains me, but I shall have to ask you to leave the Merry Persons!
VIRGINIA You would stoop to that? This is the last straw! Here's your money, you greedy little scroungers! (*Throws sovereign to scroungers*). And here's your engagement ring (*Throws ring at ROBIN*). You may consider our relationship at an end!

Exit VIRGINIA.

ROBIN Oh, I say!
CHRIS Thank you very much, sir. Very kind of your lady friend. We'll just be off then.
CHERYL Hope we haven't been too much trouble.
ROBIN Virginia! Virginia! Come back!
Exit ROBIN.
CHRIS See? I told you he'd fall for it!
Exeunt CHRIS and CHERYL. Enter KEVIN and BRIAN, the Sheriff's personal guard.

4 a. DUET - KEVIN *and* BRIAN¹

Music - "We're very famous Grecian Heroes", La Belle Hélène

KEVIN We are the guardsmen of the Sheriff,
BRIAN And we're the bravest of all time!
KEVIN But when we sing a song we're terrified
BRIAN- Fied that we will not find a rhyme!
KEVIN But if someone says we're tuneless
BRIAN They'll never hear another sound!
BOTH We'll do them in - We'll do them in!
Our skill with truncheons will astound!
We'll do them in - We'll do them in!
We are the toughest men around!

BRIAN To violence I am no stranger,
KEVIN About my safety I don't care.
BRIAN No matter how great is the danger,
KEVIN We'll always be the last ones there!
BRIAN But if you've problems with a cripple -
KEVIN (Providing they've been gagged and bound)
BOTH We'll do them in - We'll do them in!
We love to punch and kick and pound!
We'll do them in - We'll do them in!
We are the toughest men around!

Enter the SHERIFF. He is bitter, bad tempered, reactionary and cynical.

4 b. SONG - SHERIFF *with* KEVIN *and* BRIAN²

Music - "At the outset I may mention", The Grand Duke

At my entrance I should mention that it's my avowed intention
To be guided in my governing by justice and by truth.
I am constantly devising social policies surprising
That are needed now to circumvent the laziness of youth.
To solve your labour questions I've no shortage of suggestions -
As curing unemployment I've enough to write a book -
I am generous with workers, but I victimise the shirkers
Who pretend that they can't find a job however hard they look.
If they want a life of leisure then I'll give them one with pleasure,
As my torturers are always needing subjects for their art!
For it pains me to report that if you give them cash support
Then they will all become dependent from the day on which you start!
At this juncture I should mention,
(For I'm not a heartless boor)
That it isn't my intention
To be hard upon the poor -

¹ See Appendix for optional extra verse

² See Appendix for optional extra verse

All you need to keep them quipping
Is a little bit of whipping
When their drive to work is slipping
And you think they should do more!

ALL All you need, etc.

Now, the problem of taxation is a source of great vexation
That has stumped the minds of thinkers and philosophers of yore.
There's a plan that I conceived which may be easily perceived
To give some profit to the rich, and an incentive to the poor!
For I use an innovation in the tax's calculation
Which I think gives it a fairness that the usual method lacks;
First the gross amount of wages is divided into stages
Then the lowest grade of income pays the highest grade of tax!
So the peasant in the field, my new formulae revealed,
Now will owe the tax collector over twice his yearly pay,
So he'll work much longer hours to improve his fiscal powers
Till he finds that as a rich man all his taxes fade away!
Still, perhaps I'd better mention,
Just in case you are unsure,
That it's never my intention
To unjustly treat the poor!
Although it may be irking
If you want to keep them smirking
You must beat them while they're working
Or they'll plague you evermore!

ALL Although it may, etc.

SHERIFF Right men, I'm sick of my fiancée, Lady Caroline, wittering on about how brave Robin Hood is all the time, so I've decided to hunt a stag to show her how tough I am. You two go and see if you can find one that doesn't look too fierce.

**KEVIN
& BRIAN** Right ho. (*Exeunt*).

SHERIFF Huh! I'll prove to her that I'm more than a match for that nancy boy! It takes more than being nice to poor people and prancing around in a doublet and hose to impress me! It's easy to be frivolous if you've no responsibilities. People seem to think that I don't care for the common oik. I *do* care. Deeply. It's just that I can't get the message across to the ordinary man in the gutter.³

Enter LADY CAROLINE and ELOISE, her maid. CAROLINE is extremely posh, rather overexcitable and with a distinctly dirty mind.

CAROLINE Hello Rupert, darling! Eloise says that you're going to catch me a stag. Gosh! How terribly butch!

SHERIFF 'Tis a mere nothing. I often hunt stags to relax.

CAROLINE God, Rupert, you're so brave. Here, take this feather from my hat. (*She hands him a large pink feather*) Wear it always as a token of my love!

SHERIFF Er, Caroline, haven't you got one that's a bit less... Pink.

CAROLINE No I haven't. What's wrong with it?

SHERIFF Well it's hardly macho, is it? If any of my friends should see me...

CAROLINE Oh, Rupert, you know as well as I do that you haven't got any friends! Besides, I think it's totally scrummy! It makes you look a bit more like Robin Hood!

SHERIFF Bloody Robin Hood again! You're always going on about him! I don't want to look like that big girls blouse! Keep your feather! (*Throws it back*) I'm off - I've got a real man's job to do! (*Exits angrily*).

³ For additional dialogue, see Appendix

CAROLINE Oh golly, Eloise, I think I've upset him again. He's so frightfully touchy about me mentioning Robin Hood.

ELOISE You forget, Lady Caroline, that they've been sworn enemies since their teenage years. The only people the Sheriff hates more than Robin's band are peasants!

CAROLINE I suppose I shouldn't keep on at him. It's my fault, really - I keep trying to make him more like my ideal man. You know, I'm really *awfully* keen on these outlaw types, but mummy and daddy never let me go out with any. Oh Eloise, I've led such a terribly sheltered life!

5. SONG - CAROLINE

Music - "I cannot tell what this love may be", Patience

A life of luxury's a bore
When served by servants by the score,
There's never the need to lift a limb
When pandered to every whim.
There's finest china when you dine,
There's richest food and vintage wine,
Your brain goes soft and morals lax
When your job is to relax!
 Though happiness is all you see!
 Such lazy living's not for me!
 I'd give my wealth to set me free!
 I want to ride and want to roam,
 While others vegetate at home.
 Think of the gulf 'twixt them and me,
 "Fa la la la!" - and "Miserie!"

My life is full of hollow joy -
It's hollow like the horse of Troy -
You never have fierce guards to fight,
And nothing goes bump in the night!
Your clothes are washed most ev'ry day,
Your bed isn't made of mouldy hay,
Faces are not thick with grime,
And burglary is thought a crime!
 Though happiness is all you see!
 Such lazy living's not for me!
 I'd give my wealth to set me free!
 I want to ride and want to roam,
 While others vegetate at home.
 Think of the gulf 'twixt them and me,
 "Fa la la la!" - and "Miserie!"

ELOISE Lady Caroline, this forest is crawling with undesirables - you'd better return to the safety of Sherwood Castle and await the Sheriff. When he brings you the antlers of the biggest stag in the forest you'll see how tough he really is!

CAROLINE Gosh, I certainly hope so. The main reason I agreed to marry Rupert was that I had heard that he was really rugged. And, to be fair, compared to the wimps that I used to date, he is rather. But I still can't stop my thoughts wandering back to that dishy outlaw...

ELOISE What is it that you particularly like about Robin Hood, anyway? Is it his philanthropy, his skill at archery, his swordsmanship?

CAROLINE No, I think it's his tights! (*Exits*).

ELOISE Thank goodness I've got rid of her. Let me see, the time is now... (*Looks at sun*). Eleven fifty nine... My lover should be here any moment. I hate always having to meet in secret, but if his identity was known by my employer all would be lost. Ah, here he is now!

Enter WILL. They rush together and embrace.

- WILL** Eloise, my love!
- ELOISE** My own Will! Does anyone know you're here?
- WILL** No. And you?
- ELOISE** Not a soul. Oh, it is so good to see you again!
- WILL** Oh Eloise, my angel, long are the hours when we are apart. I can't stand this separation any longer - why can we not marry? If our two hearts beat as one, nothing can stand in our way.
- ELOISE** Look, I don't wish to dull the chrome of your happiness, but I can't help thinking that the fact that our employers are sworn enemies, and that their followers would kill us if they found us together, could be looked upon as something of a *slight* obstacle?
- WILL** I admit that *some* would see that as a disadvantage. (*Breaking away*) It's all so unfair. I want to cry my feelings from the treetops, not hide them away. A love like ours shouldn't be concealed but proclaimed out loud so that all the world can hear!
- ELOISE** Be at peace, Will. True love is not declared in a shout but in the most delicate of whispers - soft, sweet and low.

6. DUET - ELOISE *and* WILL

Music - "Words of love too loudly spoken", Utopia Limited

- ELOISE** Words of love too loudly spoken
Ring their own untimely knell;
Noisy vows are rudely broken,
Soft the song of Philomel.
Whisper sweetly, whisper slowly,
Hour by hour and day by day;
Sweet and low as accents holy
Are the notes of lover's lay!
- BOTH** Sweet and low, etc.
- WILL** Let the conqueror, flushed with glory,
Bid his noisy clarions bray;
Lovers tell their artless story
In a whispered virelay.
False is he whose vows alluring
Make the listening echoes ring;
Sweet and low when all-enduring
Are the songs that lovers sing!
- BOTH** Sweet and low, etc.
- ELOISE** So you see, Will, we can never reveal our love in public until the Sheriff and Robin drop this pathetic feud that they have with each other. I'm sick to death of the Sheriff moaning on all the time about how irresponsible and politically naïve Robin Hood is.
- WILL** I know what you mean. Robin never stops going on about the Sheriff's uncaring and reactionary attitude to economics. I can't stand people who think they're right all the time - they could do with looking at things from the other person's point of view.
- ELOISE** (*Ironically*). What a revolutionary thinker! (*Aside*). But of course! That gives me a brilliant idea... It's ridiculous, and yet... (*To WILL*) Will, do you know where Robin is right now?
- WILL** Yes, I just left him. He's not too happy at the moment. The Merry Persons are revolting.
- ELOISE** Tell me something new! Look, I want you to lure him to this glade - but make sure that he's alone. I'll go and get the Sheriff, he can't have got far.

WILL But that'll mean that they'll meet each other!
ELOISE (*Sarcastically*) No!
WILL But why?
ELOISE You'll see - there's no time to explain now. Quickly, there's not a moment to lose.

Centre stage lights off. ELOISE and WILL go to spots on opposite sides of the stage where they meet, respectively, SHERIFF and ROBIN as they wander on.

WILL Robin! There you are!
ROBIN Hey nonny nonny Will! Verily, methinks we...
WILL Super! Look, I've just seen one of the Sheriff's tax collectors. He's approaching that clearing over there. I think that, together, we could overpower him.
ROBIN Triffic! I'll just go and get the others...
WILL There's no time for that! Come on!

WILL and ROBIN creep out of the spot and prepare for ambush.

ELOISE My Lord! I was on my way back to the castle when I came across a wounded stag in the clearing over there. I was just thinking, he'd be much easier to catch than a live one...

SHERIFF Hm... That's true. Are you sure he's badly wounded?

ELOISE Well, he was coughing up blood when I left him.

SHERIFF Good. This cuts down my risks considerably. Now, you promise you won't tell Lady Caroline about this?

ELOISE On my mother's grave. Quick, here he comes now!

ELOISE & WILL Let's get him!

Centre lights back on. Both pairs, shouting appropriately, charge towards centre stage. Halfway, ELOISE and WILL step back and creep away into the wings, leaving ROBIN and the SHERIFF to run straight at each other. When they are merely inches apart they stop and stare at each other, shocked and stunned. There is a dramatic chord!

7. DUET - ROBIN *and* SHERIFF

Music - "Who are you, sir?", Cox and Box

ROBIN Who are you, sir? Tell me who?
SHERIFF If it comes to that, sir, who are you?
ROBIN Who are you, sir?
SHERIFF What's that to you, sir?
ROBIN What's that to who, sir?
SHERIFF Who, sir? You, sir!
ROBIN (*Aside*) Yes, 'tis the Sheriff!
SHERIFF (*Aside*) Yes, 'tis the outlaw!
ROBIN (Peasant hater, exploiter!)
SHERIFF (Ego hefty trendy leftie!)
BOTH Raise your sword and fight with me!
Vainly struggle with the fire,
With the raging, fierce desire,
To do you an injury, an injury!
ROBIN So, we meet at last, sir!
SHERIFF Yes, sir, it would seem we do!
I suppose I'd better fight you.

ROBIN Fight me? It appears we're sparred.
You shall have your wish, sir - *en guard!*
SHERIFF Guards!
ROBIN Scarlett!
SHERIFF (They will beat up the outlaw, sort out this man!)
ROBIN (We will beat up the Sheriff, sort out this man!)
BOTH Help me!

ROBIN and SHERIFF circle each other, posing bravely but showing the greatest reluctance to actually start a fight.

ROBIN So, ha, ha! It appears that the time has come for us to fight! Ha, ha!
SHERIFF It does, ha, ha! It seems that I must teach you a ha, ha! lesson!
ROBIN I laugh at your lessons, you miserable tyrant! Ha, ha!
SHERIFF Hold your tongue, outlaw! Prepare for bitter and bloody battle!
ROBIN It shall be a great pleasure, oh robber of the poor!
SHERIFF No, it will be *my* pleasure, ha, ha! That is, it *would* be my pleasure, if I had met you.
ROBIN Ha, ha! That's true. If *I* had actually encountered you it would have indeed been a tremendous duel!
SHERIFF Yes! So, ha, ha! it's a pity we didn't meet, isn't it?
ROBIN It is, ha, ha! Well, seeing as I'm alone I may as well go home.
SHERIFF Yes. I think I'll just be heading off, too.
ROBIN Er... You won't tell anybody about this, will you?
SHERIFF Not a soul. After all, nothing *has* happened, has it?
ROBIN True. Well, goodbye then.
SHERIFF 'Bye. See you around.

They look sheepishly at each other and then start to walk nonchalantly off, whistling. Enter ELOISE, followed by WILL.

ELOISE Hold it right there! Just where do you think you two are going, sneaking off home without fighting?
SHERIFF It was his idea! He made me do it!
ROBIN You big liar! You started it, you sneak!
BOTH (*Squabbling*) It was you! No, you! etc.
ELOISE Be quiet! I don't care who started it. I just hope that you're ashamed of yourselves. Two grown men acting like this! I've a good mind to tell your followers.
SHERIFF Please don't, Eloise, everybody would laugh at me.
ROBIN I've got enough trouble with loyalty already.
ELOISE All right, perhaps I'll let you off just this once, providing that you agree to do exactly as I say...
SHERIFF Name it! Just don't tell Caroline!
ROBIN A rebellion, a broken engagement and now blackmail! What a day!
ELOISE Good. Now, Will and I are getting very tired of hearing you two complaining about each other, so we're going to teach you to be less narrow minded. We want you to change places for a month.
ROBIN What?
& SHERIFF

ELOISE Will and I will help you orientate yourselves. Nobody will be able to tell.

ROBIN Look, I say, I don't wish to be awkward, but surely they'll notice the difference in our faces.

WILL I shouldn't think so. Haven't you noticed how alike you look? You could pass as twins!

SHERIFF What? Me look like codpiece-face?

ROBIN I can't look like him! I'm supposed to be handsome!

ELOISE Stop complaining. Do you agree to my bargain?

ROBIN Do we have any choice?

SHERIFF I don't care - It'll give me a chance to show your band what it's like to have a real man in charge!

ROBIN Oh yes? Just wait until my revolutionary politics take effect - I shall be hailed as the saviour of the poor!

ELOISE That's the spirit! We'll meet again in one month outside Sherwood castle to change back. And no fighting until then. Are we agreed?

ROBIN Agreed!

SHERIFF Agreed! (ROBIN *and the SHERIFF shake hands*)

ELOISE Very good. Let the experiment begin!

8. FINALE ACT I

8a. QUARTET - ROBIN, SHERIFF, ELOISE *and* WILL

Music - "I am so proud", The Mikado

ROBIN	I am agreed To do the deed, And make my goal The Sheriff's role. I'll take his place, And soon disgrace The right wing plot That was our lot. When I preside, And laws decide, I'll swell with pride That's justified. And so, I'll go, And then I'll show That men like me Who bend their knee To liberty, You can foresee From misery Will make men free!	SHERIFF	When I command O'er Robin's band Then you will see How it should be! And when, at length We grow in strength, We'll cut a dash With much more cash! The consequence When you dispense With poor expense Is affluence! And so, I'll go, And lead my foe. By my design Those simple swine Will redefine The party line And undermine This philistine!	WILL	They'll soon be changed & ELOISE	As we arranged, And then they will Their dreams fulfil. We've made an oath To help them both With great finesse But we confess Our confidence In this pretence And fraudulence Is not immense! So off you go, And then you'll know That men who boast They know the most, Will find they roast When foes they host If they're engrossed In a different post!
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ALL When you've a disagreement that could start a fight,
And you're anxious to determine who is in the right,
We've got a cunning plan no other tip can top;
To solve your confrontations use a sweet, swift swap!
To stop a fight, and do what's right,
No tip can top a sweet, swift swap.
When you've a disagreement
And you're anxious for an answer
Then no matter where you're looking
The solution to your problem is a sweet, swift swap!

Over playout ROBIN *and the SHERIFF exchange clothes. Exeunt* ELOISE *and* ROBIN.

8b. DUET - SHERIFF *and* WILL

Music - "Come hither all you people", The Grand Duke

WILL Come hither, all you people -
When you hear the startling news
SHERIFF You will shout it from the steeple,
You will cheer and you'll enthuse.
BOTH You will think that it's stupendous
When you learn the fact tremendous -
SHERIFF That although I kept on claiming,
WILL That the rich we should be maiming,
SHERIFF And although you are revolting,
WILL Your rebellion he's halting
BOTH Now (I've) got a brand new ruse!
(He's)

8c. CHORUS

Music - "Now what is this, and what is that", The Pirates of Penzance

Now what is all the fuss about, why do you raise a hue and cry?
So tell us what our leader thinks - do we at last see eye to eye?
For Robin is, and always was, a narrow-minded kind of man;
Inflexible and obstinate, he'd never alter any plan.
So what is all the fuss about, why do you raise a hue and cry?
Now tell us what our leader thinks - do we at last see eye to eye?

8d. SOLO - SHERIFF *and* CHORUS

Music - "As pure and blameless peasant", Ruddigore

SHERIFF I was a caring leader,
I liked to help the poor,
My conscience was the pleader
I never could ignore.
CHORUS He never could ignore.
SHERIFF But after what you told me
I've lost that nagging ache;
I'll try the plans you sold me -
We'll keep all that we take!
CHORUS We'll keep all that we take!
SHERIFF We'll start a new life full of lying and stealing!
CHORUS With lying and stealing we'll start a new life!
SHERIFF The place will be rife with our underhand dealing!
CHORUS With underhand dealing the place will be rife!
SHERIFF I now understand that it's us who are needy -
CHORUS That we are the needy he now understands!
SHERIFF Henceforward our band will be proud to be greedy!
CHORUS We're proud to be know as the greediest band!

8e. DUET - VIRGINIA *and* SHERIFF

Music - "But stay - our new-made court", The Grand Duke

VIRGINIA Now hold - you've told us all
About your new direction;
And we agree
That larceny
Will stop our insurrection.
But still I don't recall
How went your logic linear;
Do your new rules
Extend to jewels
And dresses for Virginia?

ALL Do your new rules, etc.
SHERIFF Of course, my darling girl,
You'll get what you desire!
A diamond ring,
Or anything,
To which you may aspire.
We all have earned the pearl
That's cultured by life's oyster.
So let's rejoice
With heart and voice,
And break out of the cloister!

ALL Yes, let's rejoice, etc.
Hurrah! Hurrah! Agreed, agreed, agreed!

**8f. ENSEMBLE - VIRGINIA, SHERIFF, MARION, ANN
and CHORUS**

Music - "The threatened cloud has passed away", The Mikado

VIRGINIA At last my dreams are coming true!
SHERIFF For wealth and titles we'll accrue!
VIRGINIA Let our engagement now resume!
SHERIFF If you'll be bride then I'll be groom!
ALL Now let the throng
Our joy advance!
With laughing song
And merry dance!

MARION Although our threat has passed away,
ANN Beware our wrath if you should stray!
MARION So if your promises fall through,
ANN Then that will be the end of you!
ALL Still let the throng
Our joy advance!
With laughing song
And merry dance!
With joyous shout and ringing cheer,
Inaugurate our new career!

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE ONE - *A glade in Sherwood Forest, one month later. The MERRY PERSONS are found revelling with unusual extravagance.*

9. CHORUS *with ANN and MARION*

Music - "Of happiness the very pith", The Gondoliers

The happiest and richest band
In Merry England here you see:
The bravest outlaws in the land
All hail their new prosperity!

WOMEN This new philosophy we find

The beau-ideal of its kind -

MEN Capitalism that's combined

With caring and sincerity.

ANN & One month has passed since Robin's switch,

MARION One month of milk and honey,

One month since change from poor to rich,

From none to lots of money!

Although he seems a little strange,

By schemes that Robin can arrange

He's made our disposition change

From overcast to sunny!

Ah! From none to lots of money!

Ah! From overcast to sunny!

CHORUS The happiest and richest band, etc.

WILL Has everybody eaten?

ALL We have!

WILL Is anybody satisfied?

ALL We're stuffed!

WILL Good! That is the way it should be. We must not forget our leader's new command that we should never stop eating until we feel like being sick!

ALL Hurrah!

WILL Now, while the port is being served, let us proceed with today's business. Firstly, market news. Marion is to register himself as a limited company under the name of "Marion Pillaging and Plundering plc". Shares in his next haul go on sale today at twopence each. Also, I regret to say that Friar Tucks catering business, "Tuck's Tempting Tucker", has declared itself bankrupt and called in the receivers.

TUCK It's not fair! It's all because you put the Merry Persons cooking out to private tender. That's the bleeding free market economy for you! (*He is jeered*)

WILL All right, settle down. Next we have a report from our poverty secretary.

LITTLE JO. Thank you. Good news! Seasonally adjusted poverty rates have improved for the third week running!

ALL Hurrah!

LITTLE JO. The latest adjustment to how the figures are calculated has led to a fall of almost thirty percent, as now people called 'Smith' are excluded from the register. We believe that this more accurately reflects the true extent of poverty in Nottingham. (*Cheers*)

WILL Thank you. Social security secretary?

ANN Social security payouts have also fallen dramatically since the introduction of more realistic means testing. This has resulted in a much fairer system that is

targeted at the genuinely needy and not the lazy scroungers who can't be bothered to work. The new, fully comprehensive application form runs to fourteen pages, and we will report back on its effectiveness as soon as we can find a peasant who can read.

(General agreement)

WILL Thank you. Finally, our leader is concerned about the lack of contributions that the band has been making towards charity recently.

ANN He told us that it was up to our individual consciences.

WILL He did.

ANN Well, this individual conscience wants to keep everything it's got! We don't like being told what to do any more.

ALL We don't!

WILL I thought you were all pleased with Robin's change of heart?

MARION We were at first - but now it seems like he wants us to redistribute wealth again. Well, we're not having it! From today, we're opting out of the Merry Persons!

ALL We are!

WILL But you can't do that!

MARION Just watch us. And if you or Robin try to stop us, you're for it!

WILL I'm sorry - for what?

MARION Exactly! Come on, let's go!

The MERRY PERSONS exit as the SHERIFF enters dressed as ROBIN, provoking cries of hate and derision. He is left alone with WILL.

SHERIFF Oh Will, what have I done wrong? Look at them - they despise me! I can't understand it. It was great when I started - the band got richer, we gave some money to the poor and everyone was happy. But then they became more and more selfish and now the peasants are getting nothing. I can't bear to walk the streets any more - all those beggars and homeless families. You know, I never thought that I'd say this, but I'm starting to develop... *pity*.

WILL You amaze me!

SHERIFF The Merry Persons are so uncontrollably greedy now that anything I do to improve matters makes me even more unpopular. And things are going to get worse - Robin's ridiculous increases in income tax mean that all the rich people are either bankrupt or have left the county, so they'll be robbing each other next!

WILL Perhaps it's just as well that you're changing back to the Sheriff tonight.

SHERIFF Yes, though I doubt that Robin could control them, either. Thank God for Virginia - if it hadn't been for her this would all have been a total disaster. She really is a fine woman! No dizzy-headed infatuation with swashbuckling but realistic views on politics and a healthy dislike of poverty. What more could you ask for?

Exit WILL. Enter VIRGINIA dressed opulently and covered in jewellery.

VIRGINIA Robin, darling, look at this fabulous new ring I've just bought! I thought that I might be able to buy a matching tiara with the proceeds from the next raid - I've just bought some shares in Marion's company. *(She sees that he is upset)*. But popsy, you look sad. Has little me done anything to upset you?

SHERIFF It's not you, dear. It's the Merry Persons - I don't seem to be able to control them any more. It looks like I've created a monster...

VIRGINIA Poor Robin! I can't think why they won't listen to you - you've become so much more sensible lately. And there's been such a change in your attitude to money! Rather than waste it by giving it to the poor, you've decided to invest it wisely by buying me lots of jewellery and clothes. You've finally convinced me that you truly love me, so I've arranged for us to get married tomorrow!

SHERIFF Er, well, I don't know, darling, perhaps we should wait a little bit longer. Just to be sure we really want to. Remember how quickly people can change - you never know, tomorrow morning I could be a completely different person!

VIRGINIA Don't be such a silly! Can't you see, Robin, the time for trepidation is past! You love me, I love you. Throw caution to the wind - let us marry at once!

10. DUET - VIRGINIA *and* SHERIFF

Music - "Rapture, rapture", The Yeomen of the Guard

VIRGINIA Rapture, rapture!
When prosperity
Makes a capture,
Come temerity!
Doubt we're parrying,
No more tarrying,
Haste to marrying,
Rapture, rapture!

SHERIFF Doleful, doleful!
Love is ending,
I've a bowl full
Of pretending.
No revealing,
Keep concealing
My true feeling,
Doleful, doleful!

VIRGINIA Joyful, joyful!
All is beautiful,
Maid is coyful,
Man is dutiful.
Joy is bubbling,
Love is doubling,
No more troubling,
Joyful, joyful!

SHERIFF Ghastly, ghastly!
Shout profanity!
Hateful vastly
Is humanity!
Band of seediness,
Rush with speediness,
Into greediness,
Ghastly, ghastly!

BOTH (Rapture, rapture!) etc.
(Doleful, doleful!)

Exit VIRGINIA, dragging SHERIFF.

Enter ANN, MARION and LITTLE JOHN, conspiratorially.

ANN Marion, Little John, the time has come for us to take control of our own destiny. I have managed to persuade the Merry Persons to join us in a raid on Sherwood Castle this very night!

LITTLE JO. Sherwood castle? Is that not a bit dangerous?

ANN It is. I don't like having to take such risks, but it's the only place with any cash left!

- MARION** I don't know what's happening to the world. A man can't make a dishonest living these days.
- LITTLE JO.** Or woman.
- ANN** Anyway, there is an ulterior motive behind this attack. You two must volunteer to kidnap the Sheriff while the others are looting the castle. While you're inside getting him, I will lie in wait until Robin Hood appears. Once he's alone, I'll spring out, and before you can say "hey nonny nonny"... (*She draws her finger across her throat.*)
- MARION** You'll stroke his neck!
- LITTLE JO.** No, kill him, gusset head!
- ANN** After I've dealt with Robin, you bring out the Sheriff, we'll bump *him* off, call out the Merry Persons and say that they killed each other in a duel.
- LITTLE JO.** Brilliant plan!
- MARION** Great... But why?
- ANN** Don't you see... the band will then be leaderless, and, seeing the situation vacant, all will cry out in a single voice, the name of the new captain of the Merry Persons...
- MARION** Who is it?
- LITTLE JO.** Is it Friar Tuck?
- ANN** No! It's me, privy-brain!
- MARION** Well, obviously it's you...
- LITTLE JO.** It was the "single voice" that got me...
- ANN** Shut up! My friends, my time has come - are you with me?
- MARION & LITTLE JOHN** We are!
- ANN** Then his doom is sealed!

11. TRIO - ANN, MARION *and* LITTLE JOHN

Music - "Away, away!", The Pirates of Penzance

- MARION & LITTLE JOHN** Away, away! my hearts on fire,
Our leader shall be killed without delay.
This very night our vengeance dire
Shall glut itself in gore. Away, away!
- ANN** Away, away! Let us conspire
To overthrow this feeble man to-day!
I shall attain the dread desire
That thrills me to the core. Away, away!
- MARION** With falsehood foul
He caught us in his powers -
Let vengeance howl;
Let sweet revenge be ours!
With paltry hoards
Our loyalty he buys,
So by our swords
To-night the traitor dies.
- ALL** Yes, yes! to-night the traitor dies.
- ANN** To-night he dies!
- MARION** Yes, or early to-morrow.
- LITTLE JOHN** The Sheriff likewise -
- ANN** He will perish in sorrow.

MARION In terror and pain,
LITTLE JOHN That steadily worsens,
ANN Control we'll gain
MARION Of the Merry Persons!
ALL To-night he dies, etc. [Exeunt.]

SCENE TWO - *Outside Sherwood Castle that evening. Entrance to castle centre stage. ELOISE, CAROLINE, KEVIN and BRIAN are discovered in a celebratory mood. CAROLINE is dressed in a flamboyant and swashbuckling manner, and the guards are wearing and holding flowers, grinning inanely.*

**12. QUARTET - ELOISE, CAROLINE,
KEVIN and BRIAN**

Music - "Never mind the why and wherefore", H.M.S. Pinafore

CAROLINE Never mind the rising taxes,
Make your ploughshares from your axes,
Now you're freed from the oppression
Of a feudal chivalry!
Though the market's in recession,
Every working man is free!

ALL Set the churches' chimes a-ringing,
Let the celebrations start!
All should tell with raucous singing
Of our Sheriff's change of heart!

ELOISE Look how public spending's rising -
KEVIN And we've stopped our victimising -

CAROLINE Now at last my life's exciting -
BRIAN I'm just glad he's stopped us fighting!

ALL Let us spread the new solution,
Now perfection has been found,
Since the Sheriff's revolution,
Happiness is all around!

ELOISE Never mind the endless queuing,
Never mind resentment brewing,
If the people are ungrateful
For the boons that he's bestowed,
They're forgetting just how hateful
Was the previous selfish toad!

ALL Set the churches' chimes a-ringing, etc.

KEVIN Never mind the high inflation,
& BRIAN This new life's a revelation,
For we never punch a peasant
And we rarely terrorise -
Our existence's much more pleasant
Now that love is in our eyes!

ALL Set the churches' chimes a-ringing,
Let the celebrations start!
All should tell with raucous singing
Of our Sheriff's change of heart!

ELOISE Look how public spending's rising -
KEVIN And we've stopped our victimising -

CAROLINE Now at last my life's exciting -
BRIAN I'm just glad he's stopped us fighting!

CAROLINE Let us spread the new solution,
KEVIN & BRIAN Set the churches' chimes a-ringing,

ELOISE Since the Sheriff's revolution,
ALL Now perfection has been found,
Happiness is all around!

Enter ROBIN dressed as the SHERIFF.

- KEVIN** Hurrah! Our great leader comes!
- ROBIN** Hey nonny non... er, thank you, men, you're too kind. Eloise, would you go and find out how business has gone today?
- ELOISE** Of course, Robin.
- ROBIN** (*Sotto voce*) It's Rupert, not Robin!
- ELOISE** How silly of me! Strange, because it's seldom that I hear Robin Hood's name these days - especially from Lady Caroline. I'd swear she's completely forgotten about him! (*Exits with KEVIN and BRIAN*).
- ROBIN** That's true, Caroline. You used to go on about me, *him*, all the time. What's changed?
- CAROLINE** *You've* changed, that's what. You used to be so staid, cautious and respectable, but this last month you've been really dashing, impulsive and flamboyant! And so passionate - you're like a new man!
- ROBIN** I could change back if you want me to...
- CAROLINE** Gosh, no! I think you're much better like this. You know, I think I'm even more keen on you than I was before.
- ROBIN** It's awfully nice of you to say that, Caroline. I think you're pretty terrific too. You don't want luxury, you care about poor people and you like a good fight. Compared to a certain girl I know...
- CAROLINE** Oh Rupert, I simply can't wait any longer - let us summon the priest and get married right away!

13. DUET - CAROLINE *and* ROBIN

Music - "If we're weak enough to tarry", Iolanthe

- CAROLINE** Not a moment should we tarry
Ere we marry,
You and I,
I have never felt so strongly,
Right or wrongly,
For a guy!
Now your moral fibre's nourished,
Love has flourished -
That is why
I am sure we should not tarry
Ere we marry,
You and I!
- ROBIN** P'raps a moment we should tarry
Ere we marry,
You and I,
For the morals you admire
May expire,
By and bye.
If my views should change their fashion
Then your passion
May well die -
So I think that we should tarry
Ere we marry,
You and I!
- CAROLINE** Oh, Rupert, I just can't understand you! You as good as told me that you loved me, and now you seem to saying that we can't get married!
- ROBIN** I think I *do* love you, Caroline, but... I just can't marry you. And I can't tell you why.

CAROLINE You're absolutely impossible! To build up my hopes like that only to shatter them! If we can't be honest with each other then it's pointless for me to stay any longer. I'm leaving, Rupert. You've missed your chance. Goodbye! (*Exits in tears*)

ROBIN Oh, Caroline, Caroline, how could I tell you the truth? My month as the Sheriff finishes tonight, so I just can't make any long term commitment. Ah, if only I could have met you as myself instead of as my enemy... But no - I shouldn't think that way. I'm engaged to Virginia - she is my future, not Caroline - however much I wish she wasn't...⁴

Enter KEVIN and BRIAN.

KEVIN Sir! Sir!

ROBIN What is it, Kevin?

KEVIN Two people to see you, sir.

ROBIN Then perhaps you should bring them in.

KEVIN Right ho.

Exit KEVIN and BRIAN. They re-enter with CHRIS and CHERYL.

ROBIN Ah, hello. Who are you?

CHRIS We're criminals, sir.

CHERYL Especially him.

CHRIS And her.

ROBIN I see. And what do you want with me?

CHERYL We've come to give ourselves up.

ROBIN You have noble minds, walkers of the paths of sin! What crime did you commit?

CHRIS Well, we haven't exactly done one yet.

CHERYL But we were going to.

CHRIS We had it all planned.

CHERYL Yeah. And he thought of it.

ROBIN But you haven't actually done anything wrong?

CHRIS Not *as such*, sir, but we definitely would've done.

ROBIN I see. Then why did you give yourselves up?

CHERYL Well, you would've caught us!

ROBIN I would?

CHRIS Oh yes, no problems. We're very inexperienced.

ROBIN Might not.

CHERYL Oh, you would, sir. So we thought that, as you'd catch us anyway, we'd save you the trouble and expense of bringing us in and give ourselves up.

CHRIS So here we are.

ROBIN Right. Now, this is nothing to do with my new policy to treat prisoners as honoured guests?

CHERYL Never entered our heads!

ROBIN Jolly good. Well, I suppose I'd better lock you up, then. Eloise! (*Enter ELOISE*) Ah, Eloise, take these two away and put them in prison.

⁴ For additional, optional dialogue, see Appendix.

- ELOISE** I'm sorry, sir, but it's full. Too many criminals are giving themselves up.
- ROBIN** I've noticed that - it is indeed an honest population that I govern! Well, you'd better put them in a guest room.
- ELOISE** They're all full too. There's only your bedroom left.
- ROBIN** Oh, I say! Very well, you'd better use that, then - prisoners are human beings too, remember. Right, you two - prison rules. I'm afraid that you will be locked in your rooms all night, every night - unless you need to go to the privy or feel like a snack or something, and you're only allowed to eat the food we give you. (To ELOISE) What's on today's menu?
- ELOISE** Tonight it's duck a l'orange.
- CHERYL** Ugh! I hate duck!
- ROBIN** Is lobster all right?
- CHERYL** Well, I'm not all that keen on it.
- ROBIN** Never mind - you've got to suffer a bit, after all. Take them away! (*Exeunt KEVIN and BRIAN with CHERYL and CHRIS*) Well, I hope they'll learn from this experience. Now, Eloise, how's the economy going?
- ELOISE** Not well, I'm afraid - we're still heavily in the red.
- ROBIN** Oh dear. Why is that?
- ELOISE** I think it's because of the social security system you introduced. Perhaps you'd better adjust it...
- ROBIN** But, Eloise, of all my innovations that is the greatest! Never again will a Nottinghamian be forced to live in grinding poverty!
- ELOISE** The sentiments are admirable, Robin, but I just don't think you should give a peasant on the dole twice what he would earn if he was employed. They've practically all stopped working.
- ROBIN** Oh dear, so they noticed that loophole, did they? Never mind - nobody should be poor while I'm in charge. We'll have to put up income tax again.
- ELOISE** I'm afraid you can't do that.
- ROBIN** Why not? I'm the Sheriff!
- ELOISE** I can't deny that, but it's already nineteen shillings, eleven and a half pence in the pound.
- ROBIN** Oh cripes! Look, the Sheriff'll be back tonight. Try and hold things together until then. (*Exit ELOISE*) I think I've made rather a mess of governing Nottingham. It seemed so easy at the start, but everything seems to be sort of going wrong now, what with the high taxes, massive inflation, and all those prisoners. And since Lady Caroline arrived on the scene, my emotional life's in an even greater turmoil than ever! Oh God, why is modern life so complicated?

Exit ROBIN into castle. Enter the MERRY PERSONS. They creep on stealthily, one at a time, over the introduction.

14. SONG - MARION, LITTLE JOHN, ANN & CHORUS

Music - "Climbing over rocky mountain", Thespis

Dodging through the dingy darkness,
Stealing stealthily in starkness,
Cloaked in total silence we are creeping.
Cloaked in silence we are creeping,
While the weary world is sleeping,
Closer to the man we hate, the man we hate!
Fording fearsome raging rivers,
Pitching pain and shirking shivers,
Pitching pain and shirking, shirking shivers.

Fighting fiendish crawling creatures,
Routing raging soulless screechers,
Till we reach the Sheriff's gate!

MARION Wealthy men are going under,
No one's left for us to plunder,
Tax inspectors wanting more,
Now the rich are growing poor!

ALL Tax inspectors wanting more,
Now the rich are growing poor!

LITTLE JO. Time has come for violent action,
Time to raid the Sheriff's faction,
Time for our response is rife,
Take his wealth and take his life!

ALL Time for our response is rife,
Take his wealth and take his life!

ANN We must work without a sound,
Not a clue to guard or hound.
Grab the money - make a dash -
Leave the owners - take the cash!
Prisoners are not our prey,
Safe in cages let them stay,
But the Sheriff is our guy;
Bring him here and hang him high!

ALL But the Sheriff is our guy;
Bring him here and hang him high!

Time has come for violent action,
Time to raid the Sheriff's faction,
Time for our response is rife,
Take his wealth and take his life!
Time for our response is rife,
Take his wealth and take his life!
Time to raid the Sheriff's faction,
Take his wealth and take his life!

ANN Good, our stealthy approach doesn't seem to have alerted the guards. Now, does everybody know the plan? Sneak into the castle, get the loot and kidnap the Sheriff. Friar Tuck, you lead the burglary faction - Marion, Little John and I will get the Sheriff.

TUCK Sounds good to me. Come along men!

ANN And women.

TUCK Yes! And women!

MERRY PERSONS exeunt into castle. Manet ANN, MARION and LITTLE JOHN.

ANN Now, remember my plan - you get the Sheriff and I'll wait here for Robin. Good luck. (*Exeunt LITTLE JOHN and MARION into castle*). Come then, Robin, your end is near. Come and meet your destiny!

ANN hides at the back of the stage. Enter the SHERIFF (dressed as ROBIN HOOD) and VIRGINIA. WILL rushes in after them.

WILL Robin! Thank goodness you're here. It's almost time for the change!

VIRGINIA What change is that, Robin?

SHERIFF Oh, er... nothing. I er... thought I might change my clothes before I joined the raid.

- VIRGINIA** But surely it'd be all right if little me stayed and watched, wouldn't it?
- SHERIFF** Not before we're married, darling. Now go along and join the Merry Persons. See if you can find a lovely new necklace.
- VIRGINIA** If you say so, dear, but only because it's you. See you later, popsy. *(She kisses him and exits into castle)*
- WILL** Popsy? She never called Robin popsy!
- SHERIFF** Shut up! Is it time for the change back yet?
- WILL** I think so. It's... *(Looks at moon)* eleven fifty eight. They'll be here any minute. Popsy, eh? You certainly have been getting on well with Virginia - much better than Robin did. I don't know how she'll take to the change back.
- SHERIFF** I don't know how I'll take to it myself. You know, I was just on the verge of asking her to mar... But lo! My opposite number approaches. Good grief, Will, do I really look like him?
- Enter ROBIN and ELOISE.*
- ROBIN** Well, hey nonny nonny Sheriff! How did you get on with my band - keep them well under control?
- SHERIFF** No problem, piece of cake. We're richer, happier and much more popular than before... sort of. How about you?
- ROBIN** Pretty much the same. Governing the peasants with a concern for social justice was child's play. No more is the Sheriff of Nottingham a universally hated figure but one is loved, revered... perhaps even worshipped!
- ELOISE** Stop bragging. The Merry Persons will be coming out any moment - you'd better change quickly.
- SHERIFF** Of course. But I just want to make it clear that I'm only changing back to clear up the mess that he's left. I'm sure the Merry Persons would much rather keep me as their leader.
- ROBIN** And I'd just like to say that it is with great reluctance that I leave the running of the Utopia that I have created to this heartless capitalist, but I feel that I must return to my poor, mismanaged followers.
- ELOISE** You could stay put, if you want...
- ROBIN & SHERIFF** No!
- ELOISE** That's what I thought! You've not been very honest with each other, have you?
- WILL** From our perspective it's been an unmitigated disaster for each of you. It's all very easy to propose extreme remedies in theory, but look what happens in practice... *(ROBIN and the SHERIFF look ashamed)*
- ELOISE** I think that you've both learned a valuable lesson - the art of politics is the art of compromise!

**15 a. QUINTETTE - WILL, ELOISE, SHERIFF, ROBIN
and ANN**

Music - "I rejoice that it's decided", The Sorcerer

- WILL** Now the trial month has ended,
Time has come to swap once more.
If things weren't as you intended,
Learn this lesson evermore -
- ALL** When you wish a task to master,
You should mark this maxim wise;
If you want to foil disaster
You must learn to compromise!

ELOISE While upon events you're brooding,
Learn from your mistakes, I pray.
Let us hope this petty feuding
Finally has had its day.

SHERIFF When to greed you are appealing,
Chaos and oppression rule.
Baser instincts you're revealing
If you call compassion "fool".

ALL When you wish a task to master,
You should mark this maxim wise;
If you want to foil disaster
You must learn to compromise!

ANN Cruel deceit is practised here -
Anger burns deep down inside.
Once the murderous mob appear,
Then as leader I'll preside!

ROBIN Politic's an education,
Wisdom it may well impart.
Fighting tax and high inflation,
Fighting doubts within your heart!

ALL Fighting doubts within your heart!
When you wish a task to master,
You should mark this maxim wise;
If you want to foil disaster
You must learn to compromise!

Exit ANN into castle. ROBIN and the SHERIFF start changing, but are suddenly discovered by angry MERRY PERSONS with VIRGINIA.

15 b. CHORUS

Music - "Upon our sea-girt land", Utopia Limited

Observe our leaders here;
Deception now is clear!
Oh, tremble thou with fear -
For mercy do not plead us!
If what we hear is true,
We have been tricked by you,
This action you shall rue,
Our hated former leaders!
So death to them!
So death to them!
For mercy do not plead us!
So death to them!
So death to them!
Death to our hated leaders!

*The mob closes in and surrounds the two leaders with swords drawn.
Enter CAROLINE, who screams.*

15 c. RECITATIVE - WILL and ANN

Music - "Then, Frederic", The Pirates of Penzance

WILL Hold, rash ones, desist your evil courses,
And let your threatened captains have their freedom.
This I command, and all people must obey me!

ANN Oh yes? Says who?

15d. SONG - WILL

Music - "Some years ago", Princess Ida

Some years ago,
No doubt you know,
(And if you don't, I'll tell you so)
Your fearless king
With knights took wing
To fight the Turkish foe.
And with that band,
In foreign land,
Under burning sun and on arid sand,
His brave crusade
And trusty blade
Struck many a fearsome blow!
For he's a violent kind of king,
Who hates the task of governing.
To fight for the Light
And to smite like a knight,
Is always the course that he thinks is right!

ALL For he's a violent kind of king, etc.

But in the East
The war has ceased -
King Richard lost to the Turkish beast -
And rumours spread
That he was dead,
And in a grave did lie.
But what you heard
Was quite absurd -
It has the mark of a traitor's word -
He's in disguise
Before your eyes -
King Lionheart am I! (*Sensation*)
For I'm a violent kind of king,
Who hates the task of governing,
But now I confess
I express my distress -
It's time for your king to address this mess!

ALL For he's a violent kind of king, etc.

ALL kneel except WILL.

ELOISE Will, are you really King Richard the Lionheart in disguise?

WILL We are. Weary of commanding, upon our return to this country one decided to disguise oneself as a simple peasant. As Will Scarlett we were able to witness at close range the mess that those we had left in charge were making of Merry England. But now we have seen enough. It is time to reveal our true identity and tell you the answer that we have found to everyone's problems.

ROBIN Your majesty, this is such an honour! What is your Royal solution?

WILL It's a little something that we heard about in Greece called "democracy". Rather than hereditary rulers, the people decide who is to be in charge of the country.

SHERIFF But that's totally ridiculous! The peasants can hardly decide whether or not to go to the toilet without someone telling them! And besides, the ruling classes would never stand for it, and without their support you won't be able to change a thing.

WILL One had thought of that. We have devised a unique variation that will satisfy both factions. Firstly, there shall be the House of Commons, filled with representatives elected by the people. Robin Hood, you have shown yourself to

be both compassionate and popular. We ask you to become England's first Prime Minister.

ROBIN My liege, you do me too great an honour.

SHERIFF You can't let that big jessie run the country! Look what a mess he's made of Not-tingham!

WILL And that is the reason for the second stage of my plan. There will also be a House of Lords, whose membership is determined on an hereditary basis. That should keep the aristocracy happy. Sheriff Rupert, you'd enjoy telling the Lords what to do. Would you care to be the first Lord Chancellor?

SHERIFF Your majesty, nothing could please me more. Thank God someone with a bit of common sense will be in power.

ELOISE But sire, how is the power to be shared between these two?

WILL That's simple. Every item of legislation must be agreed by both houses before it becomes law.

SHERIFF What? That would mean that only really wishy-washy and safe bills will ever get passed!

WILL Exactly! You see where extremism gets you? Economic turmoil or rampant self interest!

ROBIN But, sir, a house made up only of the ruling classes? It'll be so right wing and reactionary!

WILL One wouldn't be so sure. There may come a time when, compared to the Commons, the House of Lords will seem a hot bed of radicals!

ANN You have taken our leaders away, your majesty. What is to become of the rest of us? (*Hopefully*). Need another head of state?

WILL Ah yes, we were coming to you. Ann, Marion and Little John, you have shown yourselves to be scheming, untrustworthy and totally selfish. You sabotage the plans of your leaders and constantly plot to overthrow them. There is only one place for villains such as you.

MARION Prison?

WILL No, somewhere we have designed especially - the Civil Service!

TUCK But what of the rest of the Merry Persons?

WILL There are certain jobs where such shamelessly greedy people as you are welcomed; henceforth you shall become lawyers, stockbrokers and estate agents!

MERRY PERSONS Hurrah!

CAROLINE Just a minute! (*To ROBIN*) Does this mean that my newly reformed Rupert was actually Robin Hood in disguise?

ROBIN I'm afraid so. Please forgive me. Although my name was assumed, my words of love were real.

CAROLINE Of course I forgive you! You know that you've been my idol ever since I was a teenager!

ROBIN So the marriage is still on?

CAROLINE But of course, you silly sausage - as long as you start wearing tights again!

VIRGINIA Hang about, does this mean that *my* sudden change of affection was towards the Sheriff of Nottingham? Well, *that* explains a lot of things.

- SHERIFF** Virginia, I am very sorry. My name's changed but I'm still the same person. My dear, you know how to appreciate the good life. Come and join me in my exalted new position.
- VIRGINIA** Me? Wed the future Lord Chancellor? That's a lot more posh than Prime Minister, isn't it? Oh popsy, just try and stop me!
- SHERIFF** Oh, Virginia!
- VIRGINIA** Oh, Rupert! At last I'll fulfil my materialistic dreams - I'll be able to live in a huge mansion with scores of servants. You can help me with run the house and I can help you run the country.
- SHERIFF** I think not, Virginia. A grocer's daughter should never dabble in politics!
- ELOISE** Your majesty, if a servant girl may be so bold as to address her monarch directly, what is to become of me? How can a king honour his engagement to someone from the lower classes like me?
- WILL** You're right. Such a breach of social class would be far too revolutionary for the Middle Ages. Fortunately, however, we have just discovered this letter (*Producing a random scrap of paper*) which proves beyond all doubt that you were swapped in infancy with the Baroness of Rutland!
- ELOISE** Oh, what a relief! That means we can marry, does it?
- WILL** Of course! A Baroness and a king is quite acceptable!
- ELOISE** Oh Richard, I'm so pleased that everything has worked out well in the end. Isn't democracy wonderful?

16a. FINALE ACT II

Music - "Although our dark career", The Pirates of Penzance

- ANN** We've changed our treacherous life
MARION To one where we'll be paid for scheming!
CAROLINE I'll soon be Robin's wife -
ROBIN And I'll have power like I've been dreaming!
VIRGINIA I'm aristocracy -
SHERIFF And I will be the world's first Tory!
ELOISE All praise democracy -
WILL The source of all our future glory!

16b. CHORUS

Hail, ever hail, democracy!
The politics that set men free!
Give praise to Athen's favourite son!
All hail, a new age has begun!

16c. CHORUS

Music - "For the merriest fellows are we", The Gondoliers

The merriest people are we, tra la,
Who live in democracy, tra la,
These rollicking jokers
Are lawyers and brokers,
And happy as happy can be, tra la!

CURTAIN

APPENDIX

Extra verses for the entrance of KEVIN, BRIAN and the SHERIFF:

Verse 3

KEVIN To fight off challengers we're lumbered,
BRIAN But it's a task we do with glee!
BRIAN Providing that they are outnumbered,
BRIAN And they're all under four foot three!
KEVIN So if you're six year old's been naughty -
BRIAN (And they're alone when they are found)
BOTH We'll do them in - We'll do them in!
For thrashing lepers we're renowned!
We'll do them in - We'll do them in!
We are the toughest men around!

SHERIFF - Verse 3

As to worker's motivation, you must give consideration
To the different effects of social class on your approach;
When it's time for you to gauge how much you should increase their wage
If you're generous with both then you are worthy of reproach!
Extra cash is instrumentive to give rich men an incentive -
If you've got a lot of money you'll work harder given more -
But, although it sounds unpleasant, if you gave it to a peasant
It would make him even lazier than he used to be before!
Though you think me patronising, if a post I'm advertising
I will treat the upper classes as I treat the common mob.
I am terribly selective, while still totally objective,
For the one who knew my father is the one who gets the job!
And again I'd better mention,
Just in case it is obscure,
That it's always my intention
To seek justice for the poor.
But their dignity debases
When they put on airs and graces -
If you keep them in their places
They'll respect you even more!
ALL But their dignity, etc.

Additional dialogue, Act I.

This requires a new principal part – LITTLE OLD MAN. This is all he does!

SHERIFF Huh! I'll prove to her that I'm more than a match for that nancy boy! It takes more than being nice to poor people and prancing around in a doublet and hose to impress me! It's easy to be frivolous if you've no responsibilities. People seem to think that I don't care for the common oik. I *do* care. Deeply. It's just that I can't get the message across to the ordinary man in the gutter.

Enter KEVIN and BRIAN, agitated.

KEVIN Sir! Sir!
SHERIFF Yes, what is it?
KEVIN There's a man here to see you.
SHERIFF What does he want?
KEVIN (*Looking at BRIAN*) He just came with me to tell you...
SHERIFF Not Brian! The man!
KEVIN Err... I don't know.

SHERIFF Well, go and ask him.

KEVIN Right ho. (*Looks around*) He's not here.

SHERIFF Then go and get him!

KEVIN Good idea, sir. (*Exeunt KEVIN and BRIAN. Re-enter with LITTLE OLD MAN*)

SHERIFF So, what are you doing here?

KEVIN But you just asked us to..!

SHERIFF Not you! Now, what is your name, you repulsive little man?

KEVIN It's Kevin, sir.

SHERIFF Kevin, you are so mercifully free of the burden of intellect. I shall simplify my order. If you interrupt, I will kill you. Understand? (*KEVIN nods furiously*) Good. So, little old man, what is your business with me?

LITTLE OLD I have come to claim what is rightfully mine. I want some money from you.

SHERIFF From me?

LITTLE OLD Yes.

SHERIFF Hit him, guard!

KEVIN Right ho. (*He hits BRIAN*)

SHERIFF No, not Brian, the... Forget it. Go off and look for stags – I'll handle this myself. (*Exeunt KEVIN and BRIAN*) So, little old man, you escape my wrath – for the moment! Why do you dare ask for money?

LITTLE OLD It's my job. I'm the gamekeeper. If you want to kill a stag, you need a stag licence. Look (*He hands SHERIFF an official letter*)

SHERIFF Very well – how much

LITTLE OLD Two sovereigns.

SHERIFF What?

LITTLE OLD Don't blame me, mate. They're an endangered species – conservation isn't cheap, you know.

SHERIFF Well, I don't have two sovereigns on me.

LITTLE OLD All right, I'll take what you have... and that potato.

SHERIFF I'll have you know that this is a very valuable potato – I bought it from a Viking. It could fetch three sovereigns from a collector.

BRIAN Very well, then – just the potato.

SHERIFF Done – here you are. Go away quickly. (*Exit LITTLE OLD MAN.*) Lady Caroline is paying dear for her dissatisfaction with my masculinity – I was going to have that potato set in her wedding ring. But speak of the devil, here she comes now.

Enter LADY CAROLINE and ELOISE, her maid, etc.

Additional dialogue, Act II.

ROBIN Oh, Caroline, Caroline, how could I tell you the truth? My month as the Sheriff finishes tonight, so I just can't make any long term commitment. Ah, if only I could have met you as myself instead of as my enemy... But no - I shouldn't think that way. I'm engaged to Virginia - she is my future, not Caroline - however much I wish she wasn't...

Enter KEVIN and BRIAN.

KEVIN Sir! Sir!

ROBIN What is it, Kevin?

KEVIN Two people to see you, sir.
ROBIN Who are these people?
KEVIN Why, it's us, sir!
ROBIN No, I mean who are these people who have come to see me?
KEVIN You've got me there, sir.
ROBIN Then perhaps you should bring them in.
KEVIN (*Looking around*) I think they've gone, sir.
ROBIN No, they were outside. Go and get them.
KEVIN Right ho.
ROBIN (*Long pause*) Well – go and get them!
KEVIN What, now?
ROBIN Yes, now!
KEVIN Very good, sir! (*KEVIN and BRIAN start to walk off. They stop.*) Who was it we were going to get?
ROBIN The people who have come to see me!
KEVIN But we're already here!
ROBIN (*Getting hysterical*) No, not you! The people out... (*Very calmly*) Look, it's very simple. Go outside and send in the people who want to see me.
KEVIN And nothing else?
ROBIN And nothing else.
KEVIN Right ho.

Exit KEVIN and BRIAN

ROBIN It's amazing! You think they couldn't get any more stupid, and yet they still surprise you!

Re-enter KEVIN and BRIAN with CHRIS and CHERYL.

ROBIN Ah, hello. Who are you?

The dialogue continues from this point...

AUTHOR'S NOTE

After the success of 'Wicked Waxworks' and 'The Philanderer', I decided to do something more ambitious for my next show. Casting my mind over British History, I thought the Middle Ages might be fun – and that G&S had never dealt with the myth of Robin Hood (except the bit in 'Ivanhoe' that Sullivan did with Julian Sturgis). I loved the Robin Hood segment of Terry Gilliam's 'Time Bandits' and the Elizabethan series of 'Blackadder', as well as 'Monty Python and the Holy Grail', so I thought I have a go at writing a show in that sort of genre – closer to the numerous sketches I was writing for Medical Revues around that time.

Initially, this was going to be a show with original words and music, as my friend Phil Wood was keen to try composing. I started writing the libretto with this aim – although found it hard to decide on the structure and meter of songs without anyone to tell me what to do. I did a few songs, and Phil began to set one of them, and then it all seemed just too hard...

So, I returned to my original working method, and started again with G&S songs... to which I added two by Mozart ('Là ci darem la mano' from Don Giovanni, and 'Voi Che Sapete' from Figaro, as they are well known) and one from Offenbach (The Bold Gendarmes). The names of many of the characters came from people I met at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, when I spent 3 months there as a student. For Ann Oakleaf's dialogue, I also drew on the character of Rose Marie from *A Very Peculiar Practice*, a favourite TV show. I duly completed the script – two acts, two scenes, with lots of new words and what I believed was very funny dialogue. I was *really* pleased with it, and gave it to people who had been in my previous shows to read... and they were very lukewarm, and not keen to produce it.

Disheartened, I shelved it and went on to write (and have performed) 'Modern Girls' and 'The Wreckers of Red Rock'. With this extra experience, I then returned to 'Robin Hood'. I realised that forcing myself to have only one scene per act (as Gilbert did) was too restrictive, and added the scene of the Merry Men at the start of Act 2 (which originally began with 'Never mind the rising taxes'). I took out the Mozart songs (which weren't very good – there's too much repetition of words in opera!), and hit on the idea of having at least one song from every Savoy Opera to help choose the new numbers. Of course, 'Climbing over rocky mountain' is better known to be from 'Pirates', it was originally in 'Thespis', although in a slightly different form – but it was good enough for me! I cut down the dialogue, and removed some long sections for Kevin and Brian, which were (intentionally) very derivative of 'Holy Grail' (see Appendix), and gave it to people to read – and, *this* time, they happy to put it on!

The first production was a little difficult – the cast is much larger than any other show I have written, and this always provides logistic difficulties, particularly when rehearsing in exam term, as you hardly ever get all the people you want together at once. On the other hand, Michael Berner (visiting German medical student) wrote parts for a small band (Violins, Viola, 'Cello, Flute, Clarinet and Piano), which really lifted the musical side. The production went reasonably well, but was under-rehearsed, and the audience, generally, didn't seem to enjoy it quite as much as previous shows.

It's had quite a few productions since then, but I still regard it as a 'work in progress', and would like to re-edit and re-shape the script, although none of the other directors seemed to want to tackle this! It has a rather different feel from normal G&S – or, indeed, any of my other shows – and I think that may be why it is more difficult to get right. You need to think 'Monty Python' more than 'Martyn Green'. One day...

31st May 2022