

H.M.S. PINAFORE
FOR CHILDREN

ADAPTED FROM GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

Edited by David Trutt

H.M.S. PINAFORE ADAPTED FROM GILBERT & SULLIVAN
BY JAMES FLETCHER SMITH, 1935.

INTRODUCTION	Page 3
H.M.S. PINAFORE : MORNING	Page 4
H.M.S. PINAFORE : JOSEPHINE'S MORNING	Page 10
ROYAL TRAFALGAR HOTEL : NOON	Page 16
H.M.S. PINAFORE : AFTERNOON	Page 22
H.M.S. PINAFORE : JOSEPHINE'S AFTERNOON	Page 29
H.M.S. PINAFORE : DINNER	Page 35
H.M.S. PINAFORE : EVENING	Page 37
H.M.S. PINAFORE : HALF PAST TEN	Page 42
H.M.S. PINAFORE : A NEW DAY	Page 46

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Excerpted from the PUBLISHERS' NOTE, Boston USA, 1935:

“Since 1875 when the musical comedies of William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan first appeared on the London stages, those vehicles of song and laughter and good wholesome satire have brought pleasure to an ever increasing number of enthusiasts of all ages. As a result of this popularity, much has been written about these operas and their composers, but unfortunately one considerable and very important portion of the Gilbert and Sullivan audiences have been seriously neglected in this field of books. That is—the children.

“We have recognized this lack and because we believe in the value—in terms of the most lasting and happiest impressions—of bringing the child into early contact with the best the arts have produced, we take unusual pleasure in publishing an adaptation of H.M.S. PINAFORE, the first volume of the ‘STORIES FROM GILBERT AND SULLIVAN’ Series. With this and subsequent titles, we hope to do for young readers something of what Charles and Mary Lamb have done with their famous TALES FROM SHAKESPEARE.

“In publishing this Series, we have in mind all young people from seven to seventy for they have in common that of the spirit which will enable them to enjoy together the same qualities in a book. To serve this purpose, the author endeavors to achieve a style which for lightness of touch and humor is close to the lyric whimsicality of the originals.

“H.M.S. PINAFORE is the first of the Series in uniform editions to include THE MIKADO, THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE, PATIENCE, THE GONDOLIERS, IOLANTHE, THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD, and RUDDIGORE.”

The book included here, H.M.S. PINAFORE, unfortunately, is both the first and last of the intended series. No other Gilbert and Sullivan children's books were adapted by James Fletcher Smith, nor published by L. C. Page of Boston.

James Fletcher Smith succeeds in telling a story which is both the ‘same as’ and ‘different from’ that told by W. S. Gilbert, for example: *For though few of those present could have explained at all clearly what baby farming was, not one had failed to see the importance of Little Buttercup's secret.*

The story takes place on H.M.S. PINAFORE while anchored in Portsmouth Harbor. Dialogue that adapter Smith extracted from Gilbert's libretto, has been placed in “Bold quotation marks” by this Editor.

One day a great many years ago, when Queen Victoria ruled England and nothing was at sixes or at sevens, a man of war came sailing into Portsmouth. The decks were beautifully scrubbed with holystone, and not a footprint could be seen. The brasswork gleamed like gold foil. And from the Captain's down to the midshipmite's, not a speck of dust appeared on the uniforms of any in the crew. "Aha," thought the people of Portsmouth as they looked through their spyglasses, "this must surely be Her Majesty's ship *Pinafore*. No other boat was ever half so tidy." And any doubts they may have had were banished when they heard the crew singing.

"We sail the ocean blue,
And our saucy ship's a beauty;
We're sober men and true,
And attentive to our duty.
When the balls whistle free o'er the bright blue sea,
We stand to our guns all day;
When at anchor we ride on the Portsmouth tide,
We have plenty of time to play."

This chorus was kept strictly for the men aboard the *Pinafore*, as a reward for good behavior. It usually ended with a magnificent "Ahoy, ahoy!" which was now chanted so heartily that it aroused Little Buttercup who was tossing on her sleepless bed near the waterfront.

Little Buttercup was a bumboat woman, and she always did her duty on the dot. So she leapt from her bed, took out her bumboat, filled her basket with candy, shoelaces, pipes, handkerchiefs, and everything else a sailor needs when he comes home after a long voyage, and rowed away with all speed.

As her tiny boat bobbed over the waves she thought long and much about the years gone by; and once in a while a really attentive fish might easily have heard the words "Remorse, remorse," muttered between strokes of the oars. But by the time Little Buttercup tied her bumboat up beside the mighty *Pinafore*, she was quite herself again. Her plump cheeks shone like red polished apples, and her eyes twinkled merrily. To look at her no one would have thought she stayed awake at nights or had a care in the world.

“Hail, men o’ war’s men, safeguards of your nation,” she cried as she stepped onto the quarter deck. “Here is an end at last of all privation. You’ve got your pay. Spare all you can afford, to welcome Little Buttercup on board.”

In a trice all swabbing of decks and splicing of ropes was dropped; and a crowd of eager blue-jackets, with pennies in their hands, swarmed round Little Buttercup. She had not even time to notice that she had dropped into rhyme. But she did see a number of new faces in the crew; and these faces looked at her enquiringly, as much as to say, “Please ma’am, why are you called Little Buttercup, and what can there possibly be in that big basket?” So she decided to sing a little song which she had in reserve to answer just such questions as these.

“I’m called Little Buttercup—dear little Buttercup,
 Though I could never tell why;
 Still I’m called Buttercup—poor little Buttercup,
 Sweet little Buttercup, I,”

she explained. Then she added, swinging her basket enticingly,

“I’ve snuff and tobaccy, and excellent jacky,
 I’ve scissors, and watches and knives;
 I’ve ribbons and laces to set off the faces
 Of pretty young sweethearts and wives.
 I’ve treacle and toffee, and excellent coffee,
 Soft tommy and succulent chops;
 I’ve chickens and conies and pretty polonies,
 And excellent peppermint drops.”

The mouths of the crew watered, and Little Buttercup’s buxom figure swayed to the tune of her song.

“Then buy of your Buttercup—dear little Buttercup.
 Sailors should never be shy;
 So buy of your Buttercup—poor little Buttercup,
 Come, of your Buttercup buy,”

she coaxed cheerily. How could she foretell what would happen aboard the *Pinafore* ere the sun rose again on Portsmouth harbor?

“Aye, Little Buttercup,” cried Bill Bobstay the bo’sun, who had his eye on a pretty polony. “Well called! For you’re the rosiest, roundest, and reddest beauty in all Spithead.”

Little Buttercup knew better. “Red, am I?” she replied. “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 vitals?”

“No, my lass,” said Bill Bobstay, scratching his head, “I can’t say I’ve ever thought that.”

And why should he? How was he to know that Little Buttercup had a secret, and that this secret was somehow mixed up with the fact that her name was not really Little Buttercup at all, but plain Mrs. Cripps, and that she had not been a bumboat woman all her life?

“I have thought it often,” said a sinister voice nearby.

Everyone turned to look at the speaker, and everyone recoiled in horror. He had a twisted leg, and an enormous hump, and a mouth like a hippopotamus, and a nose like a red pincushion. One shoulder was higher than the other, and one eye was larger than the other, and it was white and cold, like a fish’s. Altogether the owner of that eye was about the most hideous Jack Tar who ever joined the Navy.

“Yes,” said Little Buttercup, when she had become slightly more used to that face. “You look it. What’s the matter with the man? Isn’t he well?”

“Don’t take no heed of him,” said Bill Bobstay, who had a rather tender heart. “That’s only poor Dick Deadeye.”

“I say—it’s a beast of a name, ain’t it?” hissed Dick Deadeye.

“It’s not a nice name,” admitted Little Buttercup.

“And I’m three-cornered, too, ain’t I?” persisted Dick.

“You are rather triangular,” confessed Little Buttercup.

Then the big mouth let out a blood-curdling laugh. “Ha! ha!” it roared. “That’s it! I am ugly, and they hate me for it. For you all hate me, don’t you?”

The crew of the *Pinafore* tried not to show their real feelings, but it was no use. Anybody could have seen that Dick was right. That was the most annoying thing about him. He was almost always right.

“Well, Dick,” explained Bill Bobstay, “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?”

“No,” admitted Dick.

“It’s asking too much, ain’t it?” pressed the bo’sun.

“It is,” conceded Dick. “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 am resigned.”

Dick thought this sounded rather good, and he glanced around with his live eye to see the effect of such a generous admission. But nobody was listening to poor ugly Dick any longer. Every gaze—including Little Buttercup’s—was fixed on the hatchway leading from the fore-castle.

And small wonder! Half way up the hatch stood a newcomer who was as handsome as Dick was hideous—which is almost as much as to say he was really too good-looking. Moreover he seemed very sad, and as he climbed slowly up the ladder he sang to himself.

“The nightingale

Loved the pale moon’s bright ray,

And told his tale

In his own melodious way!

He sang, ‘Ah, well-a-day!’ ”

“Oho,” thought Little Buttercup and Dick Deadeye together. “This young man is in love. And if you ask me, I should say it was a hopeless love.” For they both knew that when a good-looking young man sings out loud about the moon and the nightingale, and sighs “Ah, well-a-day!” it can only mean one thing—Love! Little Buttercup asked the young man’s name.

“That,” said Bill Bobstay proudly, “is the smartest lad in all the fleet—Ralph Rackstraw.”—“Leastways, you writes his first name ‘Ralph.’ But you pronounces it ‘Rafe.’ Don’t ’ee, mates?”

“Ay, ay,” responded the crew, “we always calls him ‘Rafe.’ ” Then a remarkable thing happened. Little Buttercup’s red cheeks turned extremely pale, and she almost dropped her basket.

“Ha! That name! Remorse! Remorse!” she muttered. And anyone who had been watching her at that moment would have known for sure that she had a secret, and that her secret was somehow mixed up with the name of Ralph Rackstraw. But nobody was paying attention to Little Buttercup now. The entire crew of Her Majesty’s ship *Pinafore* were swarming around their handsome messmate, eager to learn the exact cause of his sorrow. Ralph Rackstraw read their silent queries.

“Ah, well-a-day,” he sighed as he stepped onto the quarter deck. “I love—and love, alas, above my station!”

“He loves—and loves a lass above his station,” echoed everybody in sympathy—including Little Buttercup. Ralph Rackstraw smiled.

“Yes,” he sighed, “I love so much that I’ve become a poet. Would you like to hear some of my poetry? It’s very beautiful.”

“I’m sure it is,” declared Little Buttercup. And thus encouraged, Ralph Rackstraw sang his latest song.

“A maiden fair to see,
The pearl of minstrelsy,
A bud of blushing beauty,
For whom proud nobles sigh,
And with each other vie,
To do her menial’s duty.

“A suitor, lowly born,
With hopeless passion torn,
And poor beyond concealing,
Has dared for her to pine
At whose exalted shrine
A world of wealth is kneeling.

“Unlearnèd he in aught
Save that which love has taught
(For love had been his tutor).
Oh, pity, pity me—
Our Captain’s daughter she,
And *I* that lowly suitor!”

At the last words Ralph bowed his handsome head in despair. The crew looked very glum indeed. It was worse than they feared.

“Don’t you like my poem?” asked Ralph, surprised.

“Ah, my poor lad,” replied Bill Bobstay, patting him on the back. “The poem’s all right. It’s you as ain’t.”—“You’ve climbed too high. Our worthy captain’s child won’t have nothin’ to say to a poor chap like you. Will she, lads?”

“No, no,” chuckled Dick. “Captain’s daughters don’t marry foremast hands.”

And in his heart of hearts everyone there knew that Dick was probably right.

“Shame! Shame!” they cried, nevertheless recoiling [from Dick Deadeye].

“Dick Deadeye.” said the bo’sun in disgust, “them sentiments o’ yourn are a disgrace to our common natur’.”

“Ah, it’s a queer world!” replied Dick, still chuckling; and Bill Bobstay, seeing that it was hopeless to argue, looked round for Little Buttercup. He felt so sorry for poor Ralph that he wanted to buy him an ounce of peppermint drops, just to take his mind off his troubles.

But the bumboat woman had already disappeared. At the words “Our captain’s daughter,” Little Buttercup had vanished down the forecastle hatchway, bound only she knew where. Past ammunition rooms and store-rooms, through hold and galleys, she hurried just as fast as her weight and her basket would let her. Up companion-ways and down ladders she scrambled, until at last she came out on the poop deck. And there on the poop stood one of the prettiest and nicest-looking girls that Little Buttercup had ever seen. She was proud and brave, but her eyes were just a mite reddened, so she must have been crying.

“What’s the matter, my dear?” asked the bumboat woman, putting her basket on the deck. Then she smiled at the girl, and the girl smiled back.

“Who are y-y-you?” asked the girl, coming down from the poop.

“I’m called Little Buttercup—dear little Buttercup,
Though I could never tell why;
Still I’m called Buttercup—”

began the bumboat woman, as she always did when anyone failed to recognize her at first sight. But the girl did not wait for more.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I've heard a lot about you. You sell things to sailors, don't you?"

"Yes," admitted Little Buttercup.

"I want to buy some flowers," announced the girl in a very practical tone. "Have you any in your basket?"

"Lots and lots," replied the bumboat woman. "I've roses and posies. daisies and forget-me-nots, chrysanthemums and rhododendrons—"

"Oh, dear!" sighed the girl, peering into the basket. "There are so many different kinds I shall never know which to pick. Besides, I d-d-don't seem to be able to see very clearly this morning. Won't you help me to choose? What I want is something that will go nicely with my new dress, and that I can twine around my fingers while I am singing my song."

"I see," declared Little Buttercup. "Well, my dear, why don't you go over your song for me, and I can be deciding which flowers will make the best accompaniment?"

"All right," agreed the girl. "I will." So she folded her hands and began.

"Sorry her lot who loves too well,
 Heavy the heart that hopes but vainly,
 Sad are the sighs that own the spell
 Uttered by eyes that speak too plainly;
 Heavy the sorrow that bows the head
 When love is alive and hope is dead!"

Little Buttercup sat on a coil of rope and listened intently. "Forget-me-nots!" she exclaimed without hesitation as soon as the girl had finished, and handed her a bunch. "There will be no charge my dear," she went on pleasantly, "if you will tell me one thing. Why don't you sing something more cheerful?"

The girl looked surprised. "I should think that was plain from the words," she declared. "I am in love—vainly, hopelessly."

"There's no need to make such a fuss about it," returned the bumboat woman. "Look at me. I don't. But though you wouldn't think it at my age, I am in love too—vainly and hopelessly."

"Are you?" cried the girl in excitement. "You poor thing! With whom?"

"That would be telling!" replied Little Buttercup, shaking her head.

"I suppose it would," agreed the girl.

"And you, my dear?" asked Little Buttercup.

"That would be telling, too!" returned the girl, putting a finger to her lips. "But I can say this much—he is a sailor on board this very ship, and oh! so handsome!"

"You ought to be very happy," commented Little Buttercup. "Sailors make splendid husbands."

The girl shook her head. "But you don't understand," she wailed. "It's perfectly horrid. I'm not happy at all. He's only a *common* sailor, you see—born in some back street where organs yell and clacking housewives fume, and where there is probably only one cracked looking glass to see your face in; while I was born and bred in a luxurious home hung with ancestral armor and old brasses, and furnished with everything new from the very best shops. I ought to have fallen in love with some gilded lordling. We could never be happy together—and I blush for the weakness that has allowed me to cherish such a passion. I hate myself when I think of the depths to which I have stooped in permitting myself to think tenderly of one so ignobly born, but I love him! I love him! I love him!"

"Have you told him so?" asked Little Buttercup.

"Certainly not," cried the girl. "I am proud. Though I carry my love with me to the tomb, he shall never, never know."—"Besides," she went on, "I haven't told you the worst yet. I am already plighted to another."

"What!" exclaimed Little Buttercup.

"Yes," sighed the girl, "I have been engaged for nearly a year. Last summer Sir Joseph Porter,—he is the First Lord of the Admiralty and the ruler of the Navy, you know—saw my picture in the society news—my great-great uncle is the Earl of Spithead, you see—and fell in love with me immediately. He wrote to Papa demanding my hand in marriage, and of course Papa couldn't say 'No.' And now—oh, dear! oh, dear!—he is coming on board this very afternoon, with all his sisters and his cousins and his aunts, to claim my promised hand. Little Buttercup, whatever shall I do?"—"I can esteem—reverence—venerate Sir Joseph, for he is a great and good man. But, oh, I can't love him."

"Of course you can't," agreed Little Buttercup. "If he is the ruler of the Queen's Navy he must be at least fifty. We must put a stop to this at once. Would it do any good, do you think, if I were to have a talk with your father?"

"I am sure it wouldn't," sighed the girl. "Papa is very proud—just like me. He would be terribly angry if anyone tried to interfere with a plan he had once made. He is kind, but dreadfully strict. Everything has to go like clockwork with him. Even his morning greetings to the crew have been set to music and made part of the ship's drill. But here he comes! Quick! Let us hide in my cabin, and you shall judge for yourself."

"What!" cried Little Buttercup. "You are—?"

"I am Josephine Corcoran," said the girl proudly. "And Papa is the Captain of the *Pinafore*."

Now if Josephine Corcoran had been less in a hurry to reach her hiding place she might have noticed Little Buttercup's face. And if she had seen Little Buttercup's face she would have known that something very important had happened. She might even have guessed that the bumboat woman had a secret, and that she and her father were somehow mixed up with it. But she noticed nothing, and Little Buttercup saw this. "Good!" she murmured as she heaved her basket onto the cabin table, "I have dissembled well! Little does this fair maid guess that I already know her father, and that 'tis he I adore so vainly and so hopelessly. Ah, me! But for the hand of Fate she might have been my own child." And Little Buttercup heaved a big sigh.

"Look," called Josephine, peering out of the window. "He comes. Now watch carefully."

Little Buttercup hurried to the window just in time to see a tall and handsome figure emerging from the Captain's cabin. He wore a uniform heavily laden with the heaviest gold braid, and all his buttons glittered in the morning sun. His hair was carefully brushed with a perfect parting down the middle, and his nice clean hands showed that he had never in his life bitten his fingernails even when he was angry. Altogether he was exactly what the Captain of a man of war ought to be, and anyone could have seen that he always meant what he said and would stand for no nonsense.

Clearly the crew knew this, for as soon as the Captain appeared, they all stopped whatever they were doing and formed two perfect lines on the quarter deck before you could say "Lord Nelson." Bill Bobstay took his place at one end of the front line and Ralph Rackstraw at the other. Dick Deadeye sidled into the center of the back row, so as not to spoil the general effect with his ugly face.

"Now listen," said Josephine to Little Buttercup. "It's going to start. The beginning, of course, is in prose, so that it can easily be changed if anybody happens to feel ill some morning. But later on there is some real poetry which never alters. And that's awfully thrilling."

Little Buttercup watched. The Captain took six paces across the quarter deck, and drew himself stiffly up exactly facing the middle sailor in the front row. The crew saluted.

"My gallant crew, good morning!" began the Captain.

"Sir, good morning!" responded the crew, quick as a flash.

"I hope you're all well," returned the Captain, looking neither to right nor to left.

"Quite well; and you, Sir?" rejoined his men as soon as the last word was out of their Commander's mouth.

"I am reasonable in health, and happy to meet you all once more," said the Captain as soon as the last word was out of his crew's mouths.

"You do us proud, Sir!" responded the crew instantly; and Josephine nudged Little Buttercup in the ribs. "Now the poetry starts," she whispered excitedly. "Papa likes this part as much as I do. Just you watch. One! Two! Three!" And as Josephine said "Three!" a satisfied smile passed over Captain Corcoran's hitherto rigid face.

"I am the Captain of the *Pinafore!*" he sang proudly.

"And a right good captain, too!" chanted all his men with great enthusiasm.

"You're very, very good,

And be it understood,

I command a right good crew!" went on the Captain.

"We're very, very good,

And be it understood,

He commands a right good crew!" echoed his men with great satisfaction.

And the Captain, looking very well pleased, continued.

"Though related to a peer,

I can hand, reef, and steer,

And ship a selvagee;

I am never known to quail

At the fury of a gale,

And I'm never, never sick at sea!"

Then Josephine's father surveyed the faces of his men.

He knew they liked the part that was coming.

"What, never?" they chanted with great glee.

"No, never!" sang the Captain.

"What, *never*?" repeated the crew.

"Well, hardly ever!" conceded the Captain with a grin. And even Dick Deadeye joined in the next lines, though of course a little out of tune.

"He's hardly ever sick at sea!

Then give three cheers, and one cheer more,

For the hardy Captain of the *Pinafore*!"

roared the crew at the tops of their voices, and added four loud "Hoorays" for good measure. "That bit is put in," whispered Josephine to Little Buttercup, "to remind Papa to take his pills before luncheon. But hush! The second part is just starting." As she spoke the crew saluted. Captain Corcoran advanced one step.

"I do my best to satisfy you all—" he sang.

"And with you we're quite content," responded his men.

"You're exceedingly polite,

And I think it only right

To return the compliment," sang the Captain, and the crew replied,

"We're exceedingly polite,

And he thinks it only right

To return the compliment."

Captain Corcoran hesitated. He did not care for the next lines quite so much. But this was the part that his men enjoyed most of all. So he cleared his throat and continued,

"Bad language or abuse,

I never, never use,

Whatever the emergency;

Though 'bother it' I may

Occasionally say,

I never use a big, big D—." Then he looked around defiantly.

"What, never?" roared his men, Dick Deadeye loudest of all.

"No, never!" affirmed their Commander.

"What, *never*?" insisted the crew.

"Well, hardly ever!" conceded the Captain with a frown.

But his crew were not to be put off with a mere frown.

“Hardly ever swears a big, big D—

Then give three cheers and one cheer more

For the well-bred Captain of the *Pinafore!*” they chanted heartily; and at the end of the fourth cheer the Captain, looking far from pleased, proceeded to the order for the day.

“I don't need to tell you why he puts in the last part,” whispered Josephine to Little Buttercup. “If dear Papa has one failing it is his awful temper. And when he is really angry he does sometimes use a big, big D.”

“Yes,” interrupted Little Buttercup. “I can see that he is not the sort of man to brook the slightest interference. It would never do to tackle him now.”

“It certainly wouldn't,” agreed Josephine.

“Or any other time,” went on Little Buttercup.

“I am afraid not,” admitted Josephine.

“We can only wait until the First Lord comes aboard, and let events take their course,” said Little Buttercup.

“I am afraid so,” sighed Josephine.

“But don't give up hope,” said Little Buttercup. “I may be a poor bumboat woman, but I have gipsy blood in my veins and can read destinies. There is a change in store for you.”—“It will come out right in the end.”

“Do you really think so?” pleaded the Captain's daughter.

“I am sure of it,” said Little Buttercup, and thought long and much about her secret.

As a matter of fact it *did* come out right in the end—thanks to Little Buttercup and her secret. But even so, things might yet have turned out quite differently if Sir Joseph Porter had been a different sort of man. So perhaps it is time to peep in at the window of the drawing room of the Lord Nelson suite in the Royal Trafalgar Hotel at Portsmouth for a moment, and find out exactly what sort of man Sir Joseph Porter was.

The Royal Trafalgar Hotel was a huge and elegant building, and the drawing room of the Lord Nelson suite was the hugest and most elegant room there. It had all the conveniences and decorations you would expect. On one wall was a lifelike picture of Queen Victoria with the words “God Save Our Queen!” written in big letters underneath, and on another a lifelike picture of Lord Nelson accompanied by the words “England Expects That Every Man This Day Will Do His Duty” written in letters of equal size. Resting on the mantelpiece was a beautiful model of the good ship Victory under a glass cover, and in one corner of the room an upright piano had been thoughtfully provided by the landlord in case any of his guests should be musically inclined. Around the walls were ranged no fewer than forty very hard but exceedingly elegant gilt chairs, all of which were now occupied by a bevy of ladies, some old and some young, some thin and some fat, but each posed in an attitude of rapt attention. These were Sir Joseph’s female relatives, who accompanied him everywhere. On the piano stool sat still another lady, with her back turned to the rest and her fingers spread over the keyboard. This was Sir Joseph’s Cousin Hebe, who also accompanied him everywhere.

And in the center of the room, fidgeting nervously with a big cocked hat and feeling very awkward in his tight-fitting knickerbockers, stood a funny little man with a wrinkled face and a bald head. The funny little man was Sir Joseph Porter, and in spite of his gorgeous uniform he looked less like a First Lord of the Admiralty than almost anyone you can imagine. “Ready!” he called. Cousin Hebe struck a chord. And the First Lord opened his mouth.

“Is Cousin Joseph going to sing?” said a small voice way off at the far end of the room. The voice belonged to Sir Joseph’s youngest cousin. Her name was Daphne, and she was seven and a half years old.

“Yes, dear,” replied Sir Joseph’s oldest aunt, who happened to be sitting in the next chair. Her name was Penelope, and she was *eighty*-seven and a half years old if she was a day.

“What is he going to sing, Aunt Penelope?” asked the little cousin.

“He is going to sing us the song he will repeat at the party this afternoon,” replied the old lady. “It tells how he came to be made a First Lord of the Admiralty.”

“Why is he going to r-r-repeat the song?” asked Daphne.

“So that everybody will understand what a great and important man he is,” answered her Aunt. “Now be a good little girl and keep quiet.”

“I’ll try,” agreed Daphne, “But I won’t promise.”

Sir Joseph glanced at Daphne. Cousin Hebe struck another chord. Then Sir Joseph opened his mouth again, and in a funny squeaky little voice, began to sing.

“When I was a lad I served a term
As office boy to an attorney’s firm.
I cleaned the windows and I swept the floor,
And I polished up the handle of the big front door.
I polished up that handle so carefuller
That now I am the ruler of the Queen’s Navee!

“As office boy I made such a mark
That they gave me the post of a junior clerk.
I served the writs with a smile so bland,
And I copied all the letters in a big round hand—
I copied all the letters in a hand so free
That now I am the ruler of the Queen’s Navee!”

“Auntie,” whispered Daphne, who had been amusing herself polishing the arm of her chair with a handkerchief, “what’s an attorney?”

“It is a kind of lawyer,” was the reply.

“And why did he copy all the letters in a big round hand?” persisted Daphne.

“Because that is what he was paid to do,” answered her aunt. “Now be quiet and don’t fidget.”

Sir Joseph glared at Daphne, and went on.

“In serving writs I made such a name
That an articled clerk I soon became;
I wore clean collars and a brand-new suit
For the pass examination at the Institute.
And that pass examination did so well for me
That now I am the ruler of the Queen’s Navee!

“Of legal knowledge I acquired such a grip
That they took me into the partnership.
And that junior partnership, I ween,
Was the only kind of ship that I ever had seen.
But that kind of ship so suited me,
That now I am the ruler of the Queen’s Navee!

“I grew so rich that I was sent
By a pocket borough into Parliament.
I always voted at my party’s call,
And I never thought of thinking for myself at all.
I thought so little they rewarded me
By making me the ruler of the Queen’s Navee!”

During the third verse Daphne imitated her distinguished cousin by scratching a beautifully shaped capital “D. P.”—standing for Daphne Porter—with the point of a pin on the arm of her chair. But during the fourth verse she fidgeted terribly, and at the end of the fifth she could keep quiet no longer.

“What’s an articled clerk, Auntie?” she whispered.

“It’s an—er—an articled clerk, dear,” said her Aunt.

“Oh!” said Daphne. “And what’s a pocket borough, Auntie, and what did Cousin Joseph go into Parliament for, and what’s Parliament anyway, and why didn’t he think of thinking for—”

“I haven’t the faintest idea,” replied Aunt Penelope, in desperation. “It is enough for a little girl to realize that her Cousin Joseph must be a very great and important man, since he knows and does things we have never heard of. Now be still, and listen to the moral.”

“All right,” said Daphne. “I’ll try. But I hate morals.”

Once again Sir Joseph glared at Daphne, and continued.

“Now landsmen all, whoever you may be,
 If you want to rise to the top of the tree,
 If your soul isn’t fettered to an office stool,
 Be careful to be guided by this golden rule—
 Stick close to your desks and never go to sea,
 And you all may be Rulers of the Queen’s Navee!”

At the end of this verse there was a wave of thunderous applause from all the female relatives except Cousin Hebe, who was still busy at the piano.

“I’m glad you liked the song,” said Sir Joseph, very pleased. “Let us hope it has the same effect on Captain Corcoran of the *Pinafore*. I am going to marry his daughter, you know.

“Yes, we know!” sighed the female relatives.

“You mean you *think* you are!” muttered someone in the general direction of the piano. Sir Joseph turned sharply.

“Eh? What’s that?” he asked.

Cousin Hebe swung round on the piano stool. As soon as she did so it became quite clear just why Sir Joseph had fallen so deeply in love with Miss Corcoran when he saw her picture in the society news. It was because she was so different from Cousin Hebe; for while both were young and pretty, Cousin Hebe was as short and dark as Josephine was tall and fair. Any dunce, too, could have seen that Cousin Hebe wanted to marry Sir Joseph herself. What is more she meant to have her way. And what is still more, she knew how she was going to get it.

“I was about to remark,” she declared, smiling her sweetest smile, “that it ought to have a perfectly splendid effect. If only—”

“If only—what?” snapped Sir Joseph.

“Oh, nothing,” replied Cousin Hebe.

“I wish you wouldn’t say ‘if only’ all the time,” blurted the First Lord. “It makes me jumpy.”

Now this was just what Cousin Hebe wanted. The First Lord was really quite a good-natured little man. But when he was nervous he always tried so hard not to show it that he seemed cold and conceited. And when he seemed cold and conceited he grew so arrogant and insulting that nobody could be expected to stand him—least of all a promised bride and her father.

So Cousin Hebe smiled a broad and knowing smile to herself. Then she rose from the piano stool and beckoned to Sir Joseph.

“Come here, Cousin Joe,” she said, “and let me have a look at you.”

The First Lord advanced obediently, and Cousin Hebe eyed him all over from the crown of his cocked hat to the tips of his buckled shoes.

“Very nice,” she said at last. “Only—”

“Only what?” screamed Sir Joseph.

“Well,” replied Cousin Hebe, “if you must know, there’s just the teeniest weeniest spot of grease in the middle of your waistcoat. Right there—see! Now don’t get excited, Cousin Joe. Just remember to hold your arm across your chest, and nobody will see.”

“But I can’t keep my arm up there all the time,” wailed the First Lord of the Admiralty. “Dash it all, I’m not Napoleon.”

“No,” said Hebe. “Napoleon never used strong language. Really, Cousin Joe, you *must* learn to control your temper. Think of your position. And when you go aboard the ship, remember that you will be expected to set a good example to the Captain and the crew. Be calm, but never forget your office. Be courteous, but show that you are not a man to be trifled with. Be firm, but not overbearing even though you are the ruler of the Queen’s Navee. And above all, *keep your temper*. Now have you thought of everything you need?”

“I think so,” said Sir Joseph.

“Your music case, with the song you have composed for the use of the Navy?” suggested Cousin Hebe.

“Here it is,” replied the First Lord.

“And the marriage license?” went on Cousin Hebe.

“In my pocket,” replied Sir Joseph.

“And a clean handkerchief?” asked Cousin Hebe.

“Yes, confound it,” screamed the First Lord. “I wish you wouldn’t—”

“Temper, temper!” said Cousin Hebe, looking very pleased. Then, completely ignoring Sir Joseph, she turned to the other relatives.

“Enough of this,” she said. “The Admiralty barge waits below, manned by twelve trusty oarsmen. Let us be starting.”

“May I come too?” asked Daphne.

“Certainly not,” replied Cousin Hebe. “You are far too young. But if you are a good girl Cousin Joseph will bring you back some chocolate peppermints from the dinner table.”

“All right,” said Daphne. “I’ll try. But I won’t promise.” As proof of her good intentions she stuck out her tongue at Cousin Hebe as Sir Joseph and his various relatives started downstairs. Then she went to the window and watched the barge, manned by its twelve trusty oarsmen row away. She was able to watch for quite a long time, as the barge moved very slowly—so slowly, indeed, that poor Sir Joseph, who was growing more and more jumpy every minute, was driven almost frantic. “I must be calm. I must set an example. I must be firm. I must keep my temper. I am not to be trifled with. I must be calm. I must not lose my temper,” he repeated over and over again.

It was late in the afternoon before the barge hove to beside the mighty warship, and, as he stepped onto the quarter deck of the *Pinafore* with all his relatives around him, poor Sir Joseph felt anything but confident. Fortunately for him, though, nobody noticed how jumpy he was—for the crew of the *Pinafore*, who had been standing at attention continuously since the middle of the morning, had other things to think about than the state of Sir Joseph's nerves.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hooray!" they roared as soon as the visitors appeared; and the First Lord, remembering that he must show that he was not a man to be trifled with, acknowledged their greeting by singing.

"I am the monarch of the sea,
The Ruler of the Queen's Navee,
Whose praise Great Britain loudly chants—"

when Cousin Hebe, who hated to be left out of anything, interjected,

"And we are his sisters and his cousins and his aunts!" whereupon all Sir Joseph's other relatives—except of course little Daphne—chimed in with

"And we are his sisters and his cousins and his aunts!"

to the First Lord's vast annoyance. Captain Corcoran could not help smiling at this, in spite of the fact that he was hungry for his dinner; and Sir Joseph, who was really quite wide-awake, decided that perhaps a little joke at his own expense would not be amiss.

"When at anchor here I ride,
My bosom swells with pride
And I snap my fingers at a foeman's taunts.
But when the breezes blow
I generally go below,
And seek the seclusion that a cabin grants," continued Sir Joseph.

"And so do his sisters and his cousins and his aunts!" interrupted Cousin Hebe.

"And so do his sisters and his cousins and his aunts!"

His sisters and his cousins,
Whom he reckons up by dozens,
And his aunts!" echoed all the others.

And the crew of the *Pinafore*, seeing that they were expected to be amused, laughed on the dot and listened respectfully for whatever might follow. The song that Sir Joseph had so carefully rehearsed at the Royal Trafalgar Hotel—

where Daphne was at that moment standing on a chair and singing,

“And I polished up the handle of the big front door,

And I polished up that handle so carefuller

That now I am left all alone—confound it!” to the portrait of Lord Nelson

—came next. The effect was beyond Sir Joseph’s wildest hopes. Every man jack kept perfectly still through all six verses, and there were no interruptions whatsoever. At the end Sir Joseph turned gratefully to the Commander.

“You’ve a remarkably fine crew, Captain Corcoran,” he said in real admiration.

“It *is* a fine crew, Sir Joseph,” agreed the Captain.

“A British sailor is a splendid fellow, Captain Corcoran,” observed Sir Joseph, examining a very small midshipman.

“A splendid fellow indeed, Sir Joseph,” echoed the Captain, highly flattered and fully expecting to be made an Admiral on the spot. To tell the truth, Sir Joseph liked Captain Corcoran so much that it is more than likely he would have made him an Admiral on the spot—if he had not suddenly caught the eye of his Cousin Hebe. “Be firm,” said the eye, “be firm.” It made poor Sir Joseph fell jumpier than ever, and of course he promptly said the wrong thing.

“I hope you treat your crew kindly, Captain Corcoran,” he remarked. “No bullying, I trust—no strong language of any kind, eh?”

“Oh, never, Sir Joseph,” replied the Captain, very much disappointed.

“What, *never*?” exclaimed the First Lord.

“Well, hardly ever,” amended the Captain frowning, for he was touched in his tenderest place. “They are an excellent crew, and do their work thoroughly without it.”

Poor Sir Joseph went from bad to worse.

“Don’t patronize them, sir—pray don’t patronize them,” he snapped. “That you are their captain is an accident of birth. I cannot permit these noble fellows to be patronized because an accident of birth has placed you above them and them below you.”

“I am the last person to insult a British sailor, Sir Joseph,” replied the Captain with considerable heat.

“You are the last person who did, Captain Corcoran,” returned Sir Joseph in his coldest tones.

The Captain bit his lip. Cousin Hebe smiled. “Firmer,” her eyes seemed to say, “firmer!” And Sir Joseph went from worse to worst. Not knowing what next to say or do, he glanced down the front row of midshipmen, until his gaze came to rest at the very end.

“Desire that splendid seaman to step forward,” he said.

The Captain followed his gaze.

“Ralph Rackstraw, come here,” he commanded.

Sir Joseph frowned at the Captain.

“If *what?*” he said sternly.

“I beg your pardon?” exclaimed the Captain, surprised.

“If *what?*” demanded Sir Joseph a bit more sternly.

“If *what,*” echoed the Captain

“You mean”—“If you *please!*” pointed out Sir Joseph, almost gently and very firmly.

“Oh, yes, of course,” retorted the Captain. “If you *please.*” He was thoroughly angry by now, and he showed it. Sir Joseph began to wonder if he had not carried firmness a little far. So he tried courtesy instead.

“You’re a remarkably fine fellow,” he declared, as Ralph stepped forward.

“Yes, your honour,” agreed Ralph.

“And a first-rate seaman, I’ll be bound,” went on Sir Joseph.

“There’s not a smarter topman in the navy, your honour,” assented Ralph proudly, “though I say it who shouldn’t.”

Sir Joseph beamed. “Not at all,” he declared. “Proper self-respect, nothing more. Can you dance a hornpipe?”

“No, your honour,” confessed Ralph.

“That’s a pity,” sighed Sir Joseph, looking really disappointed. “All sailors should dance hornpipes. I will teach you one this evening after dinner. Now tell me—don’t be afraid—how does your Captain treat you, eh?”

“A better captain doesn’t walk the deck, your honour,” declared Ralph loyally, and looked around at his messmates as much as to say, “Now back me up!”

“Hear, hear, hear!” they cried with unanimous enthusiasm.

“Good!” said Sir Joseph. “I like to hear you speak well of your commanding officer. I daresay he doesn’t deserve it, but still it does you credit. Can you sing?”

“I can hum a little, your honour,” replied Ralph modestly. He would have liked to add that he could write poetry too.

“Then,” said the First Lord triumphantly, “hum this at your leisure. It is a song that I have composed for the use of the Royal Navy. It is designed to encourage independence of thought and action in the lower branches of the service, and to teach the principle that a British sailor is any man’s equal, excepting mine.”

Looking very proud of himself Sir Joseph Porter thrust into Ralph’s hand a sheet of music which he had just taken out of his case.

Little did the First Lord imagine what the consequence of this act would be. Yet in the end that little sheet of music turned out almost as important to the story as Little Buttercup’s secret. But of this Cousin Hebe alone had the faintest, vaguest guess; and she just smiled to herself and said nothing.

“Now, Captain Corcoran,” said Sir Joseph Porter sharply, “a word with you in your cabin on a tender and sentimental subject.”

Captain Corcoran looked daggers at Sir Joseph, but he dared not talk back. He knew very well that he must be as friendly as possible.

“Ay, ay, Sir Joseph,” he agreed, and turned to Bill Bobstay, “Bo’sun, in commemoration of this joyous occasion, see that extra grog is served to the ship’s company at one bell.” [one bell = 4:30 pm; libretto has seven bells = 3:30 pm.]

A broad grin slowly spread over the bo’sun’s amiable face.

“Beg pardon,” he said. “If *what*, your honour?”

“If *what*?” said the Captain impatiently. “I don’t think I understand you.”

“If you *please*, your honour!” replied Bill Bobstay looking towards the First Lord, who nodded approval.

“The gentleman is quite right,” he declared. “If you please!”

“If you *please*!” thundered Captain Corcoran, and almost stamped his foot in rage; nor did Sir Joseph improve the Commander’s temper by singing, with exasperating sweetness,

“For I hold that on the seas
The expression, ‘If you please,’
A particularly gentlemanly tone implants.”

Nor did Cousin Hebe [improve the Captain's temper] by interjecting, "And so do his sisters, and his cousins, and his aunts," nor did any of the other relatives by repeating the same sentiment as they trooped into the Captain's cabin, followed by the Captain himself, fuming with anger. He gave the cabin door such a furious slam that the crew of the *Pinafore* nearly jumped out of their skins.

"Ah," said Bill Bobstay, when he had made sure they were alone, "Sir Joseph's a true gentleman: courteous and considerate to the very humblest."

Ralph Rackstraw looked up. He had been standing with his head bowed in deep thought, exactly where Sir Joseph had left him. Now, as he raised his head, he seemed almost a new man, so animated was his expression.

"True, bo'sun," he said, his eyes sparkling with pride. "But we are not the very humblest. Sir Joseph has explained our true position to us. As he says, a British seaman is any man's equal excepting his; and if Sir Joseph says so, is it not our duty to believe him?"

"Well spoke! Well spoke!" cried everybody—except, of course, Dick Deadeye. Dick disagreed, as usual.

"You're on the wrong tack," he growled, "and so is he. He means well, but he don't know. When people have to obey other people's orders, equality's out of the question."

"Horrible! horrible!" exclaimed all his mates, and recoiled in disgust. But they knew that Dick was probably right all the same. That did not make them feel the least better.

"Dick Deadeye," said the bo'sun severely, "if you go for to infuriate this here ship's company too far, I won't answer for being able to hold 'em in. I'm shocked! that's what I am--shocked!" He eyed Dick doubtfully for a second. Then he turned to the rest of the *Pinafore's* crew. "What is to be done with this here hopeless chap?" he demanded in a loud and ringing voice.

Nobody had a helpful idea—short of violence. All of a sudden the bo'sun's eye fell on a piece of paper in Ralph's hand.

"Ah," he cried, "let us sing him the song that Sir Joseph has kindly composed for us. Perhaps *that* will bring this here miserable creetur to a proper state of mind!"

The suggestion was received with loud acclaim; and grouping themselves around the bo'sun so that they could see the words and music, the crew of the Pinafore all sang at the top of their voices.

“A British tar is a soaring soul,
 As free as a mountain bird!
 His energetic fist should be ready to resist
 A dictatorial word.
 His nose should pant and his lip should curl,
 His cheeks should flame and his brow should furl,
 His bosom should heave and his heart should glow
 And his fist be ever ready for a knock-down blow.
 “His eye should flash with an inborn fire,
 His brow with scorn be wrung;
 He never should bow down to a domineering frown,
 Or the tang of a tyrant tongue.
 His foot should stamp and his throat should growl,
 His hair should twirl and his face should scowl,
 His eyes should flash and his breast protrude,
 And this should be his customary attitude.”

The noise they made was simply terrifying, but it was nothing compared with the pose they struck at the end of the song to show the customary attitude. Their noses panted and their lips curled, their feet stamped, and their faces scowled, and they shook their clenched fists so ferociously in Dick's face that he really thought they were going to hit him. The effect was quite astonishing.

But the effect on Dick Deadeye was not nearly as astonishing as the effect the song had on Ralph Rackstraw—or anything like as important. For Ralph had been thinking hard while he sang. His eyes flashed and his breast protruded. Never, never again, he vowed, would he bow down to a domineering frown or a dictatorial word.

“Messmates,” he cried like one reborn, “my mind is made up. I'll speak to the captain's daughter. I'll tell her, like an honest man, of the honest love I have for her. Is not my heart as true as another's? Have I not hands and eyes and ears and limbs like another? Messmates—what do you say? Do you approve my determination?”

“Ay, ay! We do!” cheered all the *Pinafore*'s men,—with one exception.

“I don't,” said Dick Dead eye, very timidly.

But nothing happened. Nobody was paying attention to Dick any longer. Instead, all eyes were fixed on Ralph Rackstraw as he bounded away in the direction of the Captain's cabin; and all hopes were centered on the outcome of his quest. For a while there was no stir or sound. Then from a short distance came one long, low, despairing cry. With one accord the crew of the *Pinafore* raced towards its source, and reached the poop deck just in time to witness—what?

Well, something that made them stare with surprise, shrink with horror, and gasp with dismay—to say the very least! But to understand properly what they saw, and why, it will be necessary to go back a little and find out just what Josephine had been doing and thinking in the meantime.

At the end of the Captain's greeting to his crew Little Buttercup, as we know, thought long and much about her secret. "No, no," she muttered at last. "The time to speak has not yet come!" And thrusting an arm through the handle of her basket, she started for the cabin door.

"What are you going to do, Little Buttercup?" cried Josephine anxiously.

"Ah," replied Little Buttercup, with a knowing wink. "That would be telling! But if you really want to know—and I don't see why you shouldn't—I am going to the galley to help the ship's cook with the dinner. And you, my dear?"

In spite of everything, the Captain's daughter could not help smiling.

"Ah," she said, "that would be telling too! But if you really want to know, I am going to try and prepare myself for that which is to come. It will be hard, but I can do it."

"That's the spirit," declared Little Buttercup, and disappeared.

As soon as she had gone Josephine went to her chest of drawers, and out of the third left-hand drawer removed a really beautiful portrait of a funny little man with a cocked hat, much gold braid and lace. With this picture under her arm she traced her steps sadly to her father's cabin. There, propping the photograph against two big books on navigation, she sat down at the end of a very long and very shiny mahogany table. It would be well to remember that table—for in the end it turned out to be almost as important to the story as the First Lord's song—though not, of course, as important as Little Buttercup's secret.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" sobbed Josephine after she had stared at the photograph for more minutes than she could count. "I can esteem—venerate—reverence Sir Joseph"—"for he looks quite nice in his cocked hat and handsome uniform"—"but oh! I cannot love him."—"Whatever shall I do?"

And Miss Corcoran was ready to burst into tears, when she heard a strange commotion outside the cabin door. She looked up and—to her astonishment—in trooped forty strange ladies, some tall and some short, some young and some old, and all wearing expressions of the utmost curiosity. They were followed by a funny little man whom Josephine recognized as the original of the portrait at which she had been staring; and he, in his turn, was followed by Josephine's father, looking angrier than Josephine had ever seen him look before.

"Well, well!" exclaimed the little man. "So this is the young lady! Approach, my dear, and—"

At that instant the door closed with a terrific bang. The little man almost jumped out of his uniform. It was such a bang that it made him forget what he had been saying—if not Miss Corcoran's very existence. His eye lighted on a long, shiny object in front of him.

"That is a remarkably fine table, Captain Corcoran," he said, looking very thoughtful.

"It *is* a fine table, Sir Joseph," replied the Captain.

"With a remarkably smooth surface," went on the little man, feeling it.

"A very smooth surface, Sir Joseph," agreed the Captain, wondering where all this was leading. Josephine wondered too. Then a strange thing happened.

Without even saying "Please," Sir Joseph ordered—yes, ordered!—her father to get up on the table. "Dear me," thought Josephine, "he's not very polite. But I suppose it is all right. After all, he *is* Father's superior officer." So she waited to see what would happen next. And before she could say Sir Francis Drake, it was happening. Sir Joseph was teaching her father to dance a sailor's hornpipe.

"Sir Joseph makes me sick," said Josephine to herself. "I know he is a truly great and good man, because Papa says so. 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."

Miss Corcoran watched again, and the more she watched, the less she liked Sir Joseph. In fact it was not long before she was almost as angry as the Captain. And he was angrier than ever.

"I won't go on," he cried at last, "I, I—er—"

"Won't?" asked Sir Joseph, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes, won't!" returned the Captain, red with rage.

"Captain Corcoran, sir," returned the First Lord calmly. "Did you say 'won't'? This is insubordination. Have you ever heard of a court martial?"

Evidently the Captain had heard of a court martial. With a pathetic look at his daughter he went on dancing. Josephine could stand no more. Resisting the temptation to throw his photograph in Sir Joseph's face—which was what she felt like doing—she bolted out of the cabin, slamming the door behind her. "I'd marry him just for spite," she thought, "if only to teach him a lesson." And just as she was thinking this she ran headlong into one of her father's sailors.

“Ralph Rackstraw,” she exclaimed.

“Aye, lady,” replied the sailor. “No other than poor Ralph Rackstraw.”

Josephine’s heart went pitter-pat. Never had he looked so handsome. “And why poor, Ralph?” she asked kindly.

But Ralph hardly deigned to answer this question. “Josephine,” he cried, his eyes aflame, “in one brief breath I will concentrate the hope, the doubts, the anxious fears of six weary months. Josephine, I am a British sailor, and I love you!”

His simple eloquence went straight to Josephine’s heart. But she dared not show it. “Sir,” she exclaimed, “this audacity! You forget the disparity in our ranks.” Her heart beat even faster. This had not been at all what she wanted to say, but she could think of nothing better.

And Ralph was not daunted. “I forget nothing, haughty lady,” he replied. “I love you desperately. My life is in thy 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!”

“You shall not wait long,” answered Josephine, and thought harder than she had ever thought before. She thought of Ralph, and her heart went pitter-pat. She thought of her father, dancing away on the cabin table, and her heart stopped pattering. Before everything else she was a Captain’s daughter; and if her father wanted her to marry Sir Joseph, it was her duty to obey. Then she thought of Ralph once more, and remembered the back street in which he probably lived, with the barrel organ and the one cracked looking glass—and she told herself that never, never could they be happy together.

“Refrain, audacious tar,
Your suit from pressing,
Remember what you are,
And whom addressing!”

“Proud lords to seek my hand
In throngs assemble.
The loftiest in the land
Bow down and treble,”

she sang, feeling horribly cruel, but knowing that it was kindest to be firm.

But to herself she added,
 "I'd laugh my rank to scorn
 In union holy,
 Were he more highly born
 Or I more lowly!"

Now Ralph, of course, did not hear this part; and what he did hear was not at all what he expected. But he took it like a man.

"Proud lady, have your way!
 Unfeeling beauty!
 You speak and I obey,
 It is my duty!"

"I am the lowliest tar
 That sails the water,
 And you, proud maiden, are
 My Captain's daughter!" But to himself he added,

"My heart with anguish torn
 Bows down before her.
 She laughs my love to scorn,
 Yet I adore her."

Josephine, of course, did not hear the last part. Indeed she scarcely heard all the part before. To be called an unfeeling beauty was more than she could endure, and she vanished in a flood of tears. Ralph Rackstraw felt very much like bursting into tears as well, since he instantly realized that he now had nothing left worth living for. But he was a British sailor, so of course he did nothing of the kind. He allowed himself just one long, low despairing cry.

"Messmates, ahoy!" he called. "Come here! Come here!"

He plunged his right hand into the heart of his blouse, and the crew of the *Pinafore* started running. So did all of Sir Joseph's sisters and cousins and aunts—with the exception of course of Little Daphne who was very much occupied in sailing the model of the "Victory" across the carpet of the Lord Nelson suite. They had heard the cry even in the Captain's cabin, and of course they could not bear to be left out of anything.

“Dear, dear!” exclaimed Cousin Hebe as she arrived breathless upon the scene. “What is all this?” To herself she added, “I really believe this poor young man is planning to shoot himself.”

And that was exactly what Ralph *was* planning to do. At that moment the crew of the *Pinafore* also arrived breathless upon the scene. And what did they see? With horror and dismay unspeakable they saw Ralph’s hand slowly emerge from his blouse, and in his hand was gripped a pistol. With even greater horror and dismay they saw him slowly load the gleaming weapon and put it to his brow.

“Be warned, my messmates all,” cried Ralph, “who love in rank above you. For Josephine I fall!”

And he was just about to pull the trigger, when:

“Stop!” The voice was Josephine’s. She was hidden behind a lifeboat, so that Ralph should not see her tears. “Ah, stay your hand!” she cried. “I love you!”

“You love me?” exclaimed Ralph, delighted, and dropped the pistol.

“Yes, yes, she loves you!” echoed almost everybody joyfully. Cousin Hebe was the most joyful of all, for this was just what she wanted to happen. Indeed, only Dick Deadeye failed to join in. He never looked upon the cheerful side of things anyway. So he squatted down on the deck, rolling his great fishy eye, and muttered something about what Captain Corcoran would do when he found out what was going on, and ended up with a sinister “Ha, ha! Ho, ho!” as much to say, “You wait and see if I’m not right as usual.” Then he put his arm up to his face, as if he expected somebody to hit him.

But nobody did. All the crew knew that Dick was probably right, and that the Captain would be very angry indeed. Plans must be laid and preparations quickly made if Ralph and Josephine were ever to be united. So they huddled together like so many conspirators in an adventure story; and all Sir Joseph’s sisters and cousins and aunts joined the huddle too, not wanting to be left out of anything. Everybody was excited, everybody had something to suggest, and everybody talked at once.

"This very night—" began Josephine.

"With bated breath—" cut in Cousin Hebe.

"And muffled oar—" added Ralph.

"As still as death—" hissed Cousin Hebe.

"We'll steal ashore—" announced Ralph.

"A clergyman—" whispered Josephine.

"Shall make us one—" continued Ralph.

"At half past ten—" put in Bill Bobstay.

"And then we can—" giggled Josephine.

"Return, for none—" pointed out Ralph.

"May part us, then!—" concluded the bo'sun, forgetting in his excitement that it was not he who was marrying the Captain's daughter. As the word "then" came from Bill Bobstay's mouth, a single bell rang out in the distance, followed by the dull sound of a gong.

"Grog!" cried the *Pinafore's* men, forgetting about Ralph and Josephine.

"Dinner!" exclaimed Sir Joseph's female relatives, also forgetting about Ralph and Josephine, and scampered back to the cabin. "Till half past ten," whispered Ralph to Josephine. "Till half past ten," whispered Josephine to Ralph, and tingling with excitement and anticipation, she followed the other ladies into the cabin.

The big table had already been laid for dinner and Sir Joseph and the Captain were already glaring at each other from the opposite ends.

It was a splendid dinner, with half a lobster for each person, followed by roast duck with green peas, treacle tart, and fruit and chocolates of every imaginable shape, size, and variety. Little Daphne, looking sadly at her cold mutton and rice pudding in the Royal Trafalgar Hotel, would have had the time of her life if she could have been there. But none of those present at that perfectly wonderful dinner had a good time at all—except perhaps Cousin Hebe.

The Captain's daughter did not enjoy herself because she had been put next to Sir Joseph, and could think of nothing to say to him that was in the least pleasant or agreeable. Sir Joseph did not enjoy himself, because nothing he started to say to Josephine seemed to interest or amuse her. The waiter did not enjoy himself because everybody found fault with the way in which he passed the plates; and the sisters and cousins and aunts did not enjoy themselves because neither of the gentlemen remembered to compliment them on their new dresses or their charming and witty conversation.

As for Captain Corcoran, he had a simply awful time. He could never remember to say "If you please!" to the waiter, and was consequently always getting into trouble with Sir Joseph; and the more Sir Joseph scowled the less likely it seemed to Captain Corcoran that he would ever be made an Admiral. His feet ached and his temper was on edge, and he positively dreaded the moment when the ladies should retire to discuss the latest fashions, and he should be left alone with Sir Joseph.

At last, however, the moment came. The First Lord scowled. "Captain Corcoran," he said very coldly and firmly, "I am much disappointed in your daughter. In fact, I don't think she will do."

This was worse than the Captain had feared. To give up hope of ever being made an Admiral was bad enough, but to be told that his daughter would not do was almost more than he could stand.

"She won't do, Sir Joseph?" he stammered.

The First Lord shook his head. "I'm afraid not," he said very bitingly. "The fact is, that although I have urged my suit with as much eloquence as is consistent with an official utterance, I have done so hitherto without success. How did you account for this?"

Sir Joseph always talked like that when he was thoroughly angry. What he meant was that he did not seem to be making any headway with Josephine, and could not understand why. The Captain understood. But he could not say so.

“Really, Sir Joseph,” he replied. “I hardly know. Josephine is, of course, sensible of your condescension—”

“She naturally would be,” interrupted Sir Joseph.

“But perhaps your exalted rank dazzles her,” went on the Captain in despair.

“You think it does?” asked Sir Joseph.

The Captain passed a shaking hand across his brow. “I can hardly say,” he answered doubtfully. “But 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.”

“Now *that*,” replied Sir Joseph, stroking his chin with satisfaction, “is a really sensible suggestion. It displays more knowledge of human nature than I had given you credit for.” And he smiled not unkindly.

Captain Corcoran jumped up on the instant. “I will call my daughter,” he said. “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—”

“Yes?” asked Sir Joseph with interest.

“—Then her respect for an official utterance might induce her to look upon your offer in its proper light,” concluded Captain Corcoran.

“It is not unlikely,” replied Sir Joseph thoughtfully. “I will adopt your suggestion”—“Now call your daughter. I sincerely trust she will be reasonable. Because if she isn’t—”

And his eye said “Court martial” even if his lips did not. “Phew!” said the Captain when he reached the other side of the door, “I never want to go through *that* again!” Then he looked for Josephine, and at last found her on the poop deck, whither she had fled from all the sisters and the cousins and the aunts.

“My dear,” he announced, “Sir Joseph would like to speak to you.”

Josephine looked rather puzzled, but she asked no questions. Obediently she went into the cabin.

“Phew!” exclaimed the Captain, when she had gone, “I never want to go through—” His eye fell on a queer round object resting on the deck. It was his favorite mandolin, lying exactly where he had left it on the previous evening. The Captain picked up the instrument and regarded it with affection.

“I think,” he said to himself, “that I will sing a little. Everything is at sixes and sevens, and it will help to quiet my nerves. But I am alone. To whom am I going to sing?” Absent-mindedly plucking the strings he looked up at the starry night. The moon looked back at him, and almost seemed to wink an eye. “You’ll do,” thought the Captain and began.

“Fair moon, to thee I sing,
 Bright regent of the heavens;
 Say, why is everything
 Either at sixes or at sevens?
 I have lived hitherto
 Free from breath of slander,
 Beloved by all my crew—
 A really popular commander.
 But now my kindly crew rebel;
 My daughter to a tar is partial;
 Sir Joseph storms, and, sad to tell,
 He threatens a court martial.
 Fair moon, to thee I sing,
 Bright regent of the heavens;
 Say, why is everything
 Either at sixes or at sevens?”

This pretty song did wonders in quieting the Captain’s nerves, even though it did not make him feel the least mite happier. If he had really been alone—as he thought—he would certainly have started a second verse. But he wasn’t alone.

“Dear Captain,” said a gentle voice at his elbow, “I would fain see you smile before I go.” The Captain turned, and found himself face to face with Little Buttercup. They were old friends, these two; for many a time and oft in happier days had the Captain bought soft tommy and polonies from the poor bumboat woman’s basket.

So he was not very much surprised to see her aboard ship. What did surprise him was the strange look on Little Buttercup's jolly face. She was looking at him with such a curious expression of adoration and affection that he might well have thought she was in love. "Ah," mused the Captain, "if ever I gave my heart again, methinks it would be to such a one as this!" But of course he did not say so.

"Ah! Little Buttercup," he sighed. "I fear it will be long before I recover my accustomed cheerfulness. Misfortunes crowd upon me, and all my old friends seem to have turned against me!"

"Oh no," smiled the bumboat woman. "Do not say 'all,' dear Captain. That were unjust to one, at least."

"True," replied Captain Corcoran, "for you are staunch to me." Then he looked at the bumboat woman, and thought again how nice it would be to marry such a one as her. "Ah, Little Buttercup," he cried, "would that we were differently situated, you and I—"

As he said this a queer look came into Little Buttercup's eyes. She was thinking of her secret. "Who knows?" she said mysteriously. "We may be."

"What!" cried the Captain.

"Ay," returned Little Buttercup. "The poor bumboat woman has gipsy blood in her veins, and she can read destinies. There is a change in store for you. Be prepared!" Then, with an air of the most profound mystery, she looked straight into the Captain's eyes.

"Things are seldom what they seem;

Skim milk masquerades as cream;

Highlows pass as patent leathers;

Jackdaws strut in peacock's feathers," she said, so ominously and with such conviction, that the Captain was very much impressed. He did not see where all this was leading, but that it was leading somewhere there could be not doubt.

"Very true,

So they do!" he admitted; and Little Buttercup went on.

"Black sheep dwell in every fold;

All that glitters is not gold;

Storks turn out to be but logs;

Bulls are but inflated frogs." The Captain was still more puzzled and impressed.

“So they be,
Frequentlee,” he exclaimed, and Little Buttercup continued in a more ominous tone than ever.

“Drops the wind and stops the mill;
Turbot is ambitious brill;
Gild the farthing if you will,
But it is a farthing still.” The Captain could restrain himself no longer.

“Yes, I know.
That is so!
Though to catch your drift I’m striving,
It is shady—it is shady;
I don’t see at what you’re driving,
Mystic lady—mystic lady!” he cried.

But the bumboat woman had disappeared. The time to speak had not yet come. The night grew darker, and the Captain peered at his watch. It was twenty-two minutes past ten. The Captain picked up his mandolin and strummed fiercely.

“Though I’m anything but clever,
I could talk like that for ever;
Once a cat was killed by care;
Only brave deserve the fair.
Wink is often good as nod;
Spoils the child who spares the rod;
Thirsty lambs run foxy dangers;
Dogs are found in many mangers,”

He sang, mainly to quiet his nerves, but partly because if there was one thing he had learnt at the Naval Academy it was to spot a proverb. But when nobody answered “Very true!” or “Yes, I know!” the Captain could not help feeling just a little creepy. “Skim milk? Jackdaws? Black Sheep? Storks?” he murmured. “Ah, me! To what new misery is Little Buttercup referring? Time alone can tell!”

As he spoke these words a familiar figure with a twisted leg and a mouth like a hippopotamus came hurrying across the deck. It was Dick Deadeye. But before learning what he had come to tell the Captain, and what occurred in the next four eventful minutes, it is necessary to go back a little and find out what happened to Sir Joseph and the Captain's daughter in the meantime.

When Josephine heard that the First Lord wished to speak with her she was very much puzzled. But she was a great deal more puzzled when she stepped inside the cabin and saw Sir Joseph's face. He was actually smiling.

"Madam," he began, "it has been represented to me that you are appalled by my exalted rank and station—"

This was news to Josephine. She did not know what to say.

"—And I desire to convey to you officially," went on the First Lord, "my assurance, that if your hesitation is attributable to that circumstance, it is quite uncalled for."

In spite of his smile Sir Joseph was really very jumpy indeed. That is why he spoke such extraordinary English.

"Oh!" replied Josephine, still very much puzzled, "then your lordship is of opinion that married happiness is *not* inconsistent with discrepancy in rank?"

Josephine was jumpy too.

"I am officially of that opinion," replied the First Lord of the Admiralty.

"That the high and the lowly may be truly happy together, provided that they truly love one another?" went on Josephine, scarcely realizing what she said.

"Madam," repeated the First Lord, speaking very slowly and solemnly, "I—desire—to—convey—to—you—officially—my—opinion—that—love—is—a—platform—upon—which—all—ranks—meet."

Then—and only then—did Josephine realize the importance of her questions and the First Lord's answer. All in a moment joy was dancing in her pretty eyes. She seemed the happiest girl alive.

"I thank you, Sir Joseph," she cried. "I *did* hesitate, but I will hesitate no longer!" Without another word she rushed out of the cabin, leaving Sir Joseph stroking his whiskers and staring after her with popping eyes.

“He little thinks how eloquently he has pleaded his rival’s cause!” exclaimed Josephine as soon as she was on the other side of the cabin door. “If the high and the lowly may be truly happy together—And Sir Joseph is always right—then there is not the slightest reason why I should not run away with Ralph. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I’m so happy and excited that I don’t know what to do! But wait! Did not the cabin clock say twenty-five minutes past ten, and is not the hour of flight at hand? I must pack my bag immediately, or I shall never, never, never manage to be ready in time!”

Little did Josephine imagine that her meditations had been overheard! But as she softly closed the door of her own cabin behind her, a figure with an enormous hump and a nose like a red pincushion instantly darted out from behind a gun. It was Dick Deadeye.

“Oho, oho!” chuckled Dick. “I thought so! I thought so!” With a horrid grin on his ugly face he scampered towards the poop as fast as his twisted leg would let him. A minute later he was at the side of Josephine’s father.

“Dick Deadeye!” cried the Captain, dropping his mandolin. “You here?” Brave as he was, he drew back just a little for Dick was anything but a pleasing person to look upon.

“Ah,” said Dick, “don’t shrink from me, Captain. I’m unpleasant to look at, and my name’s agin me, but I ain’t as bad as I seem. I’m come to give you warning.”

“Warning?” said the Captain, frowning.

“Yes,” hissed Dick. “Listen!” And through sheer delight at being able to do someone else an ill turn, he put his warning into verse.

“Kind Captain, I’ve important information,
Sing hey, the kind commander that you are!
About a certain intimate relation;
Sing hey, the merry maiden and the tar!” he warbled—if he could be said to warble, which is doubtful.

The Captain seemed remarkably interested.
“Good fellow, in conundrums you are speaking,
Sing hey, the mystic sailor that you are!
The answer to them vainly I am seeking;
Sing hey, the merry maiden and the tar!” he sang back.

Dick Deadeye moved closer.
“Kind Captain, your young lady is a-sighing,
Sing hey, the simple captain that you are!
This very night with *Rackstraw* will be flying;
Sing hey, the merry maiden and the tar!” he hissed—if one can be said to hiss in music.

The Captain was now more than interested. He was terribly angry.
“Good fellow, you have given timely warning,
Sing hey, the thoughtful sailor that you are!
I’ll talk to Master Rackstraw in the morning;
Sing hey, the cat-o’-nine-tails and the tar.
The merry cat-o’-nine-tails,
The merry cat-o’-nine-tails,
The merry cat-o’-nine-tails and the tar!” he retorted meaningfully, and produced a strange object composed of no fewer than nine pieces of knotted rope, which he always carried for purposes of discipline. Dick Deadeye knew that object of old. It was the “cat.”

“Ha! Ha! They are foiled—foiled—foiled!” he chortled as he faded into the shadows; while the Captain took instant means to arrest his daughter’s flight. “Ah,” the Captain exclaimed, “this boat-cloak will afford me ample disguise. So!” And enveloping himself in a mysterious garment which happened to be lying on a capstan close at hand, he too retired into the gloom.

He was not a moment too early. It was half past ten already, and from every direction human forms were groping towards the deck. Slowly and cautiously they stole upon the nearest lifeboat; and, as the moonlight fell on their leader, the features of Bill Bobstay might have been distinguished. A second later the handsome face of Ralph Rackstraw appeared. Then—and not till then—did a dull thud break the silence. It sounded for all the world like a man's foot stamping in rage.

“Goodness, me! why, what was that?” whispered the intruders, and out of the darkness came a deep and sinister voice.

“Silent be, it was the cat!” it boomed, and the intruders felt relieved.

“Yes, yes, it was the cat!” they agreed, and scarcely heard another voice from another part of the darkness muttering, “They're right. It *was* the cat!” or a subsequent faint noise not unlike that of a cracking whip. Cautiously they stole nearer the lifeboat, and as they crept on were joined by a fluttering figure which darted, bag in hand, across the deck. It was Josephine. As the moonlight fell upon her face the same dull sound was repeated.

“Goodness, me! why, what *was* that?” exclaimed all the intruders, startled; and again the deep and sinister voice made reply. “Silent be, it was again the cat!”

But this time the echo was no mutter. “Yes, yes, it *was* the cat!” rang out the second voice loud and clear; and the Captain of the *Pinafore* stepped quickly into the moonlight.

“Hold!” he cried, casting away his disguise and never dreaming how close at hand was the change that had been prophesied for him. All his men drew back a step—all, that is to say, except Ralph Rackstraw. Then Captain Corcoran faced his daughter, and sternly demanded an explanation. But he reckoned without Ralph. With flaming cheeks and glowing heart he defied his commander.

“Proud officer, that haughty lip uncurl!” cried Ralph, “for I have dared to love your matchless daughter. Though humble, poor, and lowly born—though the meanest in the port division—I have dared in manhood's glorious pride to rise. I am an Englishman! Behold me!”

It was mutiny, but it was glorious. To a man the crew of the *Pinafore* rallied in support of their messmate—except, of course, Dick Deadeye. Never, never, would they bow down to the tang of a tyrant word. “Yes, yes! He is an Englishman!” they growled.

And Bill Bobstay, nearly beside himself with national pride, mounted the capstan and struck an attitude of extreme patriotism.

“He is an Englishman!
For he himself has said it,
And it’s greatly to his credit,
That he is an Englishman!

“For he might have been a Roosian,
A French, or Turk, or Proosian,
Or perhaps Itali-an!

“But in spite of all temptations
To belong to other nations
He remains an Englishman!” sang the bo’sun at the top of his voice.

Whereupon the crew yelled “Hurrah for the true-born Englishman!” with such enthusiasm that Sir Joseph and his relatives hurried to the cabin windows to find out what the matter could be.

Captain Corcoran was furious. He did not object to Ralph remaining an Englishman, of course, for he was an Englishman himself—and proud of it. But that a common sailor should dare to fall in love with Josephine was more than he could stand. “T-t-to seek your Captain’s child in marriage,” he spluttered. “Why, *dash* it, it’s too bad!”

Sir Joseph and his relatives not only saw, but heard. With various expressions of concern and horror they trooped onto the deck. At the same moment another figure, carrying a heavy basket and murmuring “Remorse, remorse,” slipped from whatever place of concealment it had chosen. It was Little Buttercup, who now knew that the time to speak could not be far away!

“Oh!” gasped the relatives as they appeared. Captain Corcoran stamped his foot. “Yes, *dash* it, it’s too bad!” he screamed.

Cousin Hebe smiled. This was just the sort of thing she wanted to happen. “Why, the overbearing monster!” she exclaimed to Sir Joseph. “Did you hear him? He is *swearing!*”

Sir Joseph had certainly heard. He was deeply shocked. “Captain Corcoran, sir,” he announced with impressive dignity, “I find it is not easy to express my surprise and pain. No, not a sound! That word is wholly indefensible. Go, ribald, to your cabin and repent!”

The Captain bowed his head. His superior had spoken. Silently he went into his cabin. And Little Buttercup, watching him go, moved a pace closer. The time to speak was drawing nearer every moment.

“Now, tell me, my fine fellow—for you *are* a fine fellow,” said Sir Joseph to Ralph when the cabin door had closed, “how came your Captain so far to forget himself? I am quite sure *you* had given him no cause for annoyance.” Little did the First Lord dream what was coming.

And Ralph looked far from comfortable. “Please, your honour, it was this way,” he stammered. “You see, I’m only a topman—a mere foremast hand—”

“Don’t be ashamed of that,” cut in Sir Joseph. “Your position as a topman is a very exalted one.”

At this Ralph took encouragement. “Well, your honour,” he replied, “love burns as brightly in the foksle as it does on the quarter deck, and Josephine *is* the fairest bud that ever blossomed upon the tree of a poor fellow’s wildest hopes. She’s the figurehead of my ship of life—the bright beacon that guides me into a port of happiness—the rarest, purest gem that ever—”

This was not at all what Sir Joseph had expected to hear. But his rage at what he heard was nothing compared with his rage at what he saw when the Captain’s daughter rushed to Ralph Rackstraw’s arms.

“Insolent sailor,” he screamed, “you shall repent this outrage! Is there such a thing as a dungeon on board? There *is*? Then load him with chains and take him there at once.”

Obedient to the First Lord’s word two stalwart Marines sprang up from nowhere and, snapping handcuffs on his wrists, led off the luckless sailor.

“Farewell, my own!

Light of my life, farewell!

For crime unknown

I go to a dungeon cell,” cried Ralph as he was dragged away.

And neither he nor Josephine, nor the First Lord, nor any of his sisters and his cousins and his aunts heard someone else singing very faintly—

“But when is known

The secret *I* have to tell,

Wide will be thrown

The door of his dungeon cell.” —or noticed that Little Buttercup had moved a great deal nearer. The time to speak was very close at hand.

“Oh, Sir Joseph, spare him, for I love him tenderly!” implored the Captain’s daughter, falling on her knees. It was of no avail. The First Lord turned sternly—the picture of injured dignity.

“Josephine,” he said, “I cannot tell you the distress I feel at this most painful revelation. I desire to express to you, officially, that I am hurt. You, whom I honoured by seeking in marriage—you, the daughter of a captain in the Royal Navy—”

“Hold!” called a ringing voice which the First Lord had not heard before. “*I* have something to say to *that!*”

“Y-y-you?” stammered Sir Joseph in dismay.

“Yes, *I!*” cried Little Buttercup, and did not even try to explain her name and business. Her bright eyes twinkled and her rosy cheeks were flushed. Well might she be called the roundest, reddest, and rosiest beauty in all Spithead, for a burden was slipping from her mind and she looked ten years younger already. She proudly tossed her head. The time to speak had come at last!

“A many years ago,
When I was young and charming,
As some of you may know,
I practised baby farming.

“Two tender babes I nussed:
One was of low condition,
The other upper crust,
A regular patrician.

“Oh, bitter is my cup!
However could I do it?
I mixed those children up,
And not a creature knew it!

“In time each little waif
Forsook his foster-mother,
The well-born babe was Ralph—
Your Captain was the other!”

If she looked ten years younger when she started her confession, she looked twenty-five years younger when she finished it. The sensation was terrific. For though few of those present could have explained at all clearly what baby farming was, not one had failed to see the importance of Little Buttercup's secret.

"Then I am to understand," said Sir Joseph, "that Captain Corcoran and Ralph were exchanged in childhood's happy hour—that Ralph is really the Captain, and the Captain is really Ralph?"

"That's the idea," replied Little Buttercup, chuckling.

"In that case," answered Sir Joseph, "let them appear before me at once!"

The two Marines departed—one to the cabin and the other to the dungeon—and returned immediately with Ralph and the Captain. Now whether some fairy had been at work—or the thing simply *happened*—is not very clearly known; but the fact remains that when they re-appeared the Captain was dressed as a foremast hand and Ralph was dressed as a Captain. Furthermore the former Captain of the *Pinafore* looked at least twenty-five years younger. It was most surprising. Even Sir Joseph, who was feeling frightfully jumpy, noticed the difference.

"This is a very singular occurrence," he remarked. "I congratulate you both. Captain, desire that remarkably fine seaman to step forward!"

"Corcoran," commanded Ralph, "come here!"

"If what?" said Josephine's father, who was feeling rather mischievous. "If you *please*."

"Oh, yes," returned Ralph stamping his foot. "If you *please*!" And the former Captain of the *Pinafore* stepped forward smartly.

"You are an extremely fine fellow," observed Sir Joseph.

"Yes, your honour," replied Josephine's father with a sideways wink at Little Buttercup.

"So it seems that you were Ralph, and Ralph was you," went on Sir Joseph.

"So it seems your honour," repeated Josephine's father, and winked again at Little Buttercup.

"Well," said Sir Joseph severely, "I need not tell you that after this change in your condition, a marriage with your daughter will be out of the question."

"Don't say that, your honour," chuckled Josephine's father. "Love levels all ranks, you know."

Even Sir Joseph smiled at this. "It does to a considerable extent," he laughed, "but it does not level them as much as that." Then, to everybody's delight, he behaved like a sportsman and handed Josephine to Ralph.

"Here, take her, Sir," he said, "and mind you treat her kindly."

"And I," announced Josephine's father proudly, "shall take Little Buttercup. Now that I am a simple member of the crew there is no reason at all why I should not marry this plump and pleasing person."

"Then what shall I do?" wailed Sir Joseph. "I cannot live alone."

"You shall take *me!*" said Cousin Hebe, smiling.

"Oh no, I won't!" replied Sir Joseph.

"Oh yes, you will!" asserted Cousin Hebe; and Sir Joseph saw that it was hopeless to argue.

Everybody danced a hornpipe—partly to please Sir Joseph and partly in sheer delight and relief—and it was generally voted that all three weddings should take place together on the morrow. So everybody of consequence was more or less happy, with just two exceptions. One was Dick Deadeye, who would not have been happy in any case, and the other was Little Daphne, who had fallen asleep in a big chair under the portrait of Lord Nelson and who was therefore unable to take part in the general rejoicing. But she was allowed to see all three weddings, and she was specially asked by Ralph and Josephine to spend a whole day on board the *Pinafore* without her relatives. Better still, she was given everything that was left in Little Buttercup's basket, now that she did not need it any longer. So in the end Cousin Daphne was the happiest of all.

THE END