

Ruddigore

or, The Witch's Curse

A New and Original Supernatural Opera, in Two Acts

Synopsis by Fredric Woodbridge Wilson

Produced at the Savoy Theatre, London, under the management of R. D'Oyly Carte, on Saturday, January 22, 1887, for 288 performances through November 5, 1887. Sullivan conducted the first performance.

ROBIN OAKAPPLE, a Young Farmer, actually Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd in disguise	<i>Light Baritone</i>	George Grossmith
RICHARD DAUNTLESS, Robin's Foster-Brother, a Man-of-war's-man	<i>Tenor</i>	Durward Lely
SIR DESPARD MURGATROYD of Ruddigore, a Wicked Baronet	<i>Baritone</i>	Rutland Barrington
OLD ADAM GOODHEART, Robin's Faithful Servant	<i>Baritone</i>	Rudolph Lewis
ROSE MAYBUD, a Village Maiden	<i>Soprano</i>	Leonora Braham
MAD MARGARET	<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>	Jessie Bond
DAME HANNAH, Rose's Aunt	<i>Contralto</i>	Rosina Brandram
Professional Bridesmaids		
ZORAH	<i>Soprano</i>	Josephine Findlay
RUTH	<i>Chorus</i>	Miss Lindsay
Ghosts (Baronets of Ruddigore)		
SIR RUPERT MURGATROYD, the First Baronet	<i>Chorus</i>	S. Price
SIR JASPER MURGATROYD, the Third Baronet	<i>Chorus</i>	H. Charles
SIR LIONEL MURTATROYD, the Sixth Baronet	<i>Chorus</i>	Harris Trevor
SIR CONRAD MURGATROYD, the Twelfth Baronet	<i>Chorus</i>	Percy Burbank
SIR DESMOND MURGATROYD, the Sixteenth Baronet	<i>Chorus</i>	Mr. Tuer
SIR GILBERT MURGATROYD, the Eighteenth Baronet	<i>Chorus</i>	J. Wilbraham
SIR MERVYN MURGATROYD, the Twentieth Baronet	<i>Chorus</i>	Mr. Cox
SIR RODERIC MURGATROYD, the Twenty-first Baronet	<i>Bass-Baritone</i>	Richard Temple

OFFICERS, ANCESTORS, AND PROFESSIONAL BRIDESMAIDS

First American production by D'Oyly Carte's Opera Company at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York, on February 21, 1887, for 53 performances through April 9. The opera was not revived in London during D'Oyly Carte's original management. First London revival at the Prince's Theatre, under the management of Rupert D'Oyly Carte, on October 24, 1921, during

a repertory season.

ACT I — THE FISHING VILLAGE OF REDERRING, IN CORNWALL,
EARLY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A chorus of professional bridesmaids, endowed by a “pious charity,” extol Rose Maybud’s sweetness (Chorus, *Fair is Rose as the bright May-day*), and they wonder, as is their habit, “Is anybody going To marry you to-day?” Dame Hannah appears from her niece Rose’s cottage and tells them the disappointing news that Rose continues to look “but coldly upon her many suitors.” In danger of losing their endowment if no marriages are performed, the bridesmaids encourage Dame Hannah to look kindly upon the attentions of young Robin Oakapple’s manservant, Old Adam. Hannah replies that she had fallen in love with Sir Roderic Murgatroyd, one of the bad Baronets of Ruddigore, who had died ten years earlier, and on whose account she had pledged herself “to an eternal maidenhood.” Hannah further explains that the Baronets are accursed (Legend, *Sir Rupert Murgatroyd His leisure and his riches*). The first Baronet, Sir Rupert, had persecuted witches; as one hag was being burned she cursed him and his descendants to perform a crime a day or die. Each Baronet in turn reached a point where he could sin no more, “And on that day He said that say, In agony he died!”

As the bridesmaids depart, Rose returns from her charitable errands: she has taken rock candy to an old man and false teeth to a young girl. Dame Hannah encourages her to find a husband — perhaps the faultless young Robin, who “combines the manners of a Marquis with the morals of a Methodist.” But Rose replies that Robin “is shy, and sayeth naught”; and her book of etiquette (having been abandoned at the workhouse door with that book, she obeys it as if it were the parent she has never known) would prevent her from telling him so (Ballad, *If somebody there chanced to be*).

Dame Hannah exits, and Rose is startled by bashful Robin Oakapple. They find conversation difficult, but they contrive to consult one another on behalf of imaginary friends (Duet, *I know a youth who loves a little maid*). Rose leaves, and Old Adam enters, addressing his master as “Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd” (pronounced *rivven*). Robin acknowledges that in fact he is one of the Baronets of Ruddigore — or was, since for ten years he has pretended to be dead so that the unbearable curse would fall to his younger brother, Despard.

The bridesmaids announce the arrival of Richard Dauntless (Chorus, *From the briny sea Comes young Richard, all victorious!*), Robin’s beloved foster-brother. A seaman just returned after ten years, Dick relates the circumstances of his victorious encounter with a French frigate (Ballad, *I shipped, d’ye see, in a Revenue sloop*). Left alone with his brother, Robin confesses his shortcomings: “I’m timid, Dick; shy, nervous, modest, retiring, diffident” (Song, *My boy, you may take it from me*). Dick has the qualities that Robin lacks

— and, armed with self-confidence and a repertory of nautical metaphor, he agrees to propose to Rose on Robin's behalf. But when Dick sees this "tight little craft" he forgets his client and courts Rose for himself. Rose is properly reticent, but Dick is disarmingly candid, and she is forced, by the precepts of her etiquette book, to accept his proposal (Duet, *The battle's roar is over*).

Robin returns, accompanied by the bridesmaids (Chorus, *If well his suit has sped*), and discovers that he has been crossed. He is not slow to retaliate, and proceeds before Rose to damn his brother with faint praise. Rose cannot decide between them (Ensemble, *In sailing o'er life's ocean wide*), and they leave, weeping.

Suddenly Mad Margaret appears, singing incomprehensibly (Scena, *Cheerily carols the lark*); the cause of her madness is "No crime — 'Tis only That I'm Love-lonely!" Rose happens upon her, and Margaret reveals — not knowing to whom she is speaking — that she has "come to pinch Rose Maybud," in the belief that Sir Despard Murgatroyd, whom Margaret loves, will give Rose "an Italian glance and make her his." Rose introduces herself and assures Margaret that she is pledged to another, and that they are to be wedded that very day. Hearing an approaching throng, they steal away together. The bridesmaids welcome the "bucks and blades" from the city (Chorus, *Welcome, gentry, For your entry*), who make a courteous reply (Chorus, *When thoroughly tired Of being admired*). Their pleasantries are interrupted by the melodramatic entrance of Sir Despard (Song and Chorus, *Oh, why am I moody and sad?*), whereupon the crowd disperses in horror. Richard alone approaches Sir Despard, and takes the opportunity of retaliating against Robin. He discloses that Ruthven is alive and living a lie, and the wicked Baronet prepares to restore his elder brother's rightful title to escape from his "hideous thralldom" and live a blameless life (Duet, *You understand? I think I do*).

As Dick and Sir Despard leave the stage, the jubilant chorus return to celebrate the marriage of the Robin and Rose (Chorus, *Hail the bride of seventeen summers*). A madrigal (*Where the buds are blossoming*) and gavotte follow. Sir Despard enters and claims "young Robin as my elder brother!" Robin cannot deny his deceit (Solo, *As pure and blameless peasant*). Dick confesses to his wicked betrayal (Solo, *Within this breast there beats a heart*), offering for his defense that he only obeyed his heart's dictates. The scrupulous Rose refuses Robin and, bound to duty, offers herself to the no-longer-bad Despard (Solo, *Farewell! Thou hadst my heart*). Now virtuous, however, Despard returns instead to his old love, Margaret. Rose addresses Richard, "Thou art the only one that's left, So I am thine!" Everyone is happy, apparently, except Robin (Ensemble, *Oh, happy the lily*), who, following a general dance, falls senseless onto the ground.

ACT II — THE PICTURE GALLERY IN RUDDIGORE CASTLE, A WEEK LATER

Robin — now, as Sir Ruthven, a guilty *roué* — enters with Old Adam (Duet, *I once was as*

mEEK as a new-born lamb). Sir Ruthven has the aspect of a guilty rou., Old Adam that of his wicked steward. Sir Ruthven confesses that he dislikes the obligations of his new position, and he seems unequal to the resourcefulness required to execute a crime daily. Rose and Dick enter, preceded by the ever-attentive bridesmaids, to obtain the Baronet's consent to their marriage. Their happiness is extreme (Duet, *Happily coupled are we*), although Dick is about to return to the sea, hence to his seafaring ways, and Rose is under no misapprehension about his character. Summoning all the villainy at his command, Sir Ruthven makes a threatening entrance, but is foiled when Richard holds before him, as a talisman, a Union Jack. Rose appeals to Sir Ruthven's old love for her and friendship with his foster-brother (Ballad, *In bygone days I had thy love*), and he consents. They depart, leaving the Baronet despondent. Addressing the portraits of his forefathers he asks for pity; the stage darkens, and when the light is restored the portraits have come to life, and the spectres descend from their frames (Chorus, *Painted emblems of a race*). They surround and threaten Sir Ruthven, and Sir Roderic sings a chilling song (Song, *When the night wind howls*). They inquire into Sir Ruthven's record of crimes. He can boast of little worse than making a false income tax return and forging his own will, and he is found wanting. Sir Ruthven at first defies them, but the agonies to which they subject him prove unbearable (Chorus, *He yields! He answers to our call!*). The ghosts return to their frames as Old Adam enters.

With the memory of his tormentors vivid in his mind, Sir Ruthven commissions Old Adam to carry off a village maiden, and sings of crimes envisioned (Recitative, *Away, Remorse!*; Song, *Henceforth all the crimes that I find in the Times*), and he leaves the stage. Sir Despard and his bride Margaret, dressed in sober black, enter in a formal manner and sing of the changes that have overtaken them (Duet, *I once was a very abandoned person*). Despard is troubled by Margaret's tendency to regress to her frenzied state, but her suggestion that a word "that teems with hidden meaning — like 'Basingstoke' " could restore her composure proves efficacious.

Sir Ruthven returns, and Despard addresses him with revulsion, pointing out that Sir Ruthven was responsible for all the atrocities "committed by the unhappy gentleman who occupied your place" for the past ten years. Sir Ruthven is resolved, pain and torment notwithstanding, to "atone in some degree for the infamy of my career" ("Patter-Trio," *My eyes are fully open to my awful situation*) by defying his ghostly ancestors.

Despard and Margaret leave, and Old Adam enters, with his abducted maiden, in the person of Dame Hannah. She is more than a match for Sir Ruthven, however, who invokes the ghost of his uncle, Sir Roderic, who materializes. Roderic and his old sweetheart recognize each other at once, and exchange affectionate courtesies. Now he is angry with Sir Ruthven for his treatment of the lady, and dismisses him as she reminisces (Ballad, *There grew a little flower 'Neath a great oak tree*). Sir Ruthven bursts in, followed by the entire company. He has discovered a paradox: if a Baronet of Ruddigore can only die through

refusing to commit his daily crime, then to refuse to commit a crime is tantamount to suicide, which is in itself a crime! Thus Sir Roderic (and, by extension, the other ancestors) ought never to have died at all. Sir Ruthven — once again pure and blameless — is rejoined by Rose, Dick quickly finds a companion in the bridesmaid Zorah, and all (save perhaps poor Old Adam Goodheart) are content (Finale, *Having been a wicked baronet a week*).

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