

THE POWDER MONKEYS

A Play with Music

by

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Music by

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15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

THE POWDER MONKEYS

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INTRODUCTION

There is virtually nothing in the reference books under the specific heading of “**Powder Monkeys**”, though there is a good deal about the recruitment of boys into the Navy through the Marine Society and as commissioned officers (Midshipmen). There is also plenty of material on the presence on board ships of boys as servants and cabin boys. Most of them found themselves there as volunteers or as petty criminals. Occasionally they were (illegally) impressed. Often they were very young, but usually no younger than the midshipmen under whom they served.

“A boy was allowed half the usual ship’s allowance of rum and wine. In action he was stationed at a gun with orders to supply that gun with cartridges from the magazine. In a hot engagement he was kept running to and fro, over the bloody and splinter-scattered deck, carrying the cartridges from the magazine. If he tried to bolt away from the magazine into the shelter of the orlop-deck, the midshipman stationed at the hatchway promptly shot him.”

Sea Life in Nelson’s Time, Masfield

The Press Gang

In theory it was only able-bodied, British-born seamen between the ages of eighteen and fifty-five who were liable to be pressed. But as the demand for men grew, not even those who were officially and legally exempt could feel safe any more. The gangs grabbed their men and let the superior officers argue about the law afterwards.

Hambleton Cricket Club

On June 18th 1777 Hambleton XI beat an England XI on Broadhalfpenny Down, winning by an innings and 165 runs. The prize was 1000 guineas.

One of those playing for Hambleton was the farmer, John Small, the elder - “that celebrated batsman who in 1778 made 136 (not out) against Surrey and was reputed the best judge alive of a short run”. Small played the double bass and there was a time when, marching with his instrument in hand to a musical party, he was confronted by a vicious bull and he owed his life to the soothing strains he played.

At Hambleton, music was cricket’s only rival. Is it not recorded that Tom Sueter, the wicket-keeper, had ‘A sweet counter-tenor voice’ and was he not wont to join George Lear, the peerless long-stop, in a glee at the ‘Bat and Ball’ on Broadhalfpenny?

The Young Cricketer’s Tutor, Nyren

Women’s Cricket

At the turn of the century the Ladies of Hampshire played the Ladies of Surrey. At three o'clock the match was won by the Hampshire lassies, who not being willing to leave the field at so early an hour and having only won by two innings, they played a single in which they were also the victors.

Social History of Cricket

On Board

Although the Captain officially lived in solitary state at the after end of the main deck, in fact there was often livestock at the forward end; the manger, right in the bow, was the place for poultry, pigs and even cattle.

Life in Nelson's Navy

Although many midshipmen were mere children they had "extraordinary privileges" which they abused extraordinarily. They were officers and therefore were powerful. Aboard HMS Revenge there was a midshipman who would amuse himself by climbing on the gun carriages and calling to him the finest and strongest of the sailors. He was an officer and to resent this cruelty would be mutiny.

Ibid

THE CAST

The Village Children

Tom Rowlands	<i>(Age 13)</i>
Jack Fielding	<i>(Age 14)</i>
Sam Baxter	<i>(Age 13)</i>
Sally Fielding	<i>(Age 12)</i>
Shorty Small	<i>(Age 13)</i>
Adam Small	<i>(Age 11)</i>
Nellie Mould	<i>(Age 13)</i>
Jenny Mould	<i>(Age 11)</i>
Daniel Grazier	<i>(Age 12)</i>
Ben Hopkins	<i>(Age 11)</i>
Betsy Lunn	<i>(Age 12)</i>

The Village Adults

Mary Rowlands	
William Bury,	<i>Gamekeeper</i>
John Small,	<i>Farmer</i>
Mould,	<i>Publican</i>
George Peters	<i>Blacksmith</i>
Noah Burt	<i>Gardener's boy</i>
Harry Bentley	<i>Stable lad</i>
Sarah Small	

The Gentry

Sir Peter Blackford, MP	
Lady Amelia Blackford	
Fanny Blackford	<i>(Age 14)</i>
Catherine Blackford	<i>(Age 11)</i>
Elizabeth Elliot	<i>(Age 15)</i>
Emma Spicer	<i>(Age 14)</i>
Captain Anthony Blackford	
Dominic Blackford	<i>(Age 15)</i>
Timothy Spicer	<i>(Age 15)</i>
Ralph Jackson	<i>(Age 15)</i>

THE CAST (continued)

The Navy

The Powder Monkeys:

Donkin

Pilch

Charlie Clarke

Selsey Bill

Pleggit

Johnny Johnson *Drummer boy*

Newman Adams *Drummer boy*

Lieutenant Matthews

Gunner Williams

Street Arabs, Sailors, Press-Gang, Citizens of Portsmouth,
Cricketers, Powder Monkeys.

The action takes place variously in the Wood at Hambledon; The Drawing Room of Hambledon Hall; The Committee Room at The Bat and Ball, Broadhalfpenny Down; The Cricket Fields at Broadhalfpenny Down; On the Road to Portsmouth; Outside The George Inn; Portsmouth Docks; on the Quarterdeck, in the Captain's Cabin, in the Boys' Quarters and on the Upper Gun Deck of HMS Ajax.

The time is August 1797.

The Powder Monkeys was commissioned by The Cambridge Festival Association and was first performed at The Leys School, Cambridge, on 20th July 1984.

THE POWDER MONKEYS

ACT I

SCENE 1

MUSIC 1 - OPENING MUSIC

(The lights come up on the dim image of CAPTAIN BLACKFORD'S cabin on board HMS Ajax. He is asleep in his 'cot'. His uniform can be seen draped over a stool. The sound of Marine drummers).

Chorus of Sailors: *(offstage)* *Away haul away.
We'll haul away together.
Away haul away.
Haul away Joe.*

(As the music changes, the distant, dreamlike sounds of battle, voices shouting orders, cannon-fire etc., can be heard. Scurrying figures appear in the gloom - those of children - powder monkeys. Nearer cries can be heard of "Powder. . . More powder. . . Stay by your guns. . . Tich and turn . . . Tich and turn").

Captain: *(from his bed)* Battle stations! There's a war to be fought and we need you to fight it. . . Boy, get to your gun. . . "Do as you are ordered, boy, or suffer the consequences". "Your duty is to your country".

(The noises grow. There is a shot, followed by an instant blackout).

SCENE 2

(A woodland glade near Hambleton Hall in Hampshire. It is a fine summer's day, August 1796. The stage is empty but for a nasty looking gin-trap containing a dead rabbit).

MUSIC 2 - THE EYNSHAM POACHING SONG

Tom: *(offstage)* *Three Hampshire chaps went out one day,
To Lord Hambleton's Manor they made their way.
They took their dogs to catch some game
And soon to Blackford's Wood they came.*

(He appears) *Laddie I O, laddie I O,
Fal di ral over a laddie I O.*

(JACK FIELDING, SAM BAXTER and SALLY FIELDING appear, singing too).

All: *We had not long been beating there
Before a spaniel put up a hare.
Up she jump and away she ran,
At the very same time a pheasant sprang.
Laddie I O, etc.*

(More local children appear and sing)

*We had not beat the woods all through,
When Burt the keeper came in view,
And when we saw the old beggar look,
We made our way to Cassington brook.
Laddie I O, etc.*

*When we got there 'twas full to the brim,
And you'd have laughed to see us swim.
Ten feet of water, if not more.
When we got out our dogs came o'er.
Laddie I O, etc.*

Tom: *Over hedges, ditches, gates and rails,
Our dogs followed over behind our heels.
And you can all say what you will.
We'll have our hares and pheasants still.*

All: *Laddie I O, laddie I O.
Fal di ral over a laddie I O.*

(Most of them rush off leaving TOM, JACK, SAM and SALLY).

Tom: (examining the trapped rabbit) Lord love us! look at this. Jack, look at this.
Nasty piece of work.

Jack: Ooh, vicious. Poor old rabbit's dead as dead.

Tom: This thing could snap a horse's leg, let alone a little rabbit.

Sam: Is that one of yours, Tom?

Tom: No, George Peters don't make things as nasty as this at Hambleton Forge
and I don't know who round here does. Probably made in Portsmouth, this
one, or France.

Sally: Who'd want to set one of them? It's horrible.

Jack: I dunno Sally, but Willy Burt might. That's a game-keeper's job, to keep up with things like that.

Tom: *(With difficulty, he has got the rabbit out of the trap. He holds it up)* Here, who wants a rabbit?

Sally: Ooh, I couldn't. Not all mangled like that. It's really horrible.

Tom: *(offering it round)* Jack? Sam?

Sam: *(with distaste)* Not hungry.

Tom: Oh well, one man's meat is another man's poison. My mum's good with rabbits. I shall have it for me supper. Build me muscles up for tomorrow's game.

Sally: Ooh, are you playing cricket tomorrow too, Tom? Jack's playing, aren't you Jack?

Jack: Tom's the best fieldsman in Hambledon. Course he's playing.

Sam: Wish I could play. They never picks me.

Tom: *(kindly, seeing SAM is upset)* Here, Sam, you have the rabbit.

Sam: No. It's all right, Tom.

Sally: *(cheerfully)* Good bit of rabbit pie should help you wallop the ball all the way to Droxford.

Tom: Nicer than scraps from Hambledon Manor, anyway. Betsy smuggles bits down to us after supper each day. Saves it from the pig-bin.

Jack: *(smiling)* Oh, 'Betsy Lunn, The Parlourmaid'.

Tom: *(naively)* Her and my mum are 'like that'.

Sam: We heard it was you and her that was 'like that'!

Tom: What?

Jack: What are you blushing for, Tom?

Tom: Oh, don't start that again. . .

(There is the sound of approaching chat and laughter).

Sam: *(on the alert)* Look out, who's that?

Sally: It's only the other lot coming back from Broadhalfpenny. You can tell Shorty Small a mile off.

Sam: You can smell him a mile off too.

(SHORTY SMALL, ADAM SMALL, BEN HOPKINS, DANIEL GRAZIER, JENNY MOULD and NELLIE MOULD arrive. The boys carry scythes and sickles. The girls have food baskets).

Shorty: *(noisily)* I never wants to see another blade of grass ever. Just cos I'm small they thinks 'tis easier for me to get down and cut it.

Adam: I don't see why it's us who has to cut the blooming grass up there anyway. It isn't as though WE'RE playing cricket tomorrow. What about them lazy blighters like Jack Fielding?

Jack: What about them, Adam?

Adam: (*spinning round*) Oh, hello Jack. Um . . . I was just saying . . .

Nellie: (*with glee*) He was just calling you a lazy blighter and said you ought to be cutting the cricket ground and not him.

Jack: (*threatening*) I'll thump him . . . later.

Jenny: (*who is tucking into an enormous bun*) You should have been with me, Adam, on the teas.

Nellie: (*very jealous*) Ooh, let's have some, Jen. Come on . . .

Daniel: Honestly! One mention of food and there's Nellie and Jenny Mould sure as buns is buns.

Ben: (*sitting apart*) It's lovely, that big tent with the tea in it. It makes inside seem all secret does a tent. I spent all day lying in there, eating grass.

Adam: Lazy, that's all you are, Ben Hopkins.

Ben: (*smiling*) I know.

Tom: (*joining BEN*) I know just what you mean, Ben. It's lovely inside a big canvas tent with that smell and the yellow light and the breeze blowing the canvas.

Ben: Must be like being at sea, all that canvas.

Sally: Oooh, lovely. The sea.

Jenny: All them sailors.

Tom: It's not as nice as that, Jenny.

Jack: I'd still like to go there . . .

Jenny: What, and fight with Nelson?

Sally: I can see him - fighting with Nelson!

Jack: I've often thought about running away to sea.

Sally: It'd be nice and peaceful at home!

Jack: Like Jimmy Ellwood.

Tom: Jimmy?

Jack: Haven't you heard?

Sally: He's run away to join Nelson.

Sam: Never!

Sally: Didn't you know?

Jack: Mrs Ellwood got a message yesterday from Portsmouth. It wasn't the Press Gang after all. He volunteered.

Tom: Oh no.

Nellie: Poor old Jim.

Tom: Waste of a good cricketer too. He would have been playing against Droxford tomorrow. (*A pause*). I think I hate the sea.

Nellie: (*hearing music*) Hello, there's the Gentry up Hambledon Hall, singing and dancing up there already.

Shorty: Why can't they cut the blooming grass? It's their cricket match.

Daniel: (*casually*) Oh, by the way, I don't want to worry the poaching party, but I saw our beloved friend Dominic Blackford and two of his nasty cronies out with the guns a moment ago. They were coming this way and I don't think they were looking for French men-of-war.

Sally: With their guns? Oh lor, I'm off home. See you all tomorrow up Broadhalfpenny.

(*She scurries off with the rest of them. All are chattering nervously. TOM stops in his tracks and goes back to pick up the rabbit. Voices are heard off*).

Dominic: Hello. What's going on over here?

Jackson: Tim - over here . . .

(*TOM stoops to pick up the rabbit and gets his trouser-leg caught in the trap. JACK reappears*).

Jack: Come on, Tom. Hurry up . . . (*He looks up and freezes*).

Dominic: (*still out of sight*) Hello, an animal in a trap! (*Raucous laughter*). Tell you what. Let's put him out of his misery.

Tom: (*terrified*) Noo. . .!

(*But his cry is silenced by a loud gunshot. BLACK OUT*).

SCENE 3

(*The Drawing Room at Hambledon Hall. There is an informal dance in progress*).

MUSIC 3 - GAVOTTE

(*CAPTAIN BLACKFORD, casually dressed, is dancing with FANNY BLACKFORD, CATHERINE BLACKFORD, EMMA SPICER and ELIZABETH ELLIOT. SIR PETER BLACKFORD, sipping sherry, is sitting watching, as is LADY AMELIA BLACKFORD. BETSY LUNN, the Parlourmaid, is in attendance. The dance ends. Ripples of applause*).

Sir Peter: My word, Anthony, that's a very fine step you cut there.

Captain: Thank you, Peter.

Sir Peter: Can't think how a brother of mine comes to be such a fancy dancer. Batsman? Yes. Gavottes? No - unless, of course, it's the hornpipe. You naval chaps are great hornpipers, isn't that right?

Lady Amelia: Oh really, Peter. You've always been jealous of Anthony's dancing.

Sir Peter: (*laughing*) Here, have a glass of this stuff.

Captain: You weren't a bad dancer yourself, Peter, until you gave yourself that

gout. And your daughters dance very prettily too, I must say.

Catherine: I'm the best, aren't I Uncle?

Sir Peter: Oh for heavens sake don't start complimenting them. They become insufferable.

Captain: For a politician, you speak your mind remarkable honestly, Peter.

Sir Peter: Well, my daughters don't need flattery from me. Though I must say that's a very pretty exhibition you gave there, young Emma. Your father, the Admiral, would be mightily proud of you. What do you think?

Emma: (*archly*) I think the whole thing's totally boring.

Captain: (*coming to the rescue*) Well, you must all come down to the next Summer Ball in Portsmouth. You won't get bored there; all those fine young Naval officers dancing in attendance on you. I shall send you all an invitation.

Catherine: Even me?

Lady Amelia: No, Catherine, of course not.

Captain: Oh, we might get young Catherine to the ball somehow.

Catherine: Oh good. I'll get a new dress.

Emma: (*icily*) What time are we dining?

Sir Peter: Aha, still bored, eh? Well those boys will be back soon; that'll bring a sparkle back to your pretty little eyes, I'm sure.

Lady Amelia: Sir Peter, please.

Sir Peter: Oh, for pity's sake, Amelia, they're young ladies now, not children any more.

Catherine: (*precociously*) I'm only eleven, Papa, and you shouldn't be using language like that in front of me.

Lady Amelia: Catherine, please! Do stop showing off.

(*Another awkward pause*).

Captain: Are those boys back from shooting yet?

Sir Peter: Betsy will know. She's an eye for the young men, eh, Betsy? (*He pinches her cheek. She blushes*).

Betsy: Don't know, I'm sure, Sir Peter, but Master Dominic isn't back yet.

Elizabeth: Let's go and find them.

Lady Amelia: Come now, Elizabeth; they are out shooting and young ladies have no place amongst such pursuits.

Sir Peter: But the ladies have taken to the cricket field now, I hear. Lots of good young lady players in Kent. Think I'll move there!

Lady Amelia: Well, with the speed that all the young men are being stolen off to sea, it's hardly surprising.

Elizabeth: Well, maybe we should all go to sea! (*She laughs inanely*). Would you have us on board your boat, Captain Blackford?

Captain: What, as midshipmen?

Catherine: Midshipladies, rather! (*Another inane laugh from ELIZABETH*).

Captain: No, I think not, ladies. You know what your father thinks about the way we use young children at sea. I think, perhaps, we should change the subject.

Sir Peter: Very wise, Anthony.
(*Another slightly awkward pause*).

Emma: (*coldly*) Well, this IS fun, Fanny.

Captain: I think we should have a song. Something sweet from one of the girls to send me back to sea tomorrow with a happy memory of my stay here. Who's it to be?
(*All look to EMMA*).

Emma: Not ME, thank you.

Lady Amelia: I think YOU should sing to US, Anthony. You've a fine voice.
(*There is general and enthusiastic consent*).

Captain: (*smiling*) Well, I suppose I asked for that one! Very well, this one will bring a tear to your eyes. It's a song about a lovely daughter . . . (*the girls giggle*) . . . who comes to a bad end. (*The girls shush each other*).

MUSIC 4 - ALLAN WATER

Captain: *On the banks of Allan Water,
When the sweet springtime did fall,
Was the Miller's lovely daughter,
Fairest of them all.
For his bride a soldier sought her,
And a winning tongue had he:
On the banks of Allan Water,
None so gay as she.*

(*There is a sudden distant explosion, as of a shot-gun. All jump*).

Fanny: Oh, what was that?

Sir Peter: Sounded like a gun-shot.

Lady Amelia: It's only the boys. Carry on, Anthony. What a shame they interrupted you.

Captain: *On the banks of Allan Water
When brown Autumn spread its store,
There I saw the Miller's daughter,
But she smiled no more.
For the Summer grief had brought her,
And the soldier false was he.
On the banks of Allan Water,
None so sad as she.*

*On the banks of Allan Water,
When the Winter snow fell fast,
Still was seen the Miller's daughter,
Chilling blew the blast.
But the Miller's lovely daughter
Both from cold and care was free.
On the banks of Allan Water,
There, a corpse lay she.*

(There is a respectful pause, then genuine applause. None of them have noticed DOMINIC, RALPH and TIMOTHY arrive. They have listened to the last part of the song. DOMINIC applauds loudly and crudely).

Dominic: Bravo, Uncle. Bravo. What's next? A rousing chorus of Rule Britannia?

Lady Amelia: Dominic! How dare you talk to your Uncle like that?

Captain: Oh, I can give you Rule Britannia if you really want it. It's a tune you'll be dancing to soon, young man. I can't say I approve of its sentiments but they do say it's good for the morale in the more simple-minded members of the Navy. Did you shoot anything worth shooting?

Dominic: Well, I shot something; but it's questionable whether it was worth expending a musket ball on. *(His cronies laugh raucously).*

Sir Peter: I don't much like the sound of that laughter. What did you shoot?

Dominic: Oh, only some nasty little boy from the village.

Lady Amelia: What?

Dominic: He was scurrying around in the copse at the bottom of the lawns.

Ralph: He looked as though he was poaching.

Timothy: You only winged him, though.

Ralph: It was still a damned good shot.

Sir Peter: Now just a moment. What is this? You shot someone?

Dominic: Yes.

Sir Peter: Good God.

Lady Amelia: Who?

Dominic: Oh mother . . .

Captain: You shot at a child?

Dominic: He was trespassing.

Sir Peter: Where is he?

Ralph: We left him there, just down beyond the lawn.

Fanny: Oh, come along Elizabeth . . . *(She rushes out, followed by the others all chattering).* Emma, we must do something . . .

Lady Amelia: *(following them out)* Bring him straight up here . . .
(DOMINIC stands defiantly).

Sir Peter: Now, let me understand this, Dominic . . .

Dominic: Now listen, father. I came across some snotty-nosed little rat trespassing on our property and taught him a simple lesson. That's all.

Sir Peter: 'That's all'? What do you mean, 'That's all'? Who was this child?

Dominic: Oh, how should I know? It looked like that dreadful child who lazes around at the blacksmith's. Rowlands or whatever.

Sir Peter: Tom Rowlands? . . . Oh my . . . *(He holds his heart and sits. BETSY, who has been waiting in attendance, gasps and rushes out).*

Captain: *(realising his brother isn't well)* It would be best if you left us, young man.

Dominic: But what on earth . . .

Captain: Dismiss!

Dominic: *(recognising the naval tone, smiles slightly, and salutes).* Aye aye, Sir. Come on chaps . . . *(He leaves with RALPH and TIMOTHY).*

Captain: *(turning to SIR PETER)* Are you all right, Peter?

Sir Peter: *(with a glass of sherry)* Yes, yes. I shall be all right. God, he'll be the death of me one day. The arrogant young devil.

Captain: Well he certainly is headstrong! Good Midshipman material.

Sir Peter: *(surprised)* You think so? You'll still have him with you on the Ajax?

Captain: Why ever not?

Sir Peter: Well, do Midshipmen in His Majesty's Navy wander around shooting people at will?

Captain: Sometimes they have to. Not at will, of course, but if duty calls.

Sir Peter: Duty? It's a pretty misplaced sense of duty that has you taking pot-shots at the local children.

Captain: It'll take no more than a few days to knock young Dominic into shape, despite his hot head. Don't withdraw him now for heaven's sake. The Navy is short enough of good men as it is.

Sir Peter: *(after a thoughtful pause)* But not of boys.

Captain: What?

Sir Peter: Children.

Captain: *(confused)* What of them?

Sir Peter: How many ship's boys are there on the Ajax?

Captain: We need at least seventy four.

Sir Peter: Seventy four! And where are you going to get them from?

Captain: Heaven knows!

Sir Peter: Heaven may not, but I do and so do you. You'll get them off the streets, from the Courts of Law and from all the lies and falsehoods that your recruiting . . .

Captain: Lies and falsehoods?

Sir Peter: Hell's teeth, I've seen all those ridiculous posters, glorifying the life at sea and tempting those who know no better with promises of treasures, wealth and glory; to say nothing of your fiendish press-gangs who terrorise everywhere they go. It's despicable.

Captain: But . . . these are for the men . . . the Press Gang is for layabouts . . . volunteers.

Sir Peter: I'm not talking about the men. Anthony, only last week a boy, James Ellwood, the only son of one of my constituents here, ran off, we learn to sea; seduced by your damnable lies. And are you trying to tell me that your Press Gang confines itself only to men?

Captain: Peter, there's a war to be fought and we need men to fight it.

Sir Peter: Well go and fight it, but not using innocent and ignorant children.

(They are interrupted by the noise of the girls arriving with TOM).

Fanny: Here, bring him in here . . .

Elizabeth: Oh, do mind the shot bit . . .

(They appear, guiding TOM roughly. His left arm is covered in blood. They hurry him over to the chaise and sit him on it).

Catherine: Here he is, Papa, all bloody.

Fanny: Be careful of his arm . . .

Emma: Be careful of my dress.

Fanny: Betsy - a rug or a blanket. Where is that girl?

Catherine: Here, I've fetched one. *(They put the blanket under him).*

Fanny: Down here. Oh do get out of the way, Emma.

Lady Amelia: *(entering)* Who is it, Fanny? Do we know him?

Fanny: It's that boy from the blacksmith's.

Lady Amelia: What?

Tom: It's Tom, my Lady. Tom Rowlands.

Lady Amelia: Good heavens! Mary's boy. Peter - it's Tom Rowlands.

Sir Peter: Yes. I know it is, dear.

Catherine: *(rushing in again)* Here. A bandage.

Elizabeth: Oh, he's all bloody.

Emma: I think I shall be sick.

Fanny: Give me the bandage, Catherine.

Catherine: No. I want to.

Fanny: Give it to me . . . *(They start struggling and squabbling).*

Captain: *(taking over)* Right. That's enough, ladies. Now leave him alone. He needs air to breathe and some peace and quiet.

Tom: *(a bit bewildered by all this)* I'm all right, Sir. It don't hurt much.

Fanny: But the bleeding. . .

Captain: The bleeding has stopped. It's only a small flesh wound. There is

nothing to get alarmed about. Now kindly leave the room.

Lady Amelia: Your Uncle knows best. Now come along, girls, and prepare for dinner.

Fanny: (*going*) I do think Dominic's horrid.

Catherine: I think Uncle Anthony's horrid. I wanted to stay and watch . . .
(*They all squabble their way out leaving TOM and the two men in the room.*)

Sir Peter: Peace! (*He turns to look at TOM*). Now, how are you feeling?

Tom: Bit dizzy, Sir. Half scared me to death, that gun, Sir.

Sir Peter: I'm hardly surprised. Here, wrap yourself up well. We must get you home and have that wound cleaned up.

Tom: Thank you, Sir. I'm sorry, Sir.

Sir Peter: Sorry? For what?

Tom: I think I shall be all right for tomorrow, Sir. Me right arm's me good one.

Sir Peter: Tomorrow?

Tom: The cricket match, Sir. I catch with me right hand.

Sir Peter: (*suddenly alarmed*) Good God, the cricket match. I'd clean forgotten. He's one of my prize fielders.

Tom: Please let me play, Sir.

Sir Peter: I could brain that son of mine.

Captain: Ha! Well it's a rum old world.

Sir Peter: What the devil's so funny?

Captain: It makes a bit of a mockery of all our heart searching about pitting children against the might of Napoleon's forces when a village cricket team has its own members popping each other off with shot-guns the day before the big local derby.

Sir Peter: Oh, for heaven's sake, Anthony . . .

Captain: Now don't be too serious about it all. The boy is fine. He'll be playing for England before he'll be fighting for her if I read him right, eh boy?

Tom: (*bewildered*) Beg pardon, Sir?

(*There is a sudden rumpus out in the hall. MARY ROWLANDS bursts in followed by the rest of the household.*)

Mary: Where is he? Where's my son?

Lady Amelia: Now Mary, calm down, do . . .

Mary: (*rushes straight to TOM*) Tom! you all right?

(*TOM nods. MARY looks around and comes eye to eye with SIR PETER. There is a tense silence.*)

Sir Peter: (*eventually*) He's all right, Mary, perfectly all right. It's just a flesh wound. (*MARY is silent. The CAPTAIN moves towards MARY*). Anthony, this is Mary Rowlands. She was Governess here for a while when Dominic was born.

Captain: How do you do, Mrs. Rowlands.

Mary: (*interested only in TOM's arm*) Worried, Captain Blackford. That's how I do.

Sir Peter: (*getting slightly tetchy*) Mary, you needn't worry.

Mary: Wouldn't you be if your son had been shot?

Sir Peter: Of course I would.

Mary: Just as I'd be worried if my son went around shooting people.

Dominic: He shouldn't have been trespassing on our land.

Mary: (*outraged*) Trespassing? He was practically brought up in that woodland. What was he doing?

Ralph: Poaching.

Tom: No I weren't.

Mary: (*she spins on him*) Tom!

Tom: . . . wasn't.

Mary: My child is not a law-breaker, Master Dominic, nor would he do anyone or any creature harm, I know that. You had no need to shoot at him.

Fanny: He was caught in a trap, Father. A dreadful looking thing.

Sir Peter: Thank you, Fanny.

Mary: (*appalled*) He was trapped - and you shot him?

Dominic: He shouldn't have been there.

Mary: For pity's sake, have you no feelings?

Dominic: I don't know what you mean.

Mary: (*bitterly*) No, you wouldn't.

Lady Amelia: Now come along, let's stop all this. It's not getting us anywhere. (*The rest of the children wander off, led by DOMINIC.*)

Sir Peter: Absolutely. Let's get him home.

Lady Amelia: I'll get one of the servants to help you.

Mary: The servants?

Tom: It's all right, Mother, I can walk.

Betsy: I'll get him back home, Mrs. Rowlands. You get on back and get ready.

Mary: Thank you, Betsy.

Captain: Just clean the wound with warm water and bandage it well. He'll be fine for the game tomorrow; come on, Peter.

Mary: Thank you, Captain. Be careful with him, Betsy.

(*TOM and BETSY watch as they all leave.*)

Tom: (*looking around*) Quite a place this, Betsy.

Betsy: Look, I got some vinegar. (*She starts to bathe his arm.*)

Tom: Mother was angry.

Betsy: What WERE you doing down there, Tom?

Tom: Nothing, honest. I got me leg caught in one of them gin-traps.

Betsy: And they just shot you?

Tom: Dominic did - and he laughed while he was doing it.

Betsy: He's really nasty sometimes.

Tom: Ow!

Betsy: Sorry. Anyway, he's off to sea next week, Master Dominic.

Tom: Well heaven help anyone who ends up under his command, that's all I can say.

Betsy: Captain Blackford should soon sort him out.

Tom: Them Midshipmen look after the ship boys at sea. Get paid for it too. Fifty shillings a month.

Betsy: What about the boys? Do they get paid?

Tom: Six and eightpence and half grog rations.

Betsy: Can't be bad.

Tom: Don't you believe it. It's a dog's life.

Betsy: I'd like to go to sea. Be one of them Powder Monkeys.

Tom: (*laughing*) They don't have girls.

Betsy: Why not?

Tom: 'Betsy Lunn, Powder Monkey' - don't sound right.

Betsy: I think it sounds good.

MUSIC 5 - SING MY LADS YO HO! [THE BATTLE OF ABU QUIR BAY]

Betsy: *I knew a boy who volunteered
To join the King's navee.
He loved the sport and always fought
With fire and braveree.*

*His name was Bill, he'd drink his fill
Of brandy, gin and beer.
When that young dog had drunk his grog,
He'd raise his voice so clear.*

*Soon we'll be in London Town.
Sing my lads yo ho.
We'll see the King in his golden crown.
Sing my lads yo ho.*

*Yo ho, heave ho and away we go.
Sing my lads, yo ho.
Who's afraid to face the foe?
Sing my lads yo ho.*

(*She gives TOM the sherry decanter. He has a swig - and smiles.*)

*One day the Froggies sailed so near,
Bill made a clever plan.
He jumped into the briney,
And up to their ship he swam.*

*The cannon roared. he climbed aboard,
Unnoticed in the din.
Went straight down to the magazine
And soaked it all with gin.*

Both: *Soon we'll be in London Town.
Sing my lads yo ho,
We'll see the King in his golden crown.
Sing my lads yo ho.*

*Yo ho, heave ho, and away we go.
Sing my lads yo ho.
Who's afraid to face the foe?
Sing my lads yo ho.*

REPEAT

(Happy with each other's company, they leave the room).

SCENE 4

(The Committee Room at The Bat and Ball Public House, Broadhalfpenny Down. The Hambledon Cricket Club are meeting. SARAH SMALL is taking the minutes. WILLIAM BURT, MOULD, JOHN SMALL, NOAH BURT, GEORGE PETERS and HARRY BENTLEY are there).

W. Burt: *(at the table)* Well, in the absence of the Chairman, we'd better get going gentlemen. It's a long way back down the hill to Hambledon and we don't want to be too late back with the big game tomorrow. What's first?

Sarah: Apologies for absence.

W. Burt: Oh yes. Well . . . worst news first, I suppose. Does everyone know we've lost John Wilson?

Peters: Lost him?

Mould: Not ill is he? Never known John ill before a cricket match.

W. Burt: You haven't heard?

Small: He was pressed yesterday in Portsmouth.

Peters: Never!

W. Burt: Him and three others were drinking in the King's Head. The swines slipped the King's coin into his tankard and there you go - 'in the pay of the King'.

Mould: The devils. There'll be no-one left on dry land soon, man nor boy.

Bentley: I don't think Admiral Nelson likes cricket - stealing away John Wilson and little Ellwood both in a week.

Mould: Well certainly it's been the ruining of Hambledon Cricket Club and whatever people says, that's England's loss.

W. Burt: Still, this isn't going to help us beat Droxford tomorrow, so let's be getting on.

(At which point SIR PETER BLACKFORD arrives with DOMINIC. He's in a black mood).

Sir Peter: The best man in Hampshire at turning short hits into account and we've lost him. It's all getting too much. Good evening gentlemen.

All: Evening, Squire.

Sir Peter: Sorry we're delayed. It's been a long and difficult day.

W. Burt: You've heard about John Wilson, then?

Sir Peter: Those cursed Froggies are out solely to ruin cricket you know, I'm convinced of it. You know we were taking a team out there in eighty-nine to teach them the blessed game? The trip was all fixed up and what happens? They organise their damned revolution - solely to ruin the tour, I'm convinced of it. Mould, I'll have a tankard of your best if I may. Oh, and one for my son here. You all know Dominic, I take it?

Noah: Maybe we should have Sir Francis Drake on Hambledon's team.

Bentley: Sir Francis Drake?

Noah: *(laughing)* He were a good naval bowler, weren't he? *(General laughter).*

Sir Peter: Well done, lad. Well done. *(To BURT)* Who's that?

W. Burt: That's my boy, Noah, Squire. Here's tomorrow's team, Sarah.

(SARAH hands SIR PETER the list).

Sarah: There we are, Sir Peter, such as it is.

Sir Peter: Hmm. Bit short of batting. Dominic, you'll have to prove yourself. He's scored a few runs for Winchester this year.

Peters: Let's hope he's as accurate with the bat as with the barrel, Sir Peter. *(An awkward silence).*

Sir Peter: Dominic, you know George Peters, do you? The blacksmith?

Dominic: He was trespassing, Mr. Peters.

Peters: What ever you say.

Sir Peter: Anyway, the boy's all right, George. It was only a slight wound. He'll

be able to pull his weight at the Forge - and I know for a fact that he can catch as well with one hand as he can with two.

Small: How many boys in the side are there?

W. Burt: Three or four here - about the same as Droxford.

Small: Fair enough.

Sir Peter: John Small! Good to see you. Can you play?

Small: Just this once, Squire. She's given permission.

Sarah: Oh, go on with you, John. I don't lock him up, Squire.

Small: Well, not often you don't!

Sir Peter: Well, you'll put the fear of God into Droxford - oh, not you, Mrs. Small; your husband. The great John Small back in action. Splendid. So - (*he reads*) Burt, Small, Peters, Mould, Dominic, Young Rowlands, Jack Fielding, Daniel Grazier, Harry Bentley and one sad gap left by poor Wilson.

W. Burt: Well, that's why Noah's here, Squire.

Sir Peter: Noah? Noah who? Sounds like another damned sailor!

Noah: Noah Burt, Sir.

W. Burt: My eldest. Works in your gardens.

Sir Peter: Ah, splendid. Good at cricket are you lad?

Noah: (*grinning*) No, Squire.

W. Burt: Oh, he'll stop a good square cut as well as the best.

Noah: I sings good, Squire.

Sir Peter: Sing, can you? Good. Well, that's very useful.

Noah: Assist All Ye Muses I knows best, Hambledon Cricket Song.

W. Burt: Learnt it in his cradle and sings it like a nightingale.

Sir Peter: Good lad, Noah. We'll hear it tomorrow.

(*But NOAH is off, oblivious. The rest soon join in.*)

MUSIC 6 - HAMBLEDON CRICKET SONG

Noah: *Assist all ye muses and join to rehearse
An old English sport never praised yet in verse.
'Tis cricket I sing, of illustrious fame.
No nation e'er boasted so noble a game.*

All: *Derry down down, down derry down.*

Solo: *What boasting of Castor and Pollux his brother?
The one famed for riding, for boxing the other.
Compared with our heroes, they'll not shine at all.
What were Castor and Pollux to Nyren and Small?*

All: *Derry down down, down derry down.*

All: *Then fill up your glass. He's the best that drinks most.
Here's the Hambledon club - who refuses the toast?
Let's join in the praise of the bat and the wicket
And sing in full chorus the patrons of cricket.
Derry down down, down derry down.*

Solo: *When we've played our last game and our fate shall draw nigh,
(For the heroes of cricket, like others must die),
Our bats we'll resign, neither troubled nor vexed,
And give up our wickets to those that come next.*

All: *Derry down down, down derry down.*

SCENE 5

(The scene changes to the woodland beside the cricket ground).

(TOM, his arm bandaged, is bouncing a cricket ball on his bat while singing quietly to himself. He doesn't notice JACK FIELDING creeping up on him).

Tom: *(singing)* *Derry down down, down derry down . . .*

Jack: *(seizing him)* Aha! pressed for service in the King's Navy and don't resist.

Tom: Ow! Let go my arm. Ooh, that hurt, Jack.

Jack: Sorry, I forgot you'd been shot. How did you know it was me?

Tom: I smelt you.

Jack: I don't smell. This is me clean shirt.

Tom: Right - and it's for cricket, not for rushing around playing silly games; and anyway I can do without any more nasty shocks with people creeping up behind me, thanks. I didn't sleep a wink last night.

Jack: I'm not surprised. I thought he'd killed you.

Tom: Is that why you didn't bother to come back and help me?

(A slightly awkward pause, interrupted by the arrival of ADAM who has just been 'captured' by DANIEL. NELLIE, JENNY and SALLY are in tow).

Adam: Get off, Dan. Get off.

Daniel: Ahaargh! Here's one, captain. A bit of a feeble spratt but he'll make good cannon fodder.

Jack: Ah, well done able seaman. A volunteer?

(None of them have noticed DOMINIC, RALPH and TIMOTHY appear).

Dominic: Quite why we're fielding cripples like Rowlands, I can't imagine.

Tim: Well, we don't want to win too easily. It wouldn't be cricket.

Ralph: Rowlands is our handicap. *(The GIRLS appear).*

Tim: Ah, there's Miss Elliot, Ralph, with Dominic's delicious sister.

Ralph: Come on, men.

Dominic: (*face to face with TOM*) If you drop a catch with that arm of yours and use it as an excuse, Rowlands, I'll make damned sure the other one goes the same way. Ah, my dear Miss Elliot, allow me to escort you to the field of play.

(*As he approaches her, the scene changes instantly to The Cricket Field, at which point all the local children and adults arrive where they are received by The Gentry. At the same time they all sing:-*)

MUSIC 7 - THE SKYLARK SWEETLY SINGING

Locals: *One day a cheerful country boy
Was a-poaching by the Hamble,
When lo a maiden fair and coy,
Into his path did ramble.
And as he gladly did her will,
They heard a sound so musically trill,
And he showed her all his poaching skill
With the Skylark sweetly singing.*

Gentry: *A noble Prince came riding by,
All full of grace and favour.
A sad young Princess caught his eye
And he resolved to save her.
He kissed her cheek, he calmed her fears,
He gently wiped away her tears,
And a sound came softly to their ears,*

All: *'Twas the Skylark sweetly singing.*

All: *Now all you lovers take good cheer
While wedding bells are ringing,
For every doe must have her deer
While the Skylark still is singing.
The Prince will have his Princess still,
He always has and we pray he always will,
For every Jack must have his Jill,
While the Skylark still is sweetly singing.*

SCENE 6

(There is a burst of applause and cheering. The team are encouraging JOHN SMALL and NOAH BURT who are batting, out of our sight. SARAH SMALL is scoring).

MUSIC 8 - HAMBLEDON CRICKET SONG [Reprise]
[Instrumental - under dialogue]

(Cries of 'Well struck, John. Tich and turn. Tich and turn.')

Sir Peter: *(in the thick of it)* How many is that now, Mrs. Small?

Sarah: One hundred and twenty seven, Sir Peter.

Sir Peter: And one ball to go. *(Shouts)* One ball to go, John.

W. Burt: On your toes, Noah.

(All watch. There is a great cheer as JOHN SMALL evidently wallops the ball).

Sir Peter: Good hit, John. Go hard. Go hard. *(Applause)*. Well done. Three more notches there, Mrs. Small. One hundred and thirty altogether. Well done Hambledon.

(JOHN SMALL and NOAH appear with their cricket bats. The team group up and all sing).

All: *Then fill up your glass. He's the best that drinks most.
Here's the Hambledon club. Who refuses the toast?
Let's join in the praise of the bat and the wicket,
And sing in full chorus the patrons of cricket.
Derry down down, down derry down.*

(More applause as the spectators disperse. SIR PETER addresses the team as BETSY and SARAH arrive with trays of beer).

Sir Peter: Well done, my boys. One hundred and thirty should be enough.

Sarah: Here we are lads. Well batted my John.

All: Hear, hear.

Sir Peter: Well done, ladies. A spot of lubrication. Good for the old vocal chords. Good health. Now then, what's it to be?

Bentley: You give us a verse or two of Charlie Sayer, Squire. *(All agree. To NOAH)* Makes me laugh when I sees him sing. *(NOAH roars with laughter).*

W. Burt: Noah. Shut up.

Noah: *(instantly)* Right.

W. Burt: Sorry Squire. Off you go.

MUSIC 9 - GLEE: CHARLIE SAYER

Sir Peter & team: *Charlie Sayer, quite a player,
Was a-walking one day,
When Miss Nancy, Charlie's fancy,
Came a-strolling in his way.
She was wealthy, he was stealthy.
He was under her spell.
But when he asked her if she'd marry him,
She bade him farewell.*

*Charlie Sayer, quite a player,
Was a-cricketing one day,
When Miss Nancy, still his fancy,
Was a-passing that way.
He was batting like a champion,
Hit the ball half a mile.
As it passed pretty Nancy Dawson,
She looked up and smiled.*

*Neither tarried, they were married
One Sunday in June.
'Twas a fair day, 'twas a rare day
When the choir sang in tune.
Now he pitches while she stitches:
Together they dream
Of playing out their days in Hambledon,
With two in their team.*

(The team and the audience which has gathered applaud. SIR PETER then assembles the team and addresses them).

Sir Peter: Right now, down to business. We've got to get George Minchin out as soon as possible, so, as long as we catch and throw like demons and pitch good and straight, we'll have the beating of them. Now here are the field placings: William Burt, wicket-keeper and captain on the field. Listen to him out there, boys, he knows what he's doing. Jack Fielding, point of the bat. Stay well up on this pitch for the slow bowling and about seven paces back and behind the popping crease for the fast. Yes?

Jack: Yes, Sir Peter.

Sir Peter: Daniel Grazier, long field, straight off - save the two runs - and Abel

Small, long field, straight on - same applies. Long field to the hip, John Small of course. Short slip, Noah here; well batted Noah. Long slip, Harry Bentley and Mouldy at middle wicket. Dominic, you take the long field and keep awake; and, in the helmsman's position, Tom Rowlands at long-stop. Sorry you didn't get an innings my boy, but you can earn your Hambledon velvet-cap in the field. How's the arm?

Tom: Fine, Sir Peter.

Sir Peter: Good. Now watch out for that devil Minchin. He's the best short runner left. Oh, you'll be glad to hear the Umpires have fifty guineas apiece on us to win. Must be a good sign! Off you go, boys, and good luck.

(The players disperse on to the field. FANNY BLACKFORD and the girls are hovering. DOMINIC is preparing to take the field).

Elizabeth: Don't drop any catches, Dominic.

Dominic: Don't you worry, Miss Elliot. Just keep your eyes on me.

Mary: *(straightening TOM's outfit)* Good luck, Tom. Do your best.

Tom: Thanks, Mother.

Betsy: *(who is with them)* Good luck Master Tom.

(TOM grins, turns and runs straight into DOMINIC, winding him).

Dominic: Look out will you? *(He sees who it is).* Oh, it's you.

Tom: Sorry, Master Dominic.

Dominic: Clumsy little oaf. Why don't you . . .

Mary: *(who's watching)* Dominic! Off you go, Tom. Good luck.

(DOMINIC bites his lip. The GIRLS giggle).

Fanny: Team spirit, Dominic, team spirit.

Dominic: Oh shut up.

Jackson: Blackford, the bully of the fifth. *(DOMINIC grimaces).*

Elizabeth: *(laughing)* Oh what a funny face. Do look at him, Emma.

Emma: *(bored)* I see very little that's funny.

W. Burt: *(shouting from the field)* Master Blackford! On the field please.

Spicer: Oh, get on with it, Blackford.

Dominic: Oh, damnation. *(He runs off, furious).*

MUSIC 10 - MUSIC UNDER CRICKET MATCH [on tape]

Sir Peter: *(appearing with LADY AMELIA)* Go on, boy, run. Now then girls, Fanny, Catherine, a stroll around the ground with your Mother.

Fanny: Oh must we, Papa?

Lady Amelia: Fanny!

Sir Peter: You'll do as you're told, girl.

Lady Amelia: It's your social duty.

Catherine: And it's good that we're seen talking to the villagers every now and then.

(There is applause from the field).

Elizabeth: Oh look, Dominic has stopped the ball.

Sir Peter: Well done. Well thrown, Dominic.

(There is a groan from the field).

Jackson: Oh dear. Overthrows.

Spicer: Typical Wykhamist.

Jackson: Well I'm sure Eton are no better.

Emma: *(still bored)* Ennui, ennui, ennui . . . *(and they stroll off).*

Lady Amelia: *(with her daughters)* How are you Mrs Small? Everything tallying up?

Sarah: Oh yes, my Lady. Right as rain.

Lady Amelia: Good, good. I do admire a woman who can understand cricket. The whole thing quite defeats me.

Catherine: *(condescendingly)* She can read and write too. Well done Mrs Small.

Lady Amelia: Come along, Catherine. *(They stroll off past MARY, who is sewing, and BETSY, who is sitting with her).* Not too much chatting, Betsy.

Mary: Look at them, condescending to talk to the natives. "We must go and talk to the villagers". But they don't take into account whether the villagers want to talk to them.

Betsy: Oh, I think it's nice that they do. It's nice that they lay on a day like today. There aren't many squires round here who lay on cricket matches with all the free tea and beer and things for the village.

Mary: Yes, but don't be too taken in by it all. I'm not saying it isn't kind of Sir Peter, but there are other motives. They aren't always quite as exemplary as they appear, the gentry.

Betsy: They aren't as what?

Mary: Exemplary. Perfect and blameless.

Betsy: Well I've got a lot to thank Sir Peter for, I can tell you.

Mary: *(with a touch of bitterness)* Yes, we all have.

Betsy: Oh and you, of course. I've got lots to thank you for, too. Otherwise I could still be in Petersfield Workhouse instead of working at the Manor.

Mary: I'm pleased that you're happy there.

Betsy: I wish you was still up there, though. Why did you leave?

Mary: Ah, well, Tom came along you see. It's all his fault. Well mostly his fault.

(There is another cheer from the field).

Sir Peter: Oh, well stopped, young Rowlands . . . *(and a gasp and more applause).* Well thrown! By George, what a fieldsman. Did you see that, Mary? He's a fine boy is young Tom. A wonderful run out. *(CAPTAIN BLACKFORD appears ready for travelling. SIR PETER sees him).* Ah, Anthony. Come to

support the village? We've got five of the devils out.

Captain: No, I must be off, Peter. We're sailing the day after tomorrow so I really must get to Portsmouth. If you'd thank Amelia for me, I'll just slip off.

Sir Peter: We'll bring Dominic down tomorrow. He's like a peacock in his uniform. The girls adore it.

Captain: I'll meet you outside The George; two o'clock.

Sir Peter: The George?

Captain: The recruiting rendezvous. Clearly signed.

Sir Peter: 'Recruiting rendezvous', eh? That's a respectable name for the haunt of The Press Gang, I suppose.

Captain: Oh, Peter, let's not get back on to that hobby horse again. I'll see you tomorrow. *(He turns to go).*

Sir Peter: Anthony. *(He stops).* I'm a Member of Parliament. I have a public duty to perform and, even if my brother were First Lord of the Admiralty, I wouldn't shirk from doing it. No more, I am sure, than you would shirk from doing your duty at sea. I shall be speaking on the subject in the House next week.

Captain: *(after a thoughtful pause)* I'll see you tomorrow. *(He turns and starts to move off when there is a huge groan from the field).*

Sir Peter: Oh get down, Dominic, you ass. Oh, what I'd give to be rid of this blasted gout and get out there myself. That's it. Now wake up, boy. Wake up for heaven's sake.

(He moves to the rail. The CAPTAIN turns to see MARY and BETSY).

Mary: You off then, Captain Blackford?

Captain: Mrs Rowlands! I didn't see you sitting down there.

Mary: It's best to keep in the background, I've found.

Captain: Oh, there's no need for that I'm sure. How is er . . .

Mary: Tom? Fine. As you said yourself there wasn't too much damage - only to his pride. But of course that's of no consequence to a village boy.

Captain: Oh, come now, Mrs Rowlands, you're being provocative. All human beings deserve respect; high-born or low-born; adult or child; squire or villager . . .

Mary: Captain or Cabin boy?

Captain: Indeed, Captain or cabin boy . . . Well, I must be on my way. If you'll excuse me, ladies.

Betsy: Back to sea, is it, Captain Blackford?

Captain: Back to sea, Miss Betsy, and perhaps to war. Time will tell. Good day to you both. *(He leaves as there is applause on the field).*

Sir Peter: Well bowled, George. What's that, Mrs Small, eight or nine?

Sarah: Nine down Sir Peter - and they only got eighty two.

Sir Peter: But George Minchin's still there.

(The GIRLS have re-entered).

Elizabeth: Is that Captain Blackford over there?

Fanny: He's leaving!

Catherine: And he didn't even say goodbye.

Emma: Perhaps cricket bores him too.

Fanny: Still, we'll be seeing him again tomorrow when we go to Portsmouth for Dominic to join his ship.

(There is a gasp from the field. All heads look up as the ball sails up into the air).

Sir Peter: What a shot! Look out, girls, it's coming this way.

(They all back back as TOM appears, getting into position under the now descending ball. He pulls off a brilliant one handed catch).

Sir Peter: *(after a stunned silence)* A catch. He's caught George Minchin!

Mary: *(delighted)* Well done, Tom.

Sir Peter: And well done Hambledon. We've won!

(Terrific applause and congratulations for TOM. The band strike up with:-)

MUSIC 11 - TOM BOWLING

(The players parade in and pose, one by one, in a tableau. TOM is last. SIR PETER shakes him by the hand and presents him with the cricket ball. The music finishes and the team disperse. DOMINIC passes TOM, sneering, and moves to the pavilion. TOM is left on stage alone with BETSY).

Betsy: Well done, Tom.

Tom: I feel like one of them Olympian heroes getting his laurel wreath.

Betsy: Everyone's talking about you.

Tom: They'll soon find something more interesting.

Betsy: No, you're the hero of the day. There's a picnic tomorrow. We got a whole afternoon off. Master's going to Portsmouth. You coming?

Tom: I can't. I'm going to Portsmouth too tomorrow. George and I got to take the cart to the dock-yard. We got a lot of chandlery, chains, pots and pans and things we've been making for the boats. They're sailing Monday so we got to go tomorrow.

Betsy: Oh.

Tom: Back at sunset.

Betsy: Oh.

Tom: See you Monday then.

Betsy: See you Monday.

(He's wandering off when DOMINIC emerges from the pavilion).

Dominic: Oh, well caught Rowlands. Quite a little hero aren't we? *(TOM bites his*

lip and is silent. BETSY watches). Pardon? . . . You spoke? . . . I said “well-caught”.

Tom: Well I wouldn't try and drop it, would I?

(SIR PETER and MARY have simultaneously appeared. They watch).

Dominic: We've been catching a lot of things recently, haven't we? What's next, I wonder? The Pox?

Tom: You filthy bastard . . . *(TOM, who is holding a cricket bat, grips it nervously and angrily).*

Dominic: Go on, hit me. Just you try . . .

Sir Peter & Mary: *(simultaneously)* Dominic!

Sir Peter: Damnation, I'll have you remember your good breeding, Sir. I'm damned if I know what's got into you recently, but by God, I shall be glad to see the back of you tomorrow.

Dominic: Yes, father.

Mary: Why he can't leave an innocent boy alone. Tom . . .

(She moves to embrace TOM, but he rushes off. DOMINIC turns and leaves. SIR PETER approaches MARY).

Sir Peter: Mary, we must talk. . .

Mary: *(looking at Betsy who is still watching)* No, Sir Peter. We can't talk now.

Sir Peter: *(sees BETSY)* Damnation. *(He leaves. MARY is clearly upset).*

MUSIC 12 - HEAR ME SING OF A MAID

Betsy: What ever's happening, Mary? What was all that?

Mary: Nothing. Tom will be all right. Don't you worry.

Betsy: Tom? But I don't understand. . .

Mary: *Hear me sing of a maid from a time long ago.
'Tis a tale full of sadness: a tale of woe.
She was wooed by a knight when her world was full of springtime,
But she found she had entered a world unknown:
For she soon was to learn he'd a heart that was cruel.
'Twas a heart full of darkness. A heart of stone.*

Betsy: *Why sing of a time long ago?
Why sing of fear and woe?
We should sing of Joy today.
Sing and laugh while we may.
For I know you've a heart that is full of joy,
Lightness and love that is yours alone.*

Mary: *For she soon was to learn he'd a heart that was cruel.
'Twas a heart full of darkness. A heart of stone.
The poor maid was abandoned, deceived and betrayed.
All alone she would weep. All alone she prayed
'Til her child on her smiled and her weeping turned to laughter,
And he grew straight and true as her joy and her pride.
And today, come what may, though the past be not forgotten
All her joy is her boy standing by her side.*

(For a brief moment, the two of them are silent on the stage. The music changes).

MUSIC 13 - THE TRAVELLING SONG (SWANSEA TOWN)

(TOM appears pulling the cart. GEORGE PETERS follows with his baggage which he puts on the cart. The local children appear carrying boxes of goods which they load on the cart).

(They sing as TOM and GEORGE set off:-)

Children: *Come along with a song on the road to Portsmouth.
To the breeze of the seas, take the road to Portsmouth.
Come along with a song on the road to Portsmouth.
To the breeze of the seas, take the road to Portsmouth.
To Portsmouth, to Portsmouth, to Portsmouth, to Portsmouth.*

(TOM, GEORGE and the cart have gone. The BLACKFORD FAMILY appear in their coach and four. They travel across the stage, singing:-)

Blackfords: *Gather speed as we leave on the road to Portsmouth.
Come and ride with the tide on the road to Portsmouth.
Gather speed as we leave on the road to Portsmouth.
Come and ride with the tide on the road to Portsmouth.
To Portsmouth, to Portsmouth, to Portsmouth, to Portsmouth.*

(The coach disappears. TOM and the cart re-appear, still travelling, with BETSY following at a distance. The children appear in tableau. The scene changes to Portsmouth).

Betsy: *Follow on with a song on the road to Portsmouth.
Giving chase in the race on the road to Portsmouth.
Follow on with a song on the road to Portsmouth.
Giving chase in the race on the road to Portsmouth.
To Portsmouth, to Portsmouth, to Portsmouth, to Portsmouth.*

All: *Oh now the journey's over, fair Portsmouth town's in view.
To all who sail upon the sea, fair Portsmouth welcomes you
Fair Portsmouth welcomes you, fine boys:
Go fight for England fair.
We trust that you'll return again.
May heaven here our prayer.*

SCENE 7

(The PRESS GANG appear. We are outside The George, the recruitment rendezvous).

MUSIC 14 - THE PRESS GANG SONG

Press Gang: *Come all you fellows who cherish your country.
Come prove yourselves braver than clergy or gentry.
For the honour and the glory adventure lies before ye
Be a bold man, be a King's man, seek your fortune in the Navy.*

(The PRESS GANG, led by LIEUTENANT MATTHEWS, have set up their table decorated with recruiting posters. GUNNER WILLIAMS is keeping the book. The rest of the sailors have cudgels. They see a seaman, with his luggage, leaving The George. He stops in fear when he sees the Press Gang).

Seaman 1: There's one, Sir.

Matthews: Where?

Seaman 2: Over there.

Matthews: Take him.

Man: *(tries to escape)* No! *(But he is easily caught. The rabble who are watching cheer and laugh. Street urchins rifle through his luggage etc.).*

Seaman 1: Hold there, Sir.

Matthews: And where might you be going, Sir?

Man: Home. I'm going home.

Matthews: A seaman, Sir?

Man: I've a protection here - look - from the master of The Mary Louise, merchantman, just in from Africa.

Seaman 2: A seaman, Sir.

(MATTHEWS takes the proffered paper and looks callously at it).

Man: Look, I haven't seen my wife and son for eight months. I'm going home. That's my ticket of leave . . . *(He trails to silence when he sees MATTHEWS tearing it up).*

Williams: Take him.

Man: (*weeping*) No! You can't. My Liberty Ticket . . . please . . .

Matthews: (*yelling as he is dragged off*) We sail in the morning.

All:
*Come all you young fellows who cherish your country.
Come prove yourselves braver than clergy and or gentry.
For the honour and the glory, adventure lies before ye
Be a bold man, be a King's man, seek your fortune in the Navy.*

(*Another man hurtles out of the pub, closely followed by a pewter tankard. His wife follows him, screaming*).

Wife: What kind of a husband is one who spends all night whoring in some backstreet brothel while his wife and five children starve to death at home?

Husband: Oh, shut your caterwauling, woman, and get back home where you belong.

(*The rabble enjoy this*).

Wife: . . . and the Bailiff has men out looking for you. They've already taken every stick of furniture . . .

Husband: Just run away and take your clacking tongue with you, you witch.

Wife: You'll hang for this.

(*He turns and comes face to face with the PRESS GANG and the smiling face of LIEUTENANT MATTHEWS*).

Matthews: Better to swing in a hammock than on the gallows.

Husband: (*after a pause*) When do you sail?

Williams: Six bells tomorrow, Monday.

Matthews: And there's five guineas in the King's coin for all who volunteer.

Wife: Five bloody guineas for that rotten heap of . . .

Husband: (*swinging at her*) Shut your noise. (*He turns to the GUNNER*). Where do I sign? (*He signs as his wife protests and is bundled off*).

All:
*Come all you young fellows who cherish your country.
Come prove yourselves braver than clergy and or gentry.
For the honour and the glory, adventure lies before ye
Be a bold man, be a King's man, seek your fortune in the Navy.*

Matthews: (*addressing the rabble*) Now hear me all you stout lads and boys who incline to go on board His Majesty's ship, The Ajax, as servants, with a view to learn the duty of a seaman, shall be handsomely clothed and provided for...

(*But he grinds to a halt when he sees that all the men and boys have drifted off leaving only a few ragged girls*).

Williams: You'll never make a fairground barker, Lieutenant.

Matthews: And we don't make much of a Press Gang, Mr. Williams. What have

we caught today? Four men, two of them halfwits and a crippled boy who volunteered. (*CAPTAIN BLACKFORD, in uniform and on business, appears*). Good day, Captain.

Captain: (*brusquely*) Well, Lieutenant, have you earned your promotion? (*He takes the recruitment book and looks at it*).

Matthews: I'm afraid we've seen very little here at The George, Captain . . .

Captain: Four seamen and a boy? Is that all you can find?

Matthews: It's all we've seen, Captain, apart from old men and urchins.

Captain: And why are they not on the list?

Matthews: Well, they hardly. . .

Captain: If it can walk and see, it'll do, man. To hell with age.

Matthews: But the law states that we . . .

Captain: And to hell with the law, Lieutenant. In wartime the only law is that of necessity. I need six more men and four more boys and I don't care where they come from. If they don't volunteer immediately, seize them and enter. Those are my orders. Your duty, Sir, is to carry them out. Carry on, Lieutenant.

Matthews: (*through his teeth*) Aye, aye, Sir. Follow me, gentlemen . . .

(*And he moves off, followed by the rest of the men with the equipment. As they leave, SIR PETER BLACKFORD appears with the rest of the family. DOMINIC is in full uniform, carrying his baggage*).

Sir Peter: Ah, Anthony, here we are, smack on time, all shipshape and ready to go. And here's Dominic, trussed up like a peacock and all set for action.

Captain: Very good.

Lady Amelia: Well, what do we do now, Anthony?

Catherine: Can we meet some officers, Uncle?

Captain: Well, perhaps, when we go on board.

Fanny: We can go on board? . . .

Captain: Well Dominic has to meet the Purser to sign his forms and receive the first part of his commission.

Catherine: What's a commission?

Dominic: Pay, Catherine, dear.

Fanny: They pay you? Oh, Dominic!

Dominic: Well, it's better than working.

(*A nasty silence*).

Sir Peter: I don't think that was quite as witty as you perhaps think it was, Dominic.

Captain: I can assure you it wasn't.

Catherine: Which is Dominic's boat, Uncle? Is it that big one?

Captain: No, Catherine, that's the Victory, Admiral Nelson's flagship. Ours is next

to her, there, the Ajax, and we should be getting on . . .

Sir Peter: Indeed, we should be off, too. I want to get back to Hambledon before sunset.

Captain: Say your farewells, young man.

Dominic: Goodbye, Mother.

Lady Amelia: And you will write, won't you?

(DOMINIC is too embarrassed to reply).

Fanny: *(embracing him)* Bye, bye. Do come back safely.

Catherine: And kill lots of Frenchmen.

Sir Peter: *(shaking him by the hand)* Good luck, my boy. And remember, Boney and his Froggie army are very much different from George Minchin and the Droxford team. Just keep awake this time!

Dominic: Yes, father. Goodbye.

(LIEUTENANT MATTHEWS marches on).

Matthews: Band ready, Sir.

Captain: Carry on, Lieutenant.

Matthews: Aye, aye, Sir.

MUSIC 15 - HEART OF OAK

(The populace appear and sing, patriotically).

All: *Come cheer up my lads, 'tis to glory we steer,
To add something more to this wonderful year.
To honour we call you, not press you like slaves.
For who are so free as the sons of the waves?
Heart of oak are our ships. Heart of oak are our men.
We are always ready. Steady, boys, steady.
We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again.*

(The final farewells are taken as the PRESS GANG move forward and sing).

Press Gang: *Come cheer up, my lads, raise your voice to the King.
Of scurvy and scabies and pox do we sing.
Oh the taste of the weevil, the sting of the cat,
The bite of the chain and the teeth of the rat.
Food for guns are our boys, fit for death are our men
For cannon and powder, louder, sing louder.
For Nelson and England you die to defend.*

(During the last song, BETSY has appeared, alone. She is left alone on the stage as the people and the PRESS GANG leave. She sees someone coming and hides.

GEORGE PETERS enters, followed by TOM who is pulling the cart).

George: Come on. Tom, mercy's sake, stop gawping, can't you? You look like someone from the madhouse.

Tom: 'Tis a big place this, George.

George: (*spotting the pub sign*) Here, you stay here a moment. I have to meet them in here, The George. I'll bring you a glass.

(*He goes in leaving TOM. TOM is looking round wide-eyed at the ships. He doesn't notice two street-arabs, DONKIN and PILCH, appear. They see the cart and go and sit on it. TOM eventually turns and sees them.*)

Donkin: Nice cart.

Tom: (*staring*) What?

Pilch: Nick it, did ya?

Tom: What?

Donkin: Sounds like a ruddy jackdaw, don't he? Wha . . . wha . . . wha!

Tom: (*nervously*) What do you want?

Donkin: Nuthink.

Pilch: Anything we can find. What you got?

Tom: I haven't got anything for you . . .

Donkin: (*picking up a bag from the cart*) Hello! What about this? . . .

Tom: (*going for it*) Hey, get off.

(*There is a scuffle and a lot of shouting. The cart is tipped over. They none of them see the PRESS GANG arrive. Eventually they spot them and freeze.*)

Matthews: Mr Williams.

Williams: Ah, what have we here?

Seaman 1: Young seamen, I think. Volunteers, too.

Tom: It wasn't me, Sir. It was them . . .

Matthews: Take them. Take them all . . .

(*They make a run for it but are easily caught. As TOM is seized, BETSY half comes forward to help, but keeps away in the end. TOM is the last to be dragged off.*)

(*BETSY is left standing, forlornly.*)

MUSIC 16 - NOW FATE HAS OVERTAKEN YOU

Betsy: *Now fate has overtaken you:
Mother Fortune forsaken you,
Where'er they may direct you,
My prayers will protect you.
Though fortune may abandon you,
I know she'll reach a helping hand to you.*

*I'll find a way to stay beside you,
Whatever may betide you.
Though fate has abandoned you. . .
Whatever fortune may have planned for you
I promise I shall pray for you.
Yes I swear I shall stay by you. . .*

GEORGE appears from The George. He has two mugs in his hand. He stops when he sees the abandoned cart. Realising what has happened he rushes off calling desperately for TOM.

*Though fate has overtaken you:
Mother Fortune forsaken you:
Where'er she may direct you,
I pray my prayers protect you.*

The lights fade to blackness.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1

MUSIC 17 - TOLL FOR THE BRAVE and YAW YAW YAW

(The Quarterdeck. Darkness, then the lights come up first on the drummer boys, then on the draped body of a dead seaman, then on the stage by degrees. The Ship's Company is in attendance).

Captain: *(reciting a prayer)* We therefore commit his body to the deep to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body when the sea shall give up her dead and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who at his coming shall change our vile body that it may be like His glorious body according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things to himself. Amen.

Men & boys: Amen.

(The body is released over the side and disappears with a muffled splash. The music grows and concludes).

Captain: Thank you, Mr Matthews. Return the men to their duties.

Matthews: Aye, aye, Sir. Ship's Company will return to duties. At the double . . . dismiss.

(The music continues. The chattering of the clarinets being echoed by the Powder Monkeys. Ropes are stowed, cannons moved).

Captain: Hard to larboard Mr Matthews.

Matthews: *(shouts)* Hard to larboard.

Captain: Steady as she goes.

Men:
Away haul away.
We'll haul away together.
Away haul away.
Haul away Joe.

(The men disperse. The boys remain, as they sing and fool about. MIDSHIPMEN BLACKFORD, SPICER and JACKSON appear and start playing cards on the upper deck).

Donkin: *Mein vater vos ein Dutchman,*

Chorus: *Mit mein yaw yaw yaw.*

Donkin: *Mein vater vos ein Dutchman,*

Chorus: *Mit mein yaw yaw yaw.*

Donkin: *Mein vater vos ein Dutchman*

And mein mutter vos ein Prussian.

Chorus: *Mit mein yaw yaw yaw.*
Solo: *Und I spoke ein hotch potch lingo,*
Chorus: *Mit mein yaw yaw yaw*
Solo: *Und I spoke ein hotch potch lingo,*
Chorus: *Mit mein yaw yaw yaw,*
Solo: *Und I spoke ein hotch potch lingo*
Gott for domney und by yingo
Chorus: *Mit mein yaw yaw yaw.*
Solo: *Oh ven I was a sailor*
Chorus: *Mit mein yaw yaw yaw*
Oh ven I was ein sailor,
Mit mein yaw yaw yaw
We drink up all der whiskey
Und it make us feel damn frisky. . .

Pilch: (*interrupting*) Hey, who was that, anyway?

Donkin: Who was what?

Pilch: Who was that they shoved over the side just now? Who was it?

Charlie: Who cares? Could be you next week.

Tom: It was that boy from Bristol, wasn't it? That's four in the last five days.

Pilch: No. He's still limping around here somewhere.

Johnson: It was one of them. (*He means the MIDSHIPMEN*). They usually have four playing cards.

Newman: Yeah, it was Midshipman Harrison. Nice fellow.

Pilch: Pity it couldn't have been Blackford.

Donkin: They'd never have wasted an 'ammock on him!

Charlie: (*simply*) I'm hungry.

Pilch: You're stupid.

Charlie: I can't eat them ship's biscuits. Me teeth keeps falling out. I'm running out of cogs.

Pleggit: Hey, I had some fresh meat this morning.

Charlie: (*disbelieving*) Where?

Pleggit: Big fat maggot - and one little one.

Pilch: The white ones are best.

Charlie: I feel sick.

(*There is an enormous sneeze off. BILL enters, carrying a bucket.*)

Pilch: Gawd bless you.

Bill: Makes me sneeze, that stuff.

Donkin: Gawd, what's that stink?

(*Everyone groans and wafts away BILL'S pong.*)

Bill: I thought I'd run away to sea to get away from pig mucking.

Donkin: Phew! You been swimming in the stuff?

Bill: Six ruddy pigs they got up there in the Forra'd hold. They got better quarters than we have - except that they live knee-deep in it.

Betsy: (*naively*) In what?

Bill: The old tatfer.

Charlie: Tatfer?

Bill: Yeah. Tatfer tit. . .
 (*They all work out the rhyming slang and laugh.*)

Charlie: (*laughing*) Tatfer tit! Good that.
 (*There is a sudden burst of violent arguing from the MIDSHIPMEN.*)

Dominic: Jackson, you swine. If you've been cheating . . .

Jackson: Always the good loser, weren't you, Blackford?

Spicer: Double or quits was the bargain, gentlemen. Pass the bottle . . . (*They play on.*)

Donkin: (*looking at them*) Can't think why they need to bring pigs on board. There's three perfectly good ones up there.

Pilch: Last ship I was on had a goat on board. I had to milk her for the officers.

Donkin: Yeah, bet you enjoyed that Pilch, getting your podgy little mitts around those . . .

Betsy: Keep it clean, Donkin.

Pilch: (*ignoring her*) Poor old Nanny. She got blown to bits in an action one day. Bits of goat all over the rafters.

Donkin: (*sings*) *Mit her udders on the sea-link . . .*

All: *Mit mein yaw yaw yaw.*
 (*The sound of Four Bells strikes as GUNNER WILLIAMS enters.*)

Williams: Right. Ship's boys to gunnery lessons. Look lively.

Bill: Gunnery lessons?

Williams: You heard. Gunnery lessons. There's a war on, you know.

Charlie: You can't teach me nuthink.

Williams: That I don't doubt, but orders is orders and Four Bells is gunnery lessons and if I'm caught not giving you bleeders bleeding gunnery lessons, then it's the cat for me and Mr Midshipman Blackford, your beloved Mr Midshipman Blackford what's in charge of you lot, will have your guts . . .

Donkin: Mr Midshipman Blackford, Gawd rot him, is up there playing Gin Rummy with the rest of his pock-faced prigs and I don't think he could give a powder monkeys what we're up to or not up to while he's on a winning streak.

Pilch: (*who has just picked WILLIAM'S pocket*) Plug, anyone? (*He holds up a plug of tobacco.*)

Charlie: Ooh, ta . . . (*CHARLIE goes to take it as WILLIAMS recognises it.*)

Williams: Hey, where d'you get that, you thieving rat? That's my baccy.

Pilch: *(with a grin)* There you are, Mr Williams. No charge!

(He gets a cheerful clip round the ear as WILLIAMS moves towards the barrel on which TOM is sitting. TOM moves away to make room for him to sit. He inadvertently leaves his cricket ball behind).

Pleggit: He's the best pickpocket in the King's Navee is Pilch.

Bill: He's been at it for twenty-three years.

(Laughter as WILLIAMS sits - then jumps up again).

Williams: Hey! What's this? . . . *(He holds up the cricket ball).*

Tom: *(alarmed)* That's my cricket ball.

Williams: Cricket ball? Not much good here, son. Cannon-balls, yes. Cricket balls - no. *(He tosses it to TOM who catches it deftly. None of them have noticed the arrival of LIEUTENANT MATTHEWS).*

Matthews: Mr Williams, is this the way to conduct a lesson in gunnery? Which is the Midshipman of the day?

Pilch: Mr Blackford, Sir.

Donkin: He's up there.

(MATTHEWS looks up at the card school. A pause).

Matthews: Proceed with your lesson, Mr Williams.

Williams: Aye, aye, Sir.

Matthews: *(calling up)* Mr Blackford. A word . . .

Dominic: *(playing)* A six and a four to follow.

Matthews: *(shouting)* Mr Blackford!

Dominic: Don't bloody interrupt. How many more times . . .

Matthews: *(yelling)* Mr Blackford! A word if you please . . .

(He storms out. DOMINIC throws down his cards and moves down amongst the boys. They all look at him silently).

Dominic: *(angrily)* Shouldn't you be having a gunnery lesson?

Donkin: Yes, Mr Blackford.

Pilch: We should.

Matthews: *(returning, screams)* Mr Blackford . . .

(DOMINIC, biting his lip, leaves. Eventually the boys can contain themselves no longer and burst out laughing. GUNNER WILLIAMS takes over).

Williams: Right now, as Lieutenant Matthews says, we'll get on with our gunnery lesson.

Donkin: Do we have to?

Williams: Now listen, you, use your common - if you've got any. You may not want to be here, but you are, like it or not, and you can't just get off and go home. Within a week it's more than likely you could be fighting for your King and country, and that would mean that you've a good fifty-fifty chance

of having your head blown off. Failing that, you'll be fighting to save your life - and mine for that matter - so shut your noise, lad, and listen. Right?

Donkin: *(suitably humbled)* Right.

Williams: Good, 'cos even though your mouth may be bigger than Mr Bonaparte's, I know which one speaks more sense. Here, hold this . . .

(While talking, he has been preparing for the lesson by getting things out of a wooden chest he brought in with him. He has taken out a cannon ball which he hands lightly to DONKIN. DONKIN takes it. It is four times heavier than he expects. He drops it - on his foot).

Donkin: Ow . . . *(He dances back to his seat and sits, humiliated).*

Williams: *(continuing - having made his point)* Now listen. As you've already discovered, there's no lack of work to do on this ship. When Mr Midshipman Blackford has finished with you above decks, you come into my little area down here below and when we're in action you are working for me and I am not so nice then, my dear little boys, as I am now. If we do see action, and if you believe in God, I should pray to Him that you never do, your job is to run the powder from the magazine two decks below up here to the gundeck. Gunpowder is dangerous stuff, so you have to be careful and nimble. Nimble as a monkey. Now then, I've got to tell you this so that it doesn't come as a surprise to you when it happens. We don't want you dying of shock before you die of fighting for the King, do we now? The worst thing is the blood. Slippery stuff. You have to be careful on your feet. You, laddie, have you ever had a nose bleed?

Bill: Yes, Sir.

Williams: Well, it's like an elephant's nose bleed down here once it gets started.

Pilch: Trunk-bleed! *(laughter).*

Williams: That's it, laddie, keep joking, only don't think you can use your big mouth to talk a cannon ball out of knocking your big head off. Blood is not a pretty thing, but you soon get used to it. It's the noise. . . *(He wallops his box with his stick, making everyone leap out of their skins)* . . . which is not a pretty sound - but you'll soon get used to that. What is difficult, my little children, is seeing the head blown off your best friend. That hurts. But there must, of course, be no helping the wounded while in battle. That is not your job.

Betsy: *(appalled)* You can't help a wounded man?

Williams: Your job is to fight, sir. There is no room for compassion in the heat of battle. Anyone seen deserting their post - and that includes helping a wounded man, whoever he is, even if it's your own brother - and the Midshipmen have orders to shoot them - and I've seen it done. *(There is a nasty pause).* Now then, when I joined up as a boy many years ago, HMS

Noah's Ark it was, we had a Gunner, Welsh bastard he was, never stopped singing. Ruddy awful noise! So much so that I've never forgotten it. He had a little rhyme what he taught us boys to remember the bits and pieces around the gun. There's an extra half-grog ration to the first of you who remembers it off pat. Listen.

(As he sings, he demonstrates the cartridge, the flintlock, the grapeshot, etc.)

MUSIC 18 - THE BOSUN'S ALPHABET

Williams: *A is for the Apron to keep the vent dry.
B is for the Boy who maintains the supply.
C is for the Cartridge with powder to kill.
And D is for the Duty you have to fulfil.*

*So merrily, so merrily, so merrily sail we.
There's no mortal on earth like a sailor at sea.
Blow high or blow low as the ship rolls along.
Give a sailor his grog and there's nothing goes wrong.*

(The BOYS repeat the chorus, encouraged by the GUNNER).

Williams: *E is for the Effort you have to put in.
F is for the Flintlock where the spark will begin.
Oh G is for the Grapeshot by which you may die.
H is for the Hornpipe to keep the spirits high.*

All: *So merrily, so merrily, etc.*

(As the boys sing the repeated chorus, they also do a mock hornpipe. They clear the stage as they sing and dance off).

SCENE 2

(The scene changes to The Captain's Cabin where CAPTAIN BLACKFORD is working on some papers at his table. There is a knock).

Captain: Yes?

(DOMINIC enters, comes to attention and salutes).

Dominic: You sent for me, Sir.

Captain: *(coldly)* I'll come straight to the point. Your behaviour towards the ships boys is hardly exemplary. . .

Dominic: (*relieved*) Oh, is that all? I thought it was going to be something serious!

Captain: (*angrily*) It IS serious, Sir. I'll have you know that from the start.

Dominic: (*abashed*) Yes Sir.

Captain: I am informed that you have been abusing your rank, and, incidentally, the name that we share, by unfairly treating the boys. Is that true?

Dominic: Well, if you mean beating them to get any work out of them, then yes, it's true.

Captain: Is that how you imagine an officer should go about his duties?

Dominic: They're only ship's boys, Sir.

Captain: Is that what you think of them?

Dominic: I don't know what I think of them. Not very much I am sure of that. They do what they have to do, I suppose.

Captain: There, Sir, you have it. They do what they have to do. As we all do. Every single person on this ship has his duty to do from the highest to the lowest. Everyone, young man, must implicitly obey orders without attempting to form any opinion of his own respecting their propriety. That goes for you just as much as a ship's boy. They are boys but they are on a man's ship and fighting men's battles. For that they deserve respect and for that they bear a heavy responsibility for our success. They have the same sense of duty. They are under the same discipline and they will have the same punishment if they digress. Is that clearly understood?

Dominic: (*another defiant pause*) It is.

Captain: Now go. Let us waste no more time.

(*The lights fade as MUSIC 19 - THE RACE [DROPS OF BRANDY] strikes up*).

SCENE 3

(*The Lower Gundeck. A relay race is in progress. JOHNSON and NEWMAN are drumming, the rest are divided into the two teams with the GUNNER presiding. TOM's team is doing very much better than BETSY's. The boys are running along the deck, jumping over various obstacles, filling powder horns with sand, running back and emptying them into the GUNNER's box, in relay. TOM's team wins. As they cheer, BETSY staggers in, exhausted, and sits down on a barrel, defeated*).

Williams: Team A wins by a nautical mile.

Donkin: (*Team B*) They cheated.

Williams: Donkin, my boy, if the Froggies had anything to do with you, you'd be

half way to heaven by now.

Charlie: *(Team A)* I'm flogged.

Pilch: *(Team B)* So's Lunn.

Williams: *(packing up)* Well, Gawd help any gun that gets you lot, that's all I can say. We'll do the same tomorrow. Now clear this lot away, you've got five minutes before hammocks. *(He moves off past the drummer boys who are packing up too).* Well played you lads. It's coming on.

Boys: Thank you, Mr Williams.

(GUNNER WILLIAMS leaves. The boys start clearing up. TOM sees BETSY exhausted).

Tom: You all right?

Donkin: What's the matter with you, Lunn? You run like a flippin' girl.

Pilch: Looks like one too.

Tom: Oh leave it you two.

Betsy: I can't help it. I've never done anything like this before.

Tom: *(kindly)* Don't worry. Nor have I.

Donkin: *(slinging his hammock)* Where you from, Lunn? A dancing school?

Bill: Well, at least he's not from prison, Donkin.

Donkin: Now listen, you. I was recommended to this job.

Bill: Oh yeah?

Donkin: "I recommend the prisoner to the naval service" - the Judge said!

(Laughter as everyone carries on with preparing for sleep).

Charlie: *(with NEWMAN's drum in his hand)* Hey, can I play your drum? I'd like to play the drum.

Bill: Not in battle you wouldn't. You're not allowed to stop - 'til something else stops you, that is.

Pilch: What, like a Midshipman's bullet? Remember they can shoot you if they want.

Charlie: Not that Blackford thing?

Pilch: I don't think I'd find it too difficult to shoot him.

Newman: I don't think I could do that. Shoot someone.

Pilch: You may have to, Adams.

Donkin: "It's your duty".

Charlie: You shoot me, Adams, and I'll thump you one.

(There is a distant cry of "Sling hammocks. All to quarters").

Johnson: Come on Adams. Kip time.

(As they go to leave, DONKIN, who has got a marionette puppet in his hammock, lowers it ceremoniously down simultaneously blowing a hideous din on a bosun's whistle).

Donkin: All on deck for the Admiral.

(All look. The puppet is NELSON. They cheer and sit down to watch).

Nelson: Gentlemen, where pray is ship's boy, Donkin? I have come to pay him the respects of the King and to award him the Honourable Order of the Public Bath for his great bravery and brilliance in the field of picking pockets. *(Jeers and catcalls from the pit)* I also announce that he has been pre-moted to the position of Powder Monkey Supreme on board His Majesty's Ship, *(DONKIN's head appears)* . . .

Donkin: What ship are we on?

Charlie: The Ajax, you idiot.

Nelson: His Majesty's Ship, The Ajax. Well done Mr Donkin. Gawd save the King and Gawd help the Chief Magistrate. *(Applause).*

Pilch: What about me? I'm a bigger crook than he is.

Pleggit: Make Pilch Prime Minister.

Nelson: Next on my list is ship's boy Rowlands. Rowlands, stand forward. *(TOM gets shoved forward).*

Tom: *(saluting)* Your highness?

Nelson: Boy, I heard you fought at the Battle of The Nile. Is that right?

Tom: No.

Nelson: Well done. Brave fellow. The Battle of Abu Quir Bay, was it not?

Tom: *(to JOHNSON)* Oh, I know a song about that too . . .

Nelson: Stay in character, boy, or I'll have you keelhauled, whipped through the fleet, flogged with the cat and sentenced to share a hammock with Mr midshipman Blackford for one week . . . *(The rest writhe and groan in agony).* A song, you say? Sing it this instant or I shall chop bits of you off and feed them to the crocodiles . . .

**MUSIC 20 - SING MY LADS YO HO! THE BATTLE
OF ABU QUIR BAY [Reprise]**

Tom: *'Twas on the twenty second we fought in Abu Quir Bay.
We fought away like devils, from night 'til break of day.
The gallant flagship Orient, was blown away sky high.
With the Admiral and all his crew, it served him right say I.*

All: *Soon we'll be in London Town. Sing my lads, yo ho.
We'll see the King in his golden crown. Sing my lads, yo ho.
Yo ho heave ho and away we go. Sing my lads, yo ho.
Who's afraid to face the foe? Sing my lads, yo ho.*

(The puppet does a mock Knighting ceremony with a drumstick. TOM kneels).

Nelson: Arise, Sir Thomas Rowlands of Widecombe. Gawd save the King.
(*Unseen, DOMINIC and his friends have entered.*)

All: *Soon we'll be in London Town, Sing my lads, yo ho . . .*

Dominic: (*yelling*) Can you imbeciles not understand simple orders when you hear them? Sling hammocks was given five minutes ago. Unless you want this. . .
(*he brandishes his cane*) . . . across your backs - MOVE!!! (*He smashes it down on to a crate near TOM who jumps and in doing so, drops his cricket ball. He quickly retrieves it, but not before DOMINIC has spotted it.*)
What's that, Rowlands?

Charlie: It's a cricket ball.

Dominic: I wasn't asking you. Cricket balls, Rowlands, are not, to my knowledge, regulation issue in His Majesty's Navy. Hand it over.

Tom: No.

Dominic: You heard.

Tom: It's mine. They gave it to me. It's the one I caught George Minchin with.
You were there.

Dominic: That was last week, Rowlands. Your little act of heroism was on dry land. We're not in Hambledon now. In case you hadn't noticed, we're at sea.

Spicer: Oh come on, Blackford.

Jackson: You're not at Winchester now.

Dominic: (*snaps*) Shut up.

Spicer: Oh, lay off, Dominic. (*He goes to pull DOMINIC away. DOMINIC shrugs him off, violently.*)

Dominic: You realise disobeying an officer is a punishable offence, Rowlands?

Tom: (*defiantly*) So is jealousy in the eyes of God.

Dominic: (*threateningly*) How dare you . . .

Jackson: (*leaving*) Oh, come on, Tim. (*SPICER follows. DOMINIC doesn't notice.*)

Dominic: Give me that cricket ball.

Tom: No.

Pilch: (*whispering*) Give it to him, Tom.

Dominic: Silence, boy. (*To TOM*) I won't ask you again, Rowlands.

Tom: You're not having it.

Dominic: Very well. (*As he raises his cane, TOM bravely holds his ground.*)

Donkin: Oh, here comes Lieutenant Matthews.

Dominic: What? (*Scared - quickly*) Rowlands, I'll deal with you in the morning.
Come on Jackson . . . (*He turns to go, sees the rest have already left and gropes his own way off. There is a long tense pause as they watch him go, then DONKIN lets out a coarse laugh.*)

Donkin: Thanks very much, Mr Matthews! (*There is laughter and relief all round*)

as they realise it was all a bluff. There's a crescendo of nervous chatter. TOM is very shaken. He sits).

Pilch: I thought you were for it there, Rowlands.

Tom: Thanks, Donkin. I'll pay you back.

Donkin: Oh shut up. *(The rest have now gone. PILCH moves off, TOM and BETSY are left).*

Pilch: Donkin, what have you done with Lord Nelson?

Donkin: He's in here with me.

Pilch: Disgusting . . .

Donkin: Oh, knock it off . . .

(And PILCH leaves. TOM sits alone. BETSY is hovering, toying with her bundle of clothes. A sailor crosses the stage, extinguishing the lamps as he passes).

MUSIC 21 - LOWLANDS

Sailor: *I dreamed a dream the other night.
Lowlands. Lowlands away my John.
I dreamed a dream the other night.
Lowlands away.*

Betsy: *(looking at TOM)* Aren't you tired?

Tom: Exhausted.

Sailor: *I dreamed my love came in my sleep.*

Chorus (off): *Lowlands. Lowlands away my John.*

Sailor: *Her cheeks were wet: her eyes did weep.*

Chorus (off): *Lowlands away.*

(The SAILOR moves off, still singing).

Sailor & Chorus: *She came to me as my best bride.
Lowlands. Lowlands away my John.
All dressed in white like some fair bride.
Lowlands away.*

*She made no sound. No word she said.
Lowlands. Lowlands away my John.
And then I knew my love was dead.
Lowlands away.*

*I bound the weeper round my head.
Lowlands. Lowlands away my John.
For now I knew my love was dead.
Lowlands away.*

(BETSY has come to sit beside TOM).

Betsy: You're not going to sleep?

Tom: I'm too tired. What about you?

Betsy: That stupid race nearly did for me.

Tom: It was tough.

Betsy: I let everyone down.

Tom: You tried hard.

Betsy: I nearly knocked myself out going down those rope ladders. I got a bump on my head big as a duck egg.

Tom: Yes. My arm hurts too. Throb. Throb. Throb.

Betsy: *(After a slight pause, she takes the plunge).* Must be that shotgun wound.

Tom: I think it is. It's worse when I'm tired. It must be . . . *(He stops in his tracks)* What shotgun wound?

Betsy: Eh?

Tom: I thought you . . .

Betsy: Oh . . . the one in your left arm . . .

Tom: *(lost)* How do you know about that?

Betsy: *(another pause, then:)* I helped to dress it.

Tom: What? *(BETSY removes her hat, revealing her long hair, TOM is astounded).*
Betsy! *(He leaps up and backs away).*

Betsy: Ssshhh.

Donkin: *(from his hammock)* You two going to rabbit on all night down there?

Tom: *(whispering, frantic)* Betsy, what are you doing here?

Betsy: Tom! Sshh.

Tom: Does my mother know you're here?

Betsy: Of course not.

Tom: What are you doing? Why are you here?

Betsy: I had to follow you.

Tom: But I was press-ganged.

Betsy: And I volunteered.

Tom: But you're a girl.

Betsy: I was . . . well, I still am, but . . . well, I've survived so far.

Tom: But I still don't understand why you're here.

Betsy: *(gravely)* I have something to tell you, Tom.

Tom: They'll be worried about you back home. My mother will be worried about you.

Betsy: They'll be worried about you too.

Tom: I've sent a message. A letter. Mr Williams fixed it.

Betsy: Tom, I have to tell you something before . . . It's something important that you should know before . . . something happens.

Tom: What could happen?

Betsy: Well - a musket ball. Anything . . .

Tom: Well, what is it?

Betsy: (*at last*) I know who your father is.

(*A pause*).

Tom: I don't have a father.

Betsy: Yes you do. Everyone has a father.

Tom: Well?

Betsy: Well . . . your mother . . . you know she worked up at Hambledon Hall for a while?

Tom: (*bitterly*) Looking after Dominic Blackford.

Betsy: (*meaningfully*) Working for Sir Peter . . .

Tom: Well? . . .

Betsy: (*urging him to understand*) Well . . .

Tom: (*the light slowly then suddenly dawning*) Sir Peter . . .?

Betsy: (*with great difficulty*) That's right.

Tom: Oh no . . .

Betsy: Tom . . .

Tom: (*suddenly angry*) How dare you say that? Who told you? . . .

Betsy: (*firmly*) Tom! Your mother told me.

Tom: My mother? Told you? . . .

Betsy: Well, she had to tell someone. You have to tell someone your secrets . . .

Tom: So the Squire is my father? Him and mother?

Betsy: Tom, you had to know.

Tom: (*suddenly, the awful realisation*) And Dominic is my brother.

Betsy: (*who was ready for this*) Your HALF brother, Tom.

MUSIC 22 - LOWLANDS [Reprise]

Tom: (*suddenly breaking down*) Oh God . . .

Betsy: (*putting her arm round him*) Now stay calm, Tom . . . stay calm.

Tom: Oh God, please take me home . . . take me home . . . take me home . . .

Betsy: (*singing, comfortingly*) ***I dreamed a dream the other night***

Lowlands away. . .

(*Her voice echoes as she sings and the lights fade as TOM's dream takes over*).

SCENE 4

(Hambledon. The Cricket Field and it's environs. All the girls, except LADY AMELIA and MARY appear in a tableau. They are dressed for cricket. Some hold bats).

Girls: *An old English sport never praised yet in verse,
'Tis cricket I sing of illustrious fame.
No nation e'er boasted so noble a name.
Derry down down, down derry down.*

Jenny: (breaking from the tableau) Come on. Who's batting first?

(JENNY, SALLY, NELLIE and MRS SMALL go off to organise the game. The BLACKFORDS and friends stroll after them leaving MARY and LADY AMELIA either side of the stage. They are both reading letters).

Lady Amelia: Letters are a great blessing.

Mary: And they can be rather painful too. They tell you how they are, but you know that the letter was written weeks ago and anything could have happened in the meantime.

Lady Amelia: (affectionately) Just listen to him! "I am sure you are missing me dear mother" - presumptuous boy! "The Ajax is a splendid ship" . . .

Mary: I can't tell from this what ship Tom is on. His writing's a terrible scrawl and I taught him so carefully. Oh, "Dear Mother" spelt with a 'u'.

Lady Amelia: "Mother" spelt with a 'u'?

Mary: No. "Dear" spelt with a 'u'. "Mother" spelt with two 'vs'. "I'm well but on a sad ship they grabbed me I still have my cricket ball God save the King, Pilch wrote that bit. . ." (She starts to cry quietly).

Sir Peter: (emerging with his notes in his hand. He is rehearsing his speech for the House) I need not remind the House . . . No, the House needs no reminding . . . It will not be necessary for me to remind the House that, as a result of the mutiny at Spithead, the treatment of men and boys in His Majesty's Navy . . .

Lady Amelia: Peter, not now.

Sir Peter: Ah, Amelia, I've promised Fanny I'll take her with me to Town tomorrow. She wants to come and see the Commons at work. Can't think why.

Lady Amelia: Perhaps she wants to hear you speak.

Sir Peter: Hmm, well, she may be unlucky. I'm beginning to have second thoughts.

Lady Amelia: Second thoughts?

Mary: (strongly) No, Sir Peter. You give that speech. You MUST give it.

Sir Peter: (who hadn't seen MARY) Hello, what brought that on?

Lady Amelia: Mary has received a letter today - from sea. As we have.

Sir Peter: What, from Dominic? You mean the young scoundrel has condescended to write at last? *(He takes the proffered letter and reads).* Ha! "I am a reformed character, leading the ship's boys in their prayers and doing all I can to help them. Uncle Anthony has nothing but praise for me." Well, well, there's some good in the lad yet! You hear this, Mary? Good news from Dominic.

Lady Amelia: *(quickly)* Mary has had some news too - from Tom. Not so good, I'm afraid.

Sir Peter: Oh dear. Where is he? Does he tell you?

Mary: He's been pressed on to a ship. Which one he doesn't say. At least I know he's alive, though. Or at least he was when he wrote, but I do fear for him... *(She starts to break down again. SIR PETER half moves to her, but stops himself. Instead, his anger takes over).*

Sir Peter: How can they do it? How can they? A helpless twelve year old boy. It's barbaric. Oh, I'll give that speech, Mary. You see if I don't. I'll give it for Tom. *(He starts to stride off)* You see if we don't get some reform. Just wait . . . *(and he's gone).*

(MARY and LADY AMELIA leave as FANNY, CATHERINE and ELIZABETH rush on, pursued by a cricket ball).

Fanny: *(yells)* Look out, Catherine. It's coming to you.

(The ball arrives. CATHERINE squawks and jumps on it. She picks it up).

Catherine: What do I do with it?

Elizabeth: You throw it to the wicket-keeper.

Catherine: What's a wicket-keeper?

Fanny: *(pointing off)* Over there.

(CATHERINE underarms the ball off. There's a squawk as it hits someone).

Elizabeth: That's not the wicket-keeper.

Catherine: *(impatiently)* Well, I don't know, do I?

Fanny: Oh silly . . . Oh, it's no fun, this game, without the men.

Elizabeth: And no audience to watch us or cheer us on.

Fanny: Where's Emma?

Elizabeth: Oh, languishing somewhere, pining for Ralph Jackson.

Catherine: How futile. *(She's concentrating on the game, waiting for the ball to come to her again).* She should come and play the game. We need her.

Fanny: Well, with you in the side we certainly do, Catherine.

(There is the sound of a cricket ball being struck and cries of "Well hit, Jenny").

Elizabeth: Fanny! Look out!

(The ball zooms on, hitting FANNY who is, by now, sitting down. FANNY screams. CATHERINE laughs).

Fanny: Oww! It's not funny, Catherine.

Catherine: That'll teach you to make fun of me.

Fanny: Oh, I'm hurt. *(She's hopping about)* Who hit that?

Elizabeth: Oh, one of those dreadful village girls with hairy arms.

Fanny: I'll bloody kill her.

(NELLIE MOULD puffs her way on).

Nellie: Mrs Small says would you mind throwing the ball back. The batters have run eleven already.

Fanny: They can run as much as they like as far as I'm concerned.

Nellie: But you're supposed to be fielding . . .

Fanny: Oh, take the stupid ball yourself and throw it wherever you like.

(NELLIE takes the ball and lumbers off).

Nellie: Yes, Miss Blackford.

Elizabeth: *(sarcastically)* Now, there's no need to be rude, Fanny. Cricket is a gentleman's game.

Fanny: Well the gentlemen can keep it.

(SARAH SMALL strides on, with NELLIE heavily in pursuit again. She confronts FANNY who is taken aback).

Sarah: Miss Blackford. Are you playing cricket for the Manor or aren't you?

Fanny: *(trying to exert some authority)* Mrs Small, I really think you . . .

Sarah: Good. In which case would you please concentrate a little more. Chatter a little less. Give me the ball and move to long-slip. Thank you.

(Speechless, FANNY indicates that NELLIE is holding out the ball behind her. SARAH turns round, takes it and storms off).

Fanny: Well, I've never been so . . .

Emma: *(who has wandered lazily on during all this and watched with a smile)* To long-slip, Fanny. Come along, hurry up!

Fanny: Long-slip? Where's long-slip?

Emma: *(pointing)* Over there.

Elizabeth: No, that's long hip.

Emma: No, that's long hop.

Catherine: You mean long stop. That's me.

Sarah: *(re-appearing)* Come along, PLEASE Miss Blackford.

(She disappears again. FANNY rushes off in a temper).

Elizabeth: *(seeing EMMA sitting lazily)* Where have you been, Emma, you sly thing?

Emma: Oh, just dozing

Catherine: She's been reading a letter. I saw her.

Emma: Oh do be quiet, Catherine.

Elizabeth: Sweet nothings from Ralph Jackson?

Emma: Oh don't be futile, Elizabeth. You're worse than the local women when it comes to gossip.

Catherine: Elizabeth got a letter from Dominic.

Elizabeth: No I didn't.

Emma: What did it say?

Elizabeth: I'm not telling you.

Emma: Did it arrive in a bottle, floating down the Hamble?

Elizabeth: Oh don't be futile.

Catherine: Ralph Jackson would have been disappointed at you missing that catch earlier on, Emma.

Emma: What Ralph Jackson thinks of me is immaterial . . .
(There is a huge cheer from the cricket field, applause and the players appear with SARAH SMALL).

Nellie: Well batted, Jenny. They'll have a real job to beat seventy four.

Sarah: Well done the Moulds. Batting like champions.
(CATHERINE goes off with SARAH excitedly holding the bat).

Fanny: *(re-appearing, limping with exaggeration)* Oh I'm so angry. I'm in absolute agony, I think I shall die. I shall have to cancel my dancing lesson now.

Jenny: *(who is sitting on the grass with the others)* You all right, Miss Blackford?

Fanny: Did you hit the ball?

Jenny: Yes I did. Sorry if I hurt you.

Fanny: It came at me like a cannon ball. Stupid oaf. Look at her. Built like Boadicea. Come on, Elizabeth . . . *(She stalks/limps off).*

Jenny: Built like a what?

Nellie: I don't think she likes you.

Sally: She's jealous, that's all, Jen. I think you played terrific. You'll be playing for England next.

Jenny: *(flattered)* Do you think so?

Nellie: Well, they're so short of men they'll pick anyone who can hold a bat.

Jenny: *(disappointed)* Oh!

Sally: No chance for me, then. I can't understand any of it. Don't know one end of a bat from t'other.

Nellie: Hold it in the middle. Then you can use either end. *(They laugh).*

Sally: WE could do with Betsy here. She was good.

Jenny: I wonder where she is?

Sally: They've found out where Tom is. He's been took by the Press.

Jenny: Poor old Tom.

Nellie: I wonder if Betsy's with him?

Jenny: Well, Tom'll look after her . . .

(They sink into a reverie as MARY and AMELIA appear).

Mary: I think I should talk to you about Tom . . .

Lady Amelia: Your Tom?

Mary: And Sir Peter.

Lady Amelia: My Sir Peter?

Mary: And mine in some respects . . .

Lady Amelia: Whatever do you mean?

(SIR PETER appears).

Sir Peter: These children are silenced by their innocence . . .

Lady Amelia: YOUR Sir Peter? . . .

Sir Peter: Outcast, orphaned and bewildered.

Nellie: He was a proper gentleman, was Tom . . .

Sir Peter: Food for cannons . . .

Mary: I've done my best for him . . .

Sally: Lovely eyes . . .

Nellie: Almost like a gentleman . . .

Jenny: Looks a bit like Master Dominic, I always thought . . .

(The ladies fade as SIR PETER moves forward onto the podium at The House of Commons. He is in full flight).

Sir Peter: I need not remind the House that, as a result of the mutiny in the Channel Fleet at Spithead in ninety seven, a thoroughly frightened Admiralty has agreed to the chief demand by the men for a rise in pay to one shilling a day. The demand was certainly just and not particularly generous when one reflects that their last rise was over one hundred years ago in the reign of Charles The Second. What surprises me, Mr Speaker, is what the mutineers did NOT ask for. No mention of the cessation of flogging. No mention of the appalling quality of the food. Facts which only serve to remind us of how dutiful and uncomplaining the majority of His Majesty's Navy are. The mutiny at Spithead has justly been re-named not a Tempest, but a breeze. But what the Spithead Breeze has not blown away is the outrageous misuse of children on board ships. Of course, THEY have no one to speak up for THEM. They are silenced by their innocence. They are forced into duties and they don't even understand the meaning of the word . . .

(Cries from the back-benches of "Time they did" - "No time for sympathy" - "Tell that to Boney". The noise builds until it is silenced by the voice of the Speaker calling for 'Order' and three loud hammerings on his desk).

The Scene has changed to the Captain's Cabin.

SCENE 5

(The three knocks are echoed by three taps on the door. The CAPTAIN is asleep at his desk. He doesn't stir. Three more knocks, louder).

Captain: Huh? What? . . . Go away. Not now. Go away. *(But the door opens and TOM enters, cautiously).* Dammit. Who's there?

Tom: *(nervously)* It's Tom Rowlands, Sir.

Captain: Who?

Tom: Ship's boy, Sir. With Gunner Williams, Sir.

Captain: What the devil are you doing here?

Tom: My duty, Sir.

Captain: What do you mean?

Tom: Is it right, Sir, that women aren't allowed?

Captain: Aren't allowed what? Where?

Tom: Allowed on board ship, Sir.

Captain: Whatever are you talking about?

Tom: There's a girl here on board, Sir. Disguised as a boy.

Captain: Nonsense.

Tom: It's true.

Captain: That's impossible.

Tom: It's Betsy, Sir.

Captain: Betsy? What Betsy?

Tom: Betsy Lunn, Sir. You met her last week up at Hambledon Hall.

Captain: Hambledon Hall? . . . Oh, good heavens. You're the boy who was shot?

Tom: Tom Rowlands, Sir. From down the village.

Captain: You're at sea now, boy, on board the Ajax. Now pull yourself together.

Tom: I'm sorry, Sir.

Captain: Now this is no time to be coming to me telling fairy-stories. We could well be seeing action tomorrow. You need your sleep.

Tom: But it's true, Sir. Betsy's here, disguised as a boy.

Captain: I can see you mean it.

Tom: No one else knows, Sir.

Captain: Well, it wouldn't be for the first time.

Tom: She volunteered.

Captain: How do you know?

Tom: She just told me, Sir. We been talking, Sir, and I want to go back home.

Captain: *(a bit embarrassed now)* Now, you're very tired.

Tom: She told me about Sir Peter, Sir, and I'm frightened.

Captain: Sir Peter? . . . Now come along. You're very tired. Get back to your quarters. This is no time for this kind of talk. We'll deal with it tomorrow. *(He notices that TOM is holding on to his cricket ball).* What's that in your hand? *(He reaches to take it. TOM evades his hand).*

Tom: *(protectively)* My cricket ball.

Captain: *(thrown at first)* A cricket ball? . . . *(then he realises)* Ah!

Tom: I won it, Sir.

Captain: Tom, have you ever heard of Richard Nyren?

Tom: The cricketer, Sir?

Captain: That's right.

Tom: Of course, Sir. The best England's ever had.

Captain: You know, I think even he might have found things difficult some times. Wanted to give up and go home. Even cried because he was a bit frightened. Everyone feels that way some time - that they can't go on. But they do. They must. *(He guides TOM towards the door).* Now go back and get some sleep - and count yourself lucky that you're not swimming around out there in the ocean. Forget about your troubles back on dry land and do your duty here at sea. That's all that matters, Rowlands. Duty, boy, duty . . . *(His voice echoes away and becomes that of SIR PETER who is now concluding his speech).*

SCENE 6

(The House of Commons).

Sir Peter: . . . They are forced into duties and don't even understand the meaning of the word. Children, whose eyes have just opened on the beauty of our world are encouraged, and sometimes even pressed, illegally, into the duty of servicing the cannons on our ships. These innocent victims of our corrupt society are sometimes called 'Powder Monkeys'. In such a position, their poor lives are constantly in grave danger. Their hearing lasts no more than one firing and their moral sense, gentlemen, is put greatly at risk by the company they are forced to keep below decks. It's despicable! You know, gentlemen, that I am no Jacobin. I am not by temperament or heredity a 'revolutionnaire'. But I do have more than an ounce of feeling for the plight of some of our country's children whose hammocks have become coffins and whose only semblance of a family are a group of swearing, drunken, brutal seamen. *(There are murmurings of support).* I appeal to the House to force the Admiralty's hand to bring about much needed reform. . .

(There are cheers and jeers of support, which are 'Shushed' as the lights come up on a tableau of the Lady Cricketers centred around CATHERINE BLACKFORD who is standing, with the bat, ready to receive a ball. All watch).

(There is a drum roll (MUSIC 23a). She drives drives at the (imaginary) ball. There is a gasp from the watchers. The sound of a cricket ball, whistling through the air, can be heard).

BLACKOUT.

(The sound changes to that of a cannon ball. It culminates in a deafening crash as it splinters through the side of HMS Ajax. Simultaneously the lights come up on the Gundeck in full battle order. Smoke is everywhere. GUNNER WILLIAMS is at his gun. Boys rush everywhere with powder).

MUSIC 23b - THE BATTLE [Instrumental]

(The musical cues are shown in detail in the printed score).

SCENE 7

The Battle.

(A sailor has been mortally wounded by the cannon ball. A second sailor is standing over the body. The Marine Drummers are at their posts, drumming. The Midshipmen are on duty with rifles loaded).

Jackson: *(through his megaphone)* Fire!

Williams: Fire! *(He fires his cannon with a deafening roar).*

Matthews: You are throwing away your shot, Mr Williams. Lower. Aim lower.

Jackson: Stay by your guns.

Williams: *(busy at the cannon)* Powder. More powder. Where's that bloody boy? *(The dead sailor has now been picked up by his colleague).*

Jackson: Throw him overboard and look lively.

(TOM rushes in with his powder. He comes face to face with the dead body. He stares at it in horror).

Spicer: Tell that boy to move or he'll be whipped.

Sailor: Go on, boy. On with your job.

Pilch: *(rushing past, sees TOM)* Come on, Tom. Just keep moving. That's the best way to stop being frightened. *(And he rushes off again).*

(There is a violent explosion further up the deck and cries of pain).

Dominic: (*rushing in*) Mr Jackson. Mr Spicer. Up Forra'd. There's been a bad hit. I'll stay here.

Spicer: (*as he leaves*) See you tomorrow - I hope.

Williams: (*as TOM arrives*) Now come along my boys. We must keep fighting as hard as we can. Load up. More powder, Tom. Off you go. You're doing grand.

(*TOM turns and comes face to face with DOMINIC. He stops.*)

Dominic: Look lively, Rowlands. We shoot slackers in the Navy.

(*BETSY rushes past.*)

Betsy: Come on, Tom.

(*As they rush off, another big hit crashes through the deck. DOMINIC moves to look at it when a second smashes in near him. He is felled. He falls to the floor with a scream holding his leg.*)

Dominic: My leg. God. My leg.

Williams: Powder.

Dominic: Help me in God's name. My leg . . .

Matthews: (*rushing in*) Double your shot. They're on the run.

(*There is a loud cheer as the message echoes around. MATTHEWS looks down and sees DOMINIC.*)

Dominic: Mr Matthews, please . . . (*MATTHEWS leaves.*)

Williams: Where's that powder?

(*TOM rushes in again and sees DOMINIC. He stops and stares.*)

Dominic: Rowlands. Here. Help me. You must. I'm done for else. (*He's frozen.*)
For mercy's sake. A bandage. A tourniquet. I'm bleeding to death.

(*CAPTAIN BLACKFORD appears above as TOM stoops to help DOMINIC.*)

Captain: Well done, lads. They're on the run. (*He sees TOM and DOMINIC.*)

Sailor: Where's that boy?

Williams: Powder, for God's sake.

Captain: Boy, get to your gun. Leave him and get to your gun.

Tom: (*matter of fact*) No. He's bleeding badly. Been shot.

Captain: To your post, damn you.

(*A terrible pause, as TOM realises his predicament. Then:*)

Tom: No. I'm helping him. I'm helping my brother.

Captain: Do as you are ordered, boy, or suffer the consequences.

(The rest of the battle action fades. All watch in silence).

Tom: *(defiantly)* My duty is to my brother.

Captain: Rowlands, your duty is to your country.

(Another agonising pause, then TOM kneels and busies himself with bandaging DOMINIC. The CAPTAIN pauses, then reaches out his hand. A Midshipman hands him his musket. The CAPTAIN raises it at TOM. There is a Blackout).

There is a shot.

SCENE 8

MUSIC 24 - RULE BRITANNIA

(The lights come up on The Captain's Cabin).

(He is in his bed. The chair with his uniform draped over it is there. The entire company assemble).

Men: *When Britain first at Heaven's command
Arose arose arose from out the azure main.*

Ladies: *This was the charter, the charter of our land.*

Boys: *And guardian angels sing this strain:*

All: *Rule Britannia. Britannia rules the waves.
Britons never shall be slaves.*

(Pause. Tableau. Blackout).

THE END