

SWEET LASS

A Musical Play
telling the story of
Frances l'Anson
“The Lass of Richmond Hill”

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A musical play, telling the story of Frances I'Anson, the
Lass of Richmond Hall.

Script by Ken Wadsworth and Angus Goodfellow

Songs by Brian Holdsworth

Characters:-

Frances I'Anson

William I'Anson, her father

Mrs I'Anson, her mother

Leonard Mackally, an Irish barrister and playwright

Patrick, a manservant

Jenny, a maidservant

James Hook, Director of Music at the Vauxhall Gardens

Charles Incedon, a singer

Wolfe Tone, an Irish patriot

A man.

Scene 1 Bedford Row Mrs I'Anson, Frances.

(Frances sits at a table or desk; with papers, pen etc)

Mrs I Frances I'Anson!

Fr Yes, mother. That's my name. What is it you want?

Mrs I Don't be pert, child. It doesn't become you. A girl of your age. You'll never get a husband if you're pert.

Fr Perhaps I don't want a husband, mother.

Mrs I Don't be silly, girl. Of course you want a husband. Every girl wants a husband. What would she do without one?

Fr She might find life much better without a husband. She might live her own life, be her own mistress, make a career for herself. Show she is as good as any man.

Mrs I Stuff and nonsense! That's never likely to happen, not in this world. What silly ideas will you get into your head next? What are you doing, anyway? Always reading, reading.... plays and poetry too as like as not.

Fr I'm not reading poetry now, mother.

Mrs I Thank heaven for that.

Fr I'm writing poetry.

Mrs I Oh dear; that's worse. I don't know what will become of you. Reading and writing, poetry, plays..... just like a proper blue-stocking. It's not respectable! And no respectable man will have a wife like that. Why can't you learn to run a household, to manage servants, to be proud of your home like a proper woman? Now, don't interrupt. I've made up my mind to say it and say it I will.

Fr Yes, mother.

Mrs I Yes, mother; indeed. Yes now. Yes, what was I saying when you were so foolish as to interrupt just when I had screwed ~~myself~~ myself up to saying it? Oh yes, I know. Why don't you look after your appearance? We can't all be beauties, I know. I was fortunate when I was a girl. I had the looks. And how I should ever have got your father without them, I don't know. You're not at all bad yourself, really. Quite attractive in your own way - if only you'd make the best of yourself, as you ought to do and could do, if you'd only give a little time and thought. But you don't. You make the worst of it. You never bother about your clothes or take care of your hair or, or, or anything.

Fr Oh dear, mother; I know.

Mrs I Well, your father is a well-to-do man, with a fine position. You will have a good dowry to take to any man that he approves of. But you don't even try. You just sit there and read....

Fr Not reading, mother. Writing. Remember?

Mrs I (Indulgently) Impudent wench! And what are you writing?

Fr Verses, mother. A poem. Oh, it's nothing, really. But the theme of it ought to please you.

Mrs I To please me?

Fr Yes, after what you've just been saying.

Mrs I What do your verses say, then? Though I'm sure that I shan't agree with a word of it.

Fr Shall I read it to you?

Mrs I How shall I know what it says if you don't? Go on then.

Fr As moths around the candle flame
Fond lovers ~~gi~~ come and go;
Theirs is but a foolish game,
Wisdom warns me, all the same
When my true love comes I know
I will never~~t~~ let him go.

Mrs I I should hope not. If only you can catch him. Is that all of it?

Fr No. There are three verses altogether. Shall I go on?

Mrs I Yes, yes. We can't judge a bird just by the beak. Go on, my dear.

Fr As rivers to the ocean run
Fond lovers gladly go
With their mistress to be one,
Fire ascending seeks the sun...
When my true love comes I know
I will never~~x~~ let him go.

As hours and moments quickly pass
Fond lovers gaily go
Still to court a comely lass,
Youth and love grow like the grass...
When my true love comes I know
I will never~~x~~ let him go.

Mrs I It is very pretty. Though I'm not sure that it's the kind of thing a young girl should be writing. And it will be a long time before pretty verses and an untidy dress win you a decent husband.

Fr Perhaps not so long as you think, mother.

(Enter maid, Jenny)

Mrs I Yes, girl?

Jen Please, madam, there's a legal gentleman wants to see the master.

Mrs I A legal gentleman? Then why does he come here to the house? He should know that Mr I'Anson doesn't do business here at home. What does he want?

Jen He didn't exactly say, madam. But he did say that the master expected him here. Said he was to come this very afternoon.

Mrs I But is your master at home? I thought he was to be in town all day.

Jen No, madam. He came into the house a little while ago with another gentleman. I think they're in the study.

Mrs I Indeed. And who is this legal gentleman who has called? What's his name?

Jen MacNally, madam. Mr Leonard MacNally.

Fr Oh!

Mrs I Do you know him, ~~girl~~ Frances? I'm sure I don't know him.

Fr I have.... heard of him.

Mrs I And how do you come to know a strange legal gentleman?

Fr He's quite famous I believe, from his wonderful speeches in the courts. But he also writes plays. He has had several plays produced in the theatre, and operas at Covent Garden.

Mrs I Hm. A remarkable legal gentleman, for all his strange name. You'd better show him in here, Jenny.

(Exit Jenny)

Mrs I Though I must say that two writers in one room is more than an ordinary body can properly contemplate.

Fr Mother!

(Enter Jenny and MacNally)

Jen Mr Leonard MacNally.

Mrs I Good afternoon, sir. I understand that you wish to see my husband.

MacN Indeed, ^{madam} that was my purpose. To meet you is my pleasure.

Mrs I Sir!

MacN And...? (He looks at Frances)

Mrs I My daughter, Mr MacNally. My daughter Frances.

MacN (Fancying his French, but meaningfully) Enchanté de vous revoir.

Mrs I Jenny, go tell your master that Mr MacNally is here to see him.

Jen Yes, madam. Oh no, madam.

Mrs I What do you mean, No madam?

Jen I've just remembered, madam. It's the day for making the jam. And the fruit is all in the pan and it was just about to boil over when there was the knock at the door and this gentleman came, and oh madam, it'll be all over the floor... Oh please, madam, I must go to my jam.

Mrs I You never said anything about jam before. But off you go before it's too late. (To Frances) That's the strangest thing. Why should she be making jam today?

Fr I can't imagine, mother.

(During this exchange Jenny leaves. As she passes MacNally the latter gives her money - obviously a reward or bribe - and places his finger over his lips. Jenny winks, and exits.)

Mrs I I can't think what's got into the girl. Well, perhaps I'd better go tell Mr I'Anson that you're here, Mr MacNally. He is expecting you, I believe?

MacN Yes indeed, ma'am. A matter of a brief, a little delicate, best discussed privately, you understand.

Mrs I (who doesn't understand) Yes, of course, naturally. If you will be so good as to wait here. Perhaps you won't mind my daughter's company for a moment.

MacN A pleasure, dear lady.

(Exit Mrs I)

MacN (to Frances, with a different inflexion) A pleasure, dear lady.

Fr Oh Mr MacNally. I'm sure you engineered all this.

MacN All what, my dear?

Fr No, of course not. Forgive me. I'm a little excited ... at seeing a famous playwright again so soon. I hope the new play is doing well. I'm so happy to meet you again. I did so enjoy our last meeting that I almost thought that perhaps you too.... But, of course, you have come to see Father.

MacN Yes, I have come to see your father, on business. That's quite definite. But I also wanted and was quite determined to see you.

Fr Really?

MacN Really! Since first we met there is nothing I have wanted more. When I am pleading in the courts, it is not the court's verdict I am seeking, but yours. It's not the felon's life I am striving to save, but my own. For now my life means nothing without you.

Fr Oh, Mr MacNally...

MacN MacNally, MacNally... Oh Frances, dearest. Have I no other name?

Fr Yes, but, but... I will call you Leo. You are a lion, bold and strong and noble.

MacN I have the heart of a lion ... if I have your love. Oh Frances, can you love me?

Fr I scarcely know.... we have hardly met... but ...

MacN But?

Fr But, yes! With all my heart.

MacN I fear heart.

Fr And you, my love?

MacN With all my heart I am yours. With all my heart I have loved you since first we met, since first I saw your face....

Song (MacN and Fr) Since first I saw your face...

Fr Leo...

MacN Sweet...

(They are in each other's arms. Enter Mr I and Mrs I)

Mr I My dear Mr MacNally. So sorry to keep you waiting, sir. So sorry.. (He sees) Sir! What the devil is this?

MacN Your daughter, sir...

Mr I I know it's my daughter, I can recognise my own daughter when I see her in my own house. I can recognise you, sir, you Irish jackanapes. You come to my house, sir. You pretend you have business. Fine business. What do you mean by it, sir?

MacN I love your daughter, sir. I wish to marry her.

Mr & Mrs I Marry her?!

Mrs I But she doesn't want to ~~be~~ married

Fr But I do, mother.

Mr I Be quiet, the lot of you. There will be no marrying in this house. Not whilst I am master here. Marry my daughter to a ranting Irishman, who is up to all kinds of tricks in court and thinks he can come and play them here in my own house. No sir. Not likely, sir.

MacN This is no trick, no sham. I sincerely love Frances and I believe that she loves me.

Mr I ~~Puppenny~~ Piddlesticks!

Fr And he writes beautiful plays, father. And you know you love the theatre.

Mr I Plays, girl, plays? Tuppenny farces. That's what he writes. Tuppenny farces to tickle the taste of the town. No sir. No marriage. You abuse my hospitality. You insult my intelligence. You would steal my daughter.. and my cash

Mr I (contd) too, no doubt. No sir, I tell you. No sir, No ranting canting Irishman straight from the bogs and the bothies, shall have my daughter. You will leave this house at once. You will not come here again. Out of my sight!

MacH Sir, if you were not the father of the woman I am going to marry.. (he repeats slowly and deliberately) the woman I am going to marry...you would have answered for that insult. No other man could insult my honour, or my homeland so, unchallenged. Frances, for a little time, my love, I must say farewell. For a little time... remember!

Fr Always, Leo, always...

(Exit MacH)

Mr I (to Frances) And you will go to your room. You will stay there until I decide what is to be done.

Fr Very well, Father. But I shall marry him. (Exit)

Mr I Well, wife; here's a pretty kettle of fish.

Mrs I The sly minx. Pretending she wasn't interested in men!

Mr I And now you see what your motherly care has brought us to. I should have thought that you would have looked after your ^{only} daughter somewhat better.

Mrs I It's the modern ways. No morals nowadays - not here in London. Not like it was when I was a girl in Richmond...

Mr I That's it. That's what we'll do.

Mrs I To what, Mr I'Anson? What shall we do?

Mr I Richmond, of course. That's the place. You are always eager to go there, to Hill House. It should be far enough away from London - morals or no morals - and from that mad Irishman. She'll forget him soon enough, up there in Yorkshire.

Mrs I A splendid idea. Oh thank you, Mr I'Anson. Can we go soon?

Mr I The sooner the better. Get her away from here, away from temptation. She's a good girl, really. And it's time I had a holiday. I've been working here, nose to the grindstone, long enough in London town. Time to get away from the rush and the hurry of it, from the rustle of parchment in dusty offices. Why, I can smell the Yorkshire air up on the moors. I'll go out hunting again. That's what I'll do

Song (Mr I) Hunting (An attorney's life etc)

Mrs I I am sure it will do you the world of good. And just the thing to get Frances away from hypocritical Irishman - pretending that he was so pleased to see me!

Mr I Just the thing for all of us. Richmond it shall be.

Mrs I Richmond and Hill House.

(Curtain)

Scene 2 Richmond. The garden of Hill House.

(Frances sits at a small table, writing. Stops to read, dislikes what she has written. Tears it up.)

Fr It's no use. I can't even write sense any more. Month after month up here in Richmond, with only mother to keep me company - to guard me! How dull. How different it is from when I was a girl here. Can a few years make such a difference? Not just the years, but what has happened. Oh Leo, Leo.. if only I could see you again.... 'Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediment; love is not love which alters....' O you could write, Will Shakespeare. You could find words and make them say what you felt. But did you really love, love as I do? Not just words and minds, but every fibre of my being. Without him I'm only half alive. O Leo, Leo... Now I have only words....

She sits and tries to write. Enter Mrs I'Anson)

Mrs I Busy again, Frances? Always busy with your writing.

Fr Not really busy, mother. Just passing the time.

Mrs I Time passes soon enough, young woman. Why, look at me. It seems only yesterday that I was just a girl of your age, here in Richmond, anxious as you are for the days to pass and exciting things to happen... Look at me now. I'm an old woman; just sitting here in Richmond, with your father back in London, your brothers all away, and you so unhappy. Sometimes I feel like your gaoler.

Fr Dear mother, I don't feel like that. I'm not angry with you any more. It's just that nothing seems alive, nothing means anything. I'm just existing like one of these flowers. No, not a flower. Just a vegetable that isn't even good enough to eat, growing old and hard in the ground. O mother, I do love him.

Mrs I There, there, child. It will pass. Everything passes. Even pain. Even time...

Fr Mother? But you're happy, aren't you? You are happy here at Hill House?

Mrs I Oh yes. I'm always happy here at Hill House. It's really home to me still, full of memories, every room, every stone about the place, and all the streets of Richmond town. It's very dear to me...

Song (Mrs I'Anson) Richmond my home

Fr Dear mother, I know that Richmond means a great deal to you. I love it too; at least I did. But - do you know? - it doesn't matter where you are when the one you love is ~~xxx~~ absent. Any place is dark and unhappy. And just as truly it doesn't matter where you are when your love is with you - how odd! Any place then is heaven.

Mrs I But Richmond is a fine town.

Fr I'm sure it is, and always will be. Only just now - just now to me - it's a prison. And I want to be free. I must be free, to live...

Mrs I Perhaps it won't be a prison for you much longer. Your father is coming here again very soon. Perhaps - if you don't anger him - he'll let you return with him to London.

Fr And you, mother?

Mrs I Oh yes. I shall go too. I shall have to go too... (Exit)

Fr London. London again... and Leo... Oh, surely I'll see him again.

(Enter Jenny)

Fr Oh Jenny, such good news. Soon we're going back to London.
Garden.

Jen Perhaps more news too, Miss.

Fr More news, Jenny? Tell me, what do you mean?

Jen Well, Miss; there was a letter, Miss.

Fr A letter? From.... from him? Give it to me quickly.

Jen I'm not sure that I should, Miss. Whatever would the Mistress say?

Fr Oh Jenny; don't tease me. Please, please give me the letter. It is from him, isn't it?

Jen (hands over letter) How should I know, Miss? I don't read your letters.

(Frances looks at the letter; cries: It is, it is. Kisses it. Walzes across the stage, and tears open the letter.)

Jen (looks fondly at Frances) How easily some people are pleased. If only you knew what I know. Ah well; no doubt you soon will!

(Exit Jenny)

Fr (Reading scraps from the letter aloud) ... with aching heart I write to my dearest love..... how lonely the days though full of work and all kinds of activity, empty, empty without you... Indeed, dear love, they are.... I see your dear face before me, between me and the sky, between me and my work, between me and the friends I meet..... Dearest Leo, if only you were here to speak the words you have written, such dear sweet words... I can hear your accent in every phrase, your voicing speaking only to me, low and tender... dearest, dearest, heart.... Oh, here are verses... for me!

On Richmond Hill there lives a lass
More bright than Mayday morn,
Whose smiles all other maids surpass,
A rose without a thorn;
This lass so neat,
With smiles so sweet,
Has won my right good will;
I'd crown resign to call her mine,
Sweet lass of Richmond Hill.

MacN (off) Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill..

Fr Who's there?

MacN Don't you know my voice? Have you forgotten? (Enters by garden gate)

(Frances flows across the stage and into his arms)

MacN You haven't quite forgotten, then?

Fr Never, never. I just couldn't believe anything so wonderful. But how did you come here? Your letter.... it has only just come.

MacN Of course. I brought it. But I persuaded Jenny to bring it to you first, whilst I waited to see.

Fr To see what? Did you doubt me? Did you think that I should not remember, not wish to see you?

MacN Not for a moment. I only wanted the selfish pleasure of seeing your face, of hearing your voice as you thought of me, not knowing how near I was to you.

Fr You cheat. (Fondly) You impudent cheat. I don't think that I'll forgive you.

MacN Then give me my letter and I will go.

Fr Oh no.

MacN You don't wish me to go after all?

Fr Go if you please, sir. But leave me my letter. Leave at least the poor verses you deigned to write.

MacN Poor verses?

Fr Beautiful verses. They are mine and no-one else shall have any part of them. All mine, and I love you all the more because of them.

MacN Sweet lass!

Fr Dearest Leo.... I have been so lonely. It has been so long.

MacN But over now. Come with me. To London.

Fr Now?

MacN At once. Patrick my servant has horses at the hill foot. Before dark we'll be far from Richmond, on our way to London and to life.

(Sings) Off to London.....

Fr Oh my love, it's so ridiculous. I've waited so long for this, and now it's impossible. I can't just leave like this, without clothes, without any preparation at all, to go traipsing across the length of England. Oh, my heart goes with you; but a woman does need a little time... just a little time...

Song: This is my home // Off to London

Fr Soon, my love. Very soon I'll come to you and be yours. Indeed I am yours already. Very soon I shall return to London. Once there I shall be able to make preparations and there will be no more delays. Patience, dear heart, just a little while yet.

MacN You don't know how hard it is for me to go, or you would never banish me; nor how bitter this blow to my hopes, or you would never strike it. You and I, my love, are not creatures of convention, slaves of social servitude. We are free spirits. People of a new age. No one is strong enough to deny us, to chain us. For we are free. ~~people~~

Fr Soon, my love, Leo my lion-heart. Soon.

MacN Until then I shall not live every moment an age... every day of your absence an eternity... Farewell... (Exit)

Fr Soon, my love, may it be soon.

When you must say Goodbye,
Parting from friends most dear,
You will know why
Lovers will sigh
And shed a tear....

(Enter Mr & Mrs I'Anson)

Mrs I Frances, dear. Sooner than we thought. Here's your father; new come from London.

Mr I Well, daughter. I trust you are well.

Fr Very well, father. And you also, I trust.

Mrs I Was someone here, child? I thought I heard someone talking.

Fr Someone here, mother? Why, who would be here in the garden?

Mrs I I don't know, dear. But I'm sure I heard voices. (She finds the letter on Table)
What's this? A letter? Oh, Frances!

Fr (consternation) Mother!

Mr I What's this? A letter? From whom? From him? Frances!

Mrs I Not only a letter. I thought I knew that voice. He was here.

Fr Yes, mother. And that is my letter. (She takes it.) And I am his. From Richmond or London I shall go to him. I shall be his wife, and nothing and nobody can prevent it.

Mr F No, no, no. You shall never marry an Irishman.

(Song : A Yorkshireman is a tower of strength...)

Mrs F Quite right, Mr F Anson, quite right.

Fr Quite wrong, father. Oh, he won't ruin my life. But I'm going to share it with him.

Mr F We shall see, child. We shall see. Very well; you can start your packing. Richmond or London seems to make no difference. Back to London we go tomorrow.

(Curtain)

Scene 3 MacNally's Home, London. January 1787

(The room is vacant. There is a knock at the door. Another knock. The door opens slowly. Jenny looks in. Enters.)

Jen I'm sure this is the right house. But nobody here yet. I thought they'd be here by this time. It shouldn't take so long to get married, even at St George's, Hanover Square. If only I could have been there... (Looks round) It's quite a nice room. I wonder if the rest of the house is as attractive. And easy to look after. I don't mind coming to look after Miss Frances - though what Mrs I'Anson will do without me I don't know. But I don't want to have to run a whole house without any help. There's that Patrick, Mr MacNally's servant. Not a bad looking fellow - but more at home with horses and intrigues than honest hard work, I dare say. (Noise off). Someone's coming. Should I stay here, or...?

(Enter Patrick)

Pat Oh there you are Jenny. I wondered if you'd get here.

Jen Of course I got here. You startled me. I thought they were you; I mean you were them. I thought it was Miss Frances and Mr MacNally.

Pat Not Miss Frances any longer, Jenny. Mistress MacNally, remember. You know what the song says -

When a maid becomes a wife
It is usual to change her name,
She begins a very different life,
Though her temper may remain the same!

They'll be here in the blinking of a needle's eye, my girl. I suppose everything went off all right at Bedford Row? Must have done, for they arrived at St George's Square in good order and good time.

Fr If only I could have been there. I always wanted to see Miss Frances married. And nothing would have kept me away but her own special request for me to stay behind at Bedford Square to see that all was safe and to bring on her clothes and things to the house here. Her box is in the hall, there.

Pat That was good of you, Jenny. But what in fact happened at Bedford Row?

Jen Oh it was just wonderful. Listen whilst I tell you. You know that Mr MacNally had bribed the barber?

Pat I heard that was what was in the wind.

Jen That was it then. The barber was due at the house to shave Mr I'Anson and to cut his hair which was getting so thick on top that his wig would scarcely stay on properly. And Mr MacNally had arranged with Miss Frances...

Pat Mrs MacNally!

Jen But she wasn't. At that time she was still Miss Frances, as I said. But don't interrupt me.

Pat Your pardon, my lady.

Jen Mr MacNally had arranged with Miss Frances that she was to be all ready in her room at the given time. Just on the hour he would be at the door with the carriage, and the barber was well paid to see that Mr I'Anson didn't get a chance to hear and stop them. Whatever happened he was to be kept busy until they had got safely away to Hanover Square.

Pat And that's what happened?

Jen Just what happened. Here, I'll show you. You must be Mr I'Anson. Sit in the chair there - just as he was sitting for the barber. (Pushes Patrick)

into a chair, centre, facing front. Picks up table cloth and drapes it round him, ready for shaving. From behind she plays the barber.)

Jen (as Barber) Now, Mr I'Anson, sir. A beautiful morning it is. Beautiful for the time of the year - a perfect January day. Just a touch of frost in the air, but the sun climbing up into the heavens in all its glory.

Pat (as Mr I'Anson) Yes, yes, my man. Lovely morning, I'm sure. But get on with it. I haven't all day to chatter about the weather. Get on with it.

Jen Certainly, certainly, Mr I'Anson, sir. What I always say, sir. Nothing like haste and expedition. No time-wasting here, I assure you. That's for idlers and triflers, sir; not for busy men of affairs like you and me, eh? Far too much important business for that, haven't we now?

Pat What's the matter with you this morning, man? Never heard you chatter like this before. Like a parcel of monkeys. Get on with it. Get on...

(Jenny smotheres his protests with the cloth over his face.)

Jen Just so, sir, just so. Now sir, a close shave as usual, eh? Just what you need sir. Rely upon me.

Pat What's that? Thought I heard a door...

Jen (Pushing him back into chair) Nothing at all sir; nothing at all. Just the birds singing, this fine spring morning.

Pat Spring, man? It's January. January 16th, 1787.

Jen Just so sir; quite right sir. No catching you, sir. And a lovely day for January; just like spring, sir. Sun in the sky; birds on the wing. Now, sir; don't move, don't move. Not with the razor at your throat. Couldn't like to cut you, sir. (Makes passes in front of Pat's face) There sir; that's it. All gone, I mean all done, now sir. Perfect shave. Just a little blood on the cheek and the throat. You would move sir. But no harm done, no harm done.

Pat Plenty of harm done it seems. (Feels his face) And what was all that noise I heard? Just like doors shutting, as if someone were leaving the house.

Jen Just what I said, sir; just the birds sir; singing away...

Pat Can't hear any birds now.

Jen No sir; all flown sir; the birds have flown. (Back to own character.) And so they had!

Pat (himself again) So they had. Straight to St George's and the marriage service. I was there, waiting for them.

Jen Did the mistress look pretty? Was she happy?

Pat Why, she looked as bright as the day. The sun shone in her face. A credit to the master, she looked.

Jen I hope he'll be credit to her. Oh, they're here. I'm sure I heard a carriage. (Rushes to window.) Yes, it's they, it's them.

Pat (Throws open the door) Enter MacNally and Frances straight from the wedding.) Welcome home, sir and madam.

Jen Welcome madam - oh Miss Frances, you look so lovely. Welcome sir.

MacNa Thank you Jenny. Thank you for all you have done, and for coming to be with your mistress still.

Jen Oh it's a pleasure sir. This is a very happy day...

Song: Happy day... (Quartet).

(Curtain)

Scene 4 London 1789. The MacNallys' House.

(MacNally is busy with legal papers at desk. To him Patrick)

- MacN. Well, Patrick, and what do you want now? Can't you see I'm busy?
- Pat. Indeed and I can sir; a very busy man indeed you certainly are these days, And that's the whole point of it indeed.
- MacN. What's the matter with you, man? Chattering like that. You're not usually so Irish. The whole point of it indeed, indeed. Come to the point of what you are saying and be quick about it.
- Pat. Well, sir; not to put too fine a point on it, indeed; it's the mistress, sir.
- MacN. What about the mistress?
- Pat. The mistress would like to see you, sir.
- MacN. Like to see me? I saw her an hour ago, in this very room. I can't have changed my appearance in that time - though with all this work, these papers, briefs, cases to argue, words, words, words, I shouldn't be surprised if I began to look completely different.
- Pat. And that indeed is the point, sir. The mistress knows you are so busy, she doesn't like to interrupt. So she asked me to ask you if you aren't quite so desperately busy for just a few minutes, sir, she might see you on a matter of personal business.
- MacN. You're making it up, you villain. You must be making it up. Frances asking if she may see me. Of course she may see me; surely she knows.... And let ~~you~~ you get it into your thick head, Patrick, however busy I may be I am never too busy to see your mistress.
- Pat. Very good, sir. But what about the work, sir? You did say that you must do this piece of work this morning without fail.
- MacN. I said it must be done, and done it shall be. Here, you're a clever man with words - at least they seem to come easily enough to you. You shall do it.
- Pat. I sir? But I know nothing about the law, sir. At least, not from your side of the law. I can't use the fine big legal words. I'm a simple man of everyday.
- MacN. And what could be more simple and everyday than a washerwoman accused of stealing the sheets she has been washing. Here, take it. She's an Irish washerwoman too. That should set your tongue a-jigging. I want a powerful plea in her defence and finished before dinner-time. Now, go tell your mistress. I'm free of work and all my time is hers. (Exit Patrick)
- Pat. Faith, he'll maybe make a better job of it than I should myself.
- (He straightens papers etc. Enter Frances and Patrick)
- Pat. The mistress, sir.
- MacN. My dearest mistress. (He sees Pat about to leave.) And you, my obedient servant. Take your papers. Go on, take them. A powerful pleas for the washerwoman before dinner-time, or I lose my case and you lose your job. Off with you. (Exit Patrick, with papers.)
- Fr. What was that all about?
- MacN. Just that I've taken a new partner and I must make use of him. As you were making even stranger use of him. Dearest love, you don't need, at any time, to send Patrick or anyone else to enquire whether you may see me.
- Fr. But you are so busy with important work. I hate to disturb you when you are so engrossed.
- MacN. If only you knew, my dear, the things I have to be busy with. Trifles and

MacN (Contd) idiocies.

Fr I'm sure they are not. Why, you undertake the most important cases.

MacN And the other sort too. But my only responsibility for the rest of this blessed morning is.... the most important case of all.

Fr And what is that?

MacN Why, you my sweet, my sweet sweet lass. (She accepts a kiss). Dearest love, what do you do all the hours when I am busy in court, or working away at dull legal business?

Fr There is the house. It doesn't run itself. Servants to manage; meals to arrange. Oh, I remember my dear mother chiding me because I had no such cares or interests. Would she be pleased with me now, I wonder. She used to say that I wasn't womanly enough, interested only in reading and poetry.

MacN Why don't you write poetry any more?

Fr I haven't time. There is far too much for a housewife to do to have time to fritter away in poetry. And it was never very good...

MacN You belittle yourself, my dear.

Fr Oh Leo. Mine was only a tiny talent. Not like yours. You write for the theatre and professional actors delight to speak and sing your words. You write for the law and declaim your own words in the court, more powerfully and movingly than any professional actor.

MacN You flatter me, Fran. How do you know? When did you hear?

Fr Oh I have heard. The courts are open. Sometimes I have found a little corner out of sight - but not out of hearing. I have heard you speak... so as to move the hearts of the hardest of men.

MacN And I never knew. I must take greater care. But you must find time for your own writing too. Your talent is far from tiny.

Fr No, no. No one would remember anything I wrote for five minutes.

MacN Will you wager on that?

Fr Wager?

MacN Yes. You say no-one would remember anything you wrote. Will you wager a guinea on it.

Fr No I will not. What do you mean?

MacN
 As moths around the candle flame
 Fond lovers come and go,
 Theirs is but a foolish game
 Wisdom warns me, all the same
 When my true love comes I know
 I will never let him go.

Fr But that was years ago....

MacN More than five minutes?

Fr Dearest.... At times it seems only five minutes, and yet it is more than two years since we were married. And that reminds me of what I wanted to see you about.

MacN And what is this most important business?

Fr It is important Leo. Very important to me. You know that although I was ready to leave home and parents for you.... and I would do

- Fr (Contd) it again, if need be it has always been a hurt to me that we are estranged. My father thought you a thief who had stolen something precious from him.
- MacN He certainly has refused to speak to me - even in court.
- Fr I'm sorry. It was because he thought you would make me unhappy.
- MacN I would cut off my right hand before I would bring a tear to your eye. No, that's a stupid vainglorious boast. But your unhappiness, dearest love, would be the deepest pain that I could know.
- Fr I know that. But father didn't. And fathers are old and set and stupid. But it hurt; and especially that he forbade my mother to speak to me. For more than two years we have not met, have not spoken.
- MacN I am sorry too. Do not distress yourself. Time perhaps will tell.
- Fr It has already told.
- MacN You speak in riddles.
- Fr But the truth is plain. I have not spoken to my mother, nor she to me. But we have written. Many times. And now at last she has persuaded my father that you are not quite the villain he thought you.
- MacN Why, here's triumph indeed in pleading a hopeless case.
- Fr More than that, he has agreed to come to this house, to forget the past, and they are coming this very morning, and please say Yes, it's all right, for the morning is almost gone and they're already due and will be here any minute.
- MacN And you never said a word of all this.
- Fr Oh Leo, please, please say it's all right.
- MacN It's not all right. It's far better than all right. It's what my own love most wants to make her happy and that is the first desire and aim of my life. Yes, yes. I will even pretend your father is a wise old man.
- Fr Dearest... but not too old. He mightn't like that. You will be nice to them, won't you?
- MacN As nice as ninepence.
- Fr Darling man. I must go. We are to have a special dinner and I must see to it. There's hardly time. (Exit)
- MacN Who would have thought it? Never a word, bless her. But this is good news. This is what will make her happy. And I must admit that it has been of no help to me to have one of London's leading attorneys as an enemy. But that's not the main issue. Be nice to them, she says. Be nice.... How would this do? (Acts it out flamboyantly.) Sir, my dear sir, deeply conscious as I am of the unhappy estrangement that has kept us apart these two long years.... no, no sir, I protest, the fault was mine. I pray that you will pardon your humble servant. Hmm. Would that be sufficient, I wonder. Then perhaps.... Madam, your most humble and obsequious... can you forgive the monster who tore this sweet child from your bosom? I swear that it was only the power of love, overwhelming love that drove me to such desperate measures.... (Frances has entered, seen with amazement, and giggles.) What? You weren't meant to hear....
- Fr I know, dearest. But they are here.
- MacN Already?

Fr Yes. Jenny will show them in. Be nice.... but not too nice.

MacN Trust me.

(Enter Jenny)

Jen Mr & Mrs I'Anson, sir and madam. (Enter Mr & Mrs I; exit Jenny)

MacN You are welcome to this poor house. Your servant, ma'am, sir.

Mrs I Frances.

Fr Mother. (They embrace)

MacN I am honoured sir, that you have come to our home. I thank you for your goodness of heart and assure you that estrangement from you has been the only unhappiness your dear daughter has known. That I have been, in a sense, the cause of that unhappiness has been my pain and my regret.

Mr I Just so, sir; well said, sir. My own feelings entirely. Two years much too long, eh? Bygones, bygones and all that, eh? What?

MacN Of course sir. You are too generous.

(Mrs I and Frances still in each other's arms are amused at this staccato male formality; they cannot restrain their laughter.)

Mr I Not at all, sir. And what, may I ask, is amusing you so, madam?

Fr (Goes to her father and embraces him) You wouldn't understand, father dear. Would he, mother? (She returns to Mrs I.)

Mrs I Of course not, dear child. Men will never understand what women feel. We dutifully follow them as we must, and hide the pain that may be in our heart.

Fr Oh mother, that is so true. I've discovered it already. Men will never understand what women know. They always have work to do, to keep them busy, making laws, governing the country, they just haven't time to understand how foolish it is to quarrel.

Mrs I That's why their quarrels last so long. If women had their way they'd be over in a single day. But men will never understand.

MacN Ladies, we ask your forgiveness. You must be patient and try to teach us. We will do our best to learn. Shall we not, sir?

Mr I Eh? Oh yes, yes of course. Well, what about dinner?

Fr It will be ready very soon, father.

MacN My dear, forgive me for speaking of this at so late an hour. I was going to mention it earlier, but had no chance. So many things seem to be happening all at once this morning. Will it be at ~~last~~ all possible to lay another place for dinner?

Fr Yes, that will be quite all right. You see, mother, I have learned to manage a household, even with last minute guests. Who is it, Leo?

MacN A Mr James Hook.

Fr Do I know him?

MacN Possibly not, my dear. Though I think you have seen him. He is the director of music at the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. He has composed much of the music that is played and sung at the Gardens.

Mr I Makes quite a good thing out of it, I dare say - judging by the number of people who frequent the Gardens.

Mrs I And quite respectable too, some of them at least, I understand.

Fr But why is he coming today, dearest?

Scene 5 Vauxhall Gardens A small dais, chairs etc.

(The stage is empty. Enter Hook and MacNally)

Hook And this, as you no doubt remember, my dear MacNally, is where the company gathers for the singers.

MacN Not much of a crowd here yet.

Hook Believe me, sir, there soon will be. Always a crowd for Mr Incedon, our most popular singer of fine songs. And when it is known that a new song is to be sung.... Always avid for something new, is the crowd, you know; the latest sensation. Even more than the old favourites nowadays. Oh there will be crowd sure enough, I can assure you. And here I believe is Mr Incedon himself. (Enter Incedon)
Good evening, Charles. You are in good voice, I hope.

Incl. Never better, Mr Hook.

Hook Good, good. And the new song?

Incl Oh splendid. I think it will be a success.

Hook Think, man? You may be sure. Let me introduce our author - Mr Leonard MacNally, barrister, poet, playwright, author of the Sweet Lass - Mr Charles Incedon, singer.

Incl/MacN Your servant, sir.

Hook Your party is coming, MacNally?

MacN They are on their way - my wife and her father and mother.

Hook Of course. We met at dinner - a delightful meal. And here they are.
(Enter Mr & Mrs I'Anson and Frances)

Hook Welcome, my dear friends; welcome to Vauxhall, on a most auspicious occasion. And here is the gentleman who shall sing your praises, Mrs MacNally. Allow me to introduce Mr Charles Incedon - Mrs MacNally, Mr I'Anson, Mrs I'Anson. (Murmurs of how do dos)

Incl And you, madam, are the sweet lass of the charming song? You are honoured to have such words and such music dedicated to you.

Fr (Still a little stiff and constrained about this business of the song)
So I understand, Mr Incedon.

Incl But not so honoured as we are by your presence here tonight.

Mrs There now, Frances.

Fr Thank you sir; you are very gracious.

Hook But will you not all sit down? Here are seats set for us, especially for our own party just a little apart from the crowd. (They sit. Hook speaks to the 'audience' both on and off the stage.)

And now, my lords, ladies and gentlemen, for your special pleasure we present your favourite singer, Mr Charles Incedon in your favourite songs. And first of all this evening an old favourite. From Mr Gay's famous Beggar's Opera, his own version of Over the Hills and Far away. Mr Charles Incedon... (Incedon on dais). ((Or some other suitable song))

Incl Thank you Mr Hook. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

Sings : Were I laid on Greenland's coast etc (or other song) (Applause)

Mrs I' O how lovely. Was it not lovely, Mr I'Anson? Frances?

Fr Yes, it was very charming, mother.

- Mr F What? Eh? Oh yes, very good, I'm sure.
- Mrs I Oh William; you are so enthusiastic!
- Hook So glad that you are enjoying yourself ma'am.
- Mrs I Why yes, Mr Hook. It's so seldom we have the opportunity for such an evening. And what crowds of people, all enjoying themselves so happily. It's a lovely place you have here, Mr Hook.
- Hook Delighted to know that it pleases you, ma'am. Royalty also is not dissatisfied with what we have to offer.
- Mrs I Do you hear that, now? But when are we going to have our song?
- Hook Right away, ma'am. As soon as the crowd is quiet again. (He stands to announce) And now my lords, ladies and gentlemen - a new song, An entirely new song with words by that celebrated poet and playwright, whose works are not unknown in Covent Garden - Mr Leonard MacNally. The music - the music is my own. For your especial pleasure, ladies and gentlemen - Mr Charles Incedon and the Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill.
- Incedon on dais, sings On Richmond Hill etc ... (Applause)
- Mrs I Oh, it's wonderful. Now you must be pleased, Frances.
- Fr Well, mother
- Hook A triumph, dear lady. The world is at your feet. All the world is delighted with my song ... your song!
- Incl Was it satisfactory, Mrs MacNally?
- Fr (sincerely) pleased Thank you, sir. You sang beautifully.
- Incl We poor players exist to please.
- Mrs I And very pleasing it was indeed. (They chatter to one another)
- McN (to Fr) Am I forgiven?
- Fr There was nothing to forgive - except my foolish jealousy.
- McN My rose without a thorn....
- (The orchestra plays the Sweet Lass. The curtain falls.)

Introduction to Scene 6

James Hook in front of curtain.

Hook We left Frances and MacNally happy in the success of their song - our song - at the Vauxhall Gardens. We join them now some three years later in Dublin where MacNally is devoting his talents at the bar to the cause of Irish patriotism.

Scene 6 Dublin 1792 The MacNally's house. Patrick and Jenny are tidying up.

Jen There - that's this room finished. It was certainly a big party last night - all those new friends of the master's.

Pat And so it was to be sure. Mr MacNally is becoming an important man these days in Mr Wolfe Tone's new society - United Irishmen they call themselves. He's a true Irish patriot. And he's a fine man of the law, too. Look at this case he's appearing in at the moment.

Jen Oh, you mean that Mr Napper Tandy. What's he done, exactly?

Pat He's done nothing, save oppose Ireland's enemies, and for that he was arrested and thrown into a foul dungeon. But they can't keep a man like Napper Tandy in prison. He was freed, and now, with Mr MacNally's help, he's bringing an action against the Lieutenant Governor himself for false imprisonment.

Jen Well, it's a funny state of affairs, I must say. But if anyone can help him, I'm sure Mr MacNally can.

Pat I'm glad you have such faith in the master. It's taken you long enough to get over your feeling that he wasn't good enough for your Miss Frances.

Jen Oh, that's not true. Well, perhaps at first I wasn't too sure. I mean, he did rather sweep her off her feet with all that poetry. But that was a long time ago. They've been married for five years now, and it's lovely seeing them ~~xxxxxx~~ both so much in love and so happy together.

Pat Well, that's true, to be sure. But what about you - don't you miss London sometimes?

Jen I like it here, Patrick. Not that I don't miss Mr and Mrs I'Anson - they were very kind to me. But it's much more lively here, with all these parties and things. And all those funny Irishmen who keep calling.

Pat Less of that, my girl. All those "funny Irishmen" as you call them are ~~xxxxxx~~ trying to save their country from the English oppressors. And just remember, you're working in a household which is playing its part in the fight.

Jen You make it sound so exciting, Patrick. But that's what I mean about liking it here. And even though we're only servants, we seem to be part of things.

Pat You're right, my girl. If it wasn't for us servants, things would soon come to a stop. When you think about it, it's really the servants who run the world.

(Song: When first I took a servant's place. Patrick - Jenny - Both)

Pat And so it is. But servants we are still, and there's work to be done - more's the pity! Besides, I hear the master and mistress coming.

(Patrick exits. Jenny stays and hands letters to MacN, then exits)

MacN (Sorting letters) We have several letters today - Here is one for you, my dear. And I think I know from whom it comes. Only your mother adorns the page with such flourishes.

Fr You must not mock, my dearest - it is just the overflowing of her affection.

(opens letter and reads)

Well ! Really ! How could they ! Listen to this, husband. "There is much talk in London about the song Leonard wrote for you. Everybody is saying it is about them. Some say the Lass is Lady Sarah Lennox, who used to be the King's mistress. Cook said she'd heard there is a Miss Smith from Richmond in Surrey who tells all the tradesmen that she is the Lass, and Mistress Knightly told me just the other day that the song really refers to a rich merchant's daughter called Miss Croft who killed herself for the love of a young cavalry officer." Well, really ! How could they ! I was right after all, Leo - you would let it be sung in public and I told you I didn't want it. It was my song, that you wrote just for me, and now everybody is calling it theirs.

MacN There, now. It's not as bad as all that. It's just that people are jealous and wish the song had been written about them. We know it's really our song.

Fr Well, just listen what else Mama writes: "They say, too, that the song was written by William Upton, and not by Leonard at all." There ! What do you say to that !

MacN Well, now, that is ridiculous. Upton is just a second-rate versifier without a drop of real poetry in his blood. Sure, and he's written scores of songs for James Hook to put to music for the Vauxhall, but to think he could write anything like Sweet Lass, well that's ... that's ...

Fr Now, now - as you say, my dearest, we know whose song it is.

MacN (Smiles fondly at Fr) Ah, of course. Just so ...

(Song. "It's our song." Sung by MacN - Frances)

MacN So there we are. Let them say what they will. All that matters is that you're my Lass and so long as I have you, then they can have the song if they're so minded. (Opens letter) See here, now - here's more news from London. My opera, Robin Hood, is to be produced again at Covent Garden. That at least will be remembered, even though they may forget Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill.

Fr I'm sure you're wrong, my dearest - about forgetting our song, I mean. But I'm glad about your opera. You really must give more time to writing another piece. You spend so much time nowadays with all these Irish matters.

MacN But it is a true cause, my dear. There is corruption in the Irish parliament and England's influence is a yoke about the neck of our country. I can perhaps help in some small way those who seek to remedy the situation. That is why I invite members of this new society to meet here occasionally.

Fr If it pleases you, my sweet, I cannot object. I only ask that you do not give up your writing entirely.

(Patrick enters, closely followed by Tone)

Pat Excuse me, sir. Here's Mr Tone to see you.

MacN Ah, Wolfe, my friend, come in. How are you today ?

Tone Good morning, Leonard - Mrs MacNally. I called to thank you for entertaining our gathering last night. Our Society of United Irishmen needs the support of such people as yourself.

MacN We share a common aim - to unite all Irishmen against the unjust rule of England and abolish all religious distinctions.

Tone That is indeed our aim, and I am determined to achieve it, by insurrection if need be. The people of France have shown the way to throw off oppression and we must follow them. In this we look for support from the Catholic peasantry. And if needs must, I will seek friends in France.

MacN Your course lies one way, my friend, and mine another. I am readier with words than with the sword when it comes to rebellion. But we can follow the same ideals.

(Disturbance outside. Patrick enters)

Pat Mr MacNally, sir, there's a gentleman here who insists on seeing you.

MacN Then show him in, Patrick.

(Man enters)

Man Good morning, gentlemen. I am required by my friend Sir Jonah Barrington to deliver this note into the hand of Mr MacNally, and to await a reply.

MacN Here, I am MacNally

(Takes note and reads)

The devil take me ! Here I am challenged to a duel !

Fr (Gasps) A duel ! But why !

MacN It seems Sir Jonah dislikes our verse in the Morning Star about the case of Napper Tandy. He feels we have slighted the Lieutenant Governor, to say nothing of the Irish parliament of which he has just become a member.

Fr But you can't fight a duel - you mustn't.

MacN But I must - for the honour of all true Irishmen. Tell Sir Jonah I will meet him and that I choose pistols. Tone - will you second me ?

Tone Willingly.

Man Your servant, gentlemen - ma'am (Bows and leaves).

Fr This is madness - two men fighting over some stupid words. Why, you may be killed - Mr Tone, please, tell him he must not do this.

Tone: I'm afraid, Mrs MacNally, it's no use my telling him that. Your husband is a man of honour and cannot withdraw.

Fr Honour ! You talk of honour ! Does it mean more to ~~you~~ you than your wife and family ?

MacN It is something women will never understand, my dear. But even Sir Jonah found naught amiss in my other verse in the Morning Star -
 "They say that honour's just a name,
 To love the country of your birth
 As patriot is a foolish game,
 And loyalty is nothing worth.
 But this I say, by this I stand,
 I'll fight for honour and my native land."
 So you see, my love, I cannot draw back now.

Tone There is no help for it, Mrs MacNally. Your husband is an Irishman.

MacN 'Tis so, my dear.

Song: "The green hills of Ireland" Sung by MacN

(Frances sobs)

Curtain

Scene 7 The same - next day Jenny is comforting Frances

Jen Don't go on so, mistress. Mr MacNally will be all right. He's a fine gentleman and he'll be sure to win, don't you worry.

Fr But I do worry, Jenny, who wouldn't worry. If he's not killed he could be injured for life. Oh ! - It's so senseless ! Two grown men shooting at one another over some stupid words. And what about me ? What thought does he give to me ?

Jen You mustn't misjudge him, Miss Frances. He loves you, that's for sure.

Fr Yes, you're right - he does love me. And I love him. Oh, Jenny, suppose he is killed - what should I do ?

Song: "What would life be" Sung by Frances

(Noise outside)

Fr Listen - what's that ?

Jen (At door) It's them, mistress - they're back. Oh - but the master - he's wounded !

(Enter MacNally supported by Tone and Patrick)

Fr Oh, Leo ! You're hurt ! (Rushes forward)

MacN It's all right, my dear. It's nothing - 'tis just a slight wound.

Fr Nothing, indeed ! It's your leg - you can't walk.

MacN (Is helped to the settee) It'll be fine in a couple of weeks. The surgeon was there and attended to it. He say's I'll probably limp a bit, but that's all.

Fr Well, I hope you're satisfied. Here I've been, worried out of my wits. If this is what your blessed United Irishmen are going to have you doing, you'd be better back in England.

MacN I'm sorry, my love. But I won't be fighting any more duels for a little while. The fact that I accepted this challenge has shown I mean what I say, and that's enough. Besides, the joke of it is, I shouldn't have been wounded at all - 'twas a mistake I was hit.

Fr A mistake ? How could it have been a mistake ?

MacN Well, it was this way. But first - Patrick, a drink. And one for Mr Tone.

(Patrick pours and serves drink)

Now, where was I ? Ah, yes - well, we arrived at the appointed place, in this grove just outside the city, and there was Barrington and his second all ready and waiting. And there was this fellow to see fair play, who produces a brace of pistols. So there was nothing for it but to put on a bold front and take a pistol, although I don't mind telling you, my dear, I could have wished myself elsewhere. Any way, you know how it is with duels -

MacN (Contd) you both stand back to back, march outward so many paces, then turn and fire. Well, I fired right enough, but I didn't aim to hit him. After all, he is an Irishman, even though he's mistaken in his views. And Barrington, when he saw what I'd done, he aimed his shot into the ground. It was sheer chance that the ball struck a boulder and ricocheted, lodging in my leg. Barrington was most upset - it made it appear he had aimed to hit me after I had fired wide, d'ye see. So morally I was the winner - and so was our cause !

Fr I'll never understand these things. How you can be the winner when you lie there wounded, I'll never know. But so long as you're still alive, that's all that matters to me (Kisses MacNally)

Tone Well. Leonard. I can see you are in good hands now, so I must be about my business. I'll call tomorrow to see that all is well.

MacN Thank you, Wolfe - I am grateful for your services. Patrick - see Mr Tone out, will you now ?

(Exeunt Tone and Patrick, followed by Jenny)

Fr Well, my dearest, perhaps some good will come out of all this business. It means at least that you must stay at home for a few days and rest your leg. And that will give us a chance to talk together more - you have been so busy lately I never see you. It will also give you time for your writing - just as I wished.

MacN You must forgive me, my darling, if I have neglected you. But it is difficult for a true Irishman to see wrongs inflicted on his country and to do nothing to help ~~wrote~~ right them. Sometimes, though, I wish we could be back in England, back in your native Yorkshire, where I gave you my heart in verse.

Song:

Sung by MacNally

Fr Oh Leo, it doesn't matter where we are, provided we are together. Richmond was really only a beautiful prison without you, though should we return together it would be a heaven. Perhaps one day we will go back ...?

MacN Perhaps - who knows ...

Curtain

Introduction to Scene 8

Enter James Hook in front of curtain.

Hook That MacNally loved Frances there is no doubt, and they were a happy family, although there was some sadness, too, in their life. I would read to you from a letter written by MacNally in 1793 to Frances's brother Ralph who was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. He is inviting Ralph to visit them in Dublin.

(Puts on spectacles and reads from letter)

at/ "Your sister and I have very often indeed wished for your society, and whether you come to us in ~~adversity~~ adversity or prosperity, you will find a house and everything it affords at your devotion. You will meet a kind reception and every attention within our power to render Ireland Agreeable. Our circle of acquaintances is extensive, pleasant and respectable, and when we have you among us, if your heart be disengaged, if no 'black-eyed Susan' has laid hold of your affections, who knows, I say, but we might send you home a Benedict coupled to a Hibernian ten-thousand pounder! My family has not increased since I left England. Two little ones came into the world and scarcely looked about them when they spurned this sordid earth as unworthy of their innocence and took flight to Heaven. There is, however, another 'en ventre sa mere' which I am given to understand will be a March bird: so that, though my fair partner and self have been rather unsuccessful, you see we have not been idle. Misses Frances and Eliza are, I assure you, much admired - the eldest must be handsome for she is said to be like me. She is slender, lively, with a turn for humour, and resides very much with my sister Fetherston, about eight miles from Dublin, who is extremely fond of her. Eliza is a blue-eyed maid, of a gentle, affectionate disposition, and has, in my opinion, a very strong resemblance of your mother: she is constantly with ourselves. Your sister is, as you hope, in good health and spirits. She is much admired and, what is more important to me, as much respected. My relations here love her most sincerely, and if they did not I should hate them from my heart. Seven years have now elapsed since our marriage, and though we have experienced some severe rubs, I can say for her, as I can sincerely say for myself, there has not been a moment of repentance. As to myself, business increases daily, so do connections. I have been able to pay off several heavy debts, and will shortly be able to liquidate them whole. Our house is in one of the politest streets in Dublin and though not spacious is fashionable and furnished with taste and expense under the direction of Madame Fanny, who has as strong an attachment for carpenters, painters etc as her mother. To you, as I have ever been, so will I ever remain, dear Ralph, your affectionate friend and brother, Leo MacNally."

(Folds letter, puts spectacles away)

But now we move forward to the year 1795.

Scene 8 Dublin 1795 The MacNally's house. Frances and Mrs I'Anson.

- Fr Oh Mother, I'm so happy you and Father have come to visit us. It seems so long since we last saw one another. You must see a great change in the children.
- Mrs I They're fine bairns. And before long there'll be another. You must look after yourself, my dear - you're looking very tired and pale.
- Fr Sometimes I do feel very tired, Mother. But it will pass. I worry about Leo - things have not been going too well for the Irish movement, and he has become involved with some very odd people.
- Mrs I But he still loves you, doesn't he, child ?
- Fr Oh yes, Mother, as much as ever. And I him. But he's always so busy with his work, defending members of the United Irishmen who have been arrested, that I scarce see him.
- Mrs I Never mind, my dear, perhaps your father can help during our stay here. Sometimes he gives quite good advice.
- Fr (Laughing) I'm sure he does, Mother. And I'm sure Leo will welcome it. Here they come now

(Enter MacNally and Mr I'Anson. MacNally limps)

- MacN And so you see, sir, the way things are heading. A rebellion must come, though I for one will not welcome it. Many of the leaders of the United Irishmen have been arrested, and one, a ~~fix~~ friend of mine, Wolfe Tone, has been expelled to America. But there are many others, who see insurrection as the only means of keeping Ireland's separate identity, and are working in secret to bring it about.
- Mr I Well, sir, you cannot expect me as an Englishman to have much sympathy with your cause. Although for my part, I would as soon see England shot of Ireland and her troubles, as have the bother of governing her.
- MacN Well, perhaps we have some ground in common, after all. But enough of Ireland's politics. Your visit here is to see your daughter. I hope, too, you will see something of our beautiful city.
- Mr I I had thought to do just that. Mrs I'Anson, would you care to walk in the park while the sun shines ?
- Mrs I Yes, my dear, that would be very nice. Frances, my dear, don't you think the fresh air would do you good ?
- Fr No thank you, Mama, I think I'll stay here. There is something I want to talk to Leo about.
- Mrs I Very well, my dear. Come along then, husband, let us take our walk.

(Exeunt Mr and Mrs I'Anson)

- MacN And now, my dearest, what is it that is of such importance that it keeps you from the company of your parents so soon after their arrival ?
- Fr Oh Leo - I'm frightened.

MacN Frightened ? What nonsense is this ?

Fr I have this premonition. We have been so very happy together - almost too happy. And now I have this awful dread that it will all end.

MacN But why should it ? We love each other as dearly now as ever - how can you think we would part ?

Fr Leo, I've not told you this before - you've so much to worry you. But I've felt so weak at times lately, and I see it as a sign that I will not survive the birth of our child.

MacN But my dear one, this is but imagination. You must not think like this. If you are ill, you will receive every attention there is to be had. But there is to be no talk of dying.

Fr I know I am foolish to talk like this, but this feeling weighs on me so. I have almost come to be resigned to it. This is why I have told you, so that we do not waste a single precious minute of the few weeks we have left together.

MacN What am I to do ? Must I humour you, must I accept that what you say will come true ? Oh my darling, what terrible nightmare is this we find ourselves in ?

Fr It need be no nightmare, my dearest. Let it be a time of even greater love than we have known so far, so that you will have only happy memories when I am gone.

MacN When you are gone ! I cannot, I will not believe this. How could I live without you

Fr And yet, my love, I tell you, it is to be. But knowing this, we can prepare. One thing I dread most about dying is that I should not have said goodbye to those I love. Be comforted, my sweet Leo, by the joy we have known, and when it is time for farewell, think only of our undying love.

MacN For all of us there comes a time to say goodbye

Song: "A time to say goodbye" Sung by MacNally

But that time is not yet, my dearest, it is only your foolish fancy. So, come, let us have no more of this.

Fr Well, Leo, at least I have told you, and now I feel happier in my mind... Listen - isn't that Mother and Father back already ?

(Enter Mr and Mrs I'Anson)

Why, Mother, back so soon ?

Mrs I What dreadful weather ! Did you not notice ? We had barely got across the street when it started to rain. Really, your climate is worse than London's - in fact, it quite reminds me of Yorkshire.

Fr Oh Mother, never mind. Come, sit by me and let us talk about your beloved Yorkshire.

Mrs I Yours, too, don't forget, Frances. You were happy enough there as a child.

Fr I suppose I was, Mother. Although before a young bird flies its nest, it thinks it the whole world, and so it was with me when as a young girl I walked through Richmond's cobbled streets. But it was in Richmond that love found me, so perhaps, after all, I should share your affection for the town.

Mrs I There, now, I always knew it ! When your child is born and you are well again, you must visit England and go once more to Richmond.

MacN Indeed, ma'am, that is an excellent idea. The Lass of Richmond Hill should return to her home !

Fr If only that may be ...

Song:

Sung by Frances

Curtain

Conclusion

Enter James Hook in front of curtain

Hook But alas, it was not to be. Frances's premonition was to prove only too well founded, for she died in childbirth on the 3th of September 1795, aged only 28. But for us she lives still, immortalised in song. And if, dear friends, anyone should tell you that Frances T'Anson was not the Lass of Richmond Hill, well, you at least will know differently.

Curtain rises on cast singing "Sweet Lass"