

## **Gilbert And Sullivan**

### **"A Many Years Ago"**

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Buttercup.

Hold! Ere upon your loss  
You lay much stress,  
A long-concealed crime  
I would confess!

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

Chorus.

Now this is most alarming!  
When she was young and charming,  
She practised baby-farming,  
A many years ago.

Buttercup.

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

Chorus. (explaining to eachother)

Now, this is the position:  
One was of low condition,  
The other a patrician,  
A many years ago.

Buttercup.

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

Chorus.

However could you do it?  
Some day, no doubt, you'll rue it,  
Although no creature knew it,  
So many years ago.

Buttercup.  
In time each little waif  
Forsook his foster-mother,  
The well born babe was Ralph -  
Your captain was the other!

Chorus.  
They left their foster-mother,  
The one was Ralph, our brother,  
Our captain was the other,  
A many years ago.

#### DIALOGUE

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

Buttercup.  
That is the idea I intended to convey, officially!

Sir Joseph.  
And very well you have conveyed it.

Buttercup.  
Aye! aye! yer 'onour.

Sir Joseph.  
Dear me! Let them appear before me, at once!

(Ralph enters as Captain; Captain as a common sailor.  
Josephine rushes to his arms)

Josephine.  
My father - a common sailor!

Captain.  
It is hard, is it not, my dear?

Sir Joseph.  
This is a very singular occurrence; I congratulate you  
both. (to Ralph)  
Desire that remarkably fine seaman to step forward.

Ralph.  
Corcoran. Three paces to the front - march!

Captain.

If what?

Ralph.

If what? I don't think I understand you.

Captain.

If you please.

Sir Joseph.

The gentleman is quite right. If you please.

Ralph.

Oh! If you please.

(Captain steps forward.)

Sir Joseph. (to Captain)

You are an extremely fine fellow.

Captain.

Yes, your honour.

Sir Joseph.

So it seems that you were Ralph, and Ralph was you.

Captain.

So it seems, your honour.

Sir Joseph.

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

Captain.

Don't say that, your honour - love levels all ranks.

Sir Joseph.

It does to a considerable extent, but it does not level them as much as that. (Handing Josephine to Ralph.) Here - take her, sir, and mind you treat her kindly.

Ralph & Josephine.

Oh bliss, oh rapture!

Captain & Buttercup.

Oh rapture, oh bliss!

Sir Joseph.

Sad my lot and sorry,

What shall I do? I cannot live alone!

Hebe.

Fear nothing - while I live I'll not desert you.  
I'll soothe and comfort your declining days.

Sir Joseph.

No, don't do that.

Hebe.

Yes, but indeed I'd rather -

Sir Joseph.

(resigned) To-morrow morn our vows shall all be  
plighted,  
Three loving pairs on the same day united!

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