

THE POOR SOLDIER

A MUSICAL COMEDY

Words by JOHN O'KEEFE

Music by WILLIAM SHIELD.

In a new version by DANIEL O'BRIEN

First performed at Covent Garden Theatre,
November 4th, 1783

DRAMATIS PERSONAE in order of appearance

DARBY

DERMOT

KATHLEEN

CAPTAIN FITZROY

FATHER LUKE

PATRICK

BAGATELLE

BOY

NORAH

SCENE – Carton¹, near the seat of the Duke of Leinster, in Ireland.

TIME - 1783²

¹ **Carton House** was one of Ireland's greatest stately homes and one time ancestral seat of the Earls of Kildare and Dukes of Leinster. Located 14 miles west of Dublin, in Maynooth, County Kildare, the Carton demesne runs to 1,100 acres (4.5 km²). For two hundred years it possessed the finest example in Ireland of a Georgian-created parkland landscape. In the 2000s much of the estate was redeveloped into two golf courses and the house into a hotel complex.

² February 1783 - American Revolutionary War: Great Britain formally declares that it will cease hostilities with the United States of America.

A 2010 PROLOGUE TO

THE POOR SOLDIER

Spoken by Mr Gerrard

Written by a self-styled Gentleman. Others may demur.

Prepared? Comf'table as seat doth allow?
Gathered here for operatic mirth I trow.
Mirth? Returning soldiery? Battles lost.
Back across the western seas tempest tos't.
Still - Mirth? The breathless witnesses demur.
Beneath the rebel earth they lie interr'd.
Whilst home to life and love the rump return
Credit of ign'rant nation, for to yearn.
Cent'ries pass. Revenant militia still.
Lauded? Applauded? Fife and drum yet thrill?
Sands of ancient Persia and Silken Road
Soak up all trace of spilled and loy'list blood.
Thus, though by mirth diverted, music lull'd
Honour to present braves be not annull'd

And Opera? Gaping Pit boarded oer?
Messrs Scratch and Pluckit beneath this floor;
Powers beyond those by Muse of Music giv'n,
Who for perfection hath eons striv'n?
'I see no Messrs Bash and Thumpit here,
No evidence of Bass or Trumpet near.
What then, "Opera", I dub soubriquet
Tis no more than another d-d dull play'.
Fear not my Lord. Nor Lady by your side
Our Muse of Music shall not be denied.
Though evidence of such is not so near
Tis but a fleeting moment, then all is clear -
Opera 'tis. Of that you can be certain,
Please but await the rising of the curtain.

1. OVERTURE

ACT ONE SCENE 1

The Country. Sunrise. A large mansion in the distance. A small house and a cottage near the front.

DARBY (Without)

Nay, nay; what harm, Dermot?

DERMOT

(*Without.*) Why, 'tis harm, so stay where you are.

Enter DERMOT and DARBY.

DARBY

Upon my faith, I won't say a word.

DERMOT

Go along back, I tell you.

DARBY

Lud, I never saw such a man as you are; why, sure, I'll only stand by.

DERMOT

But I tell you it's not proper for anyone to be by when one's alone with one's sweetheart.

DARBY

Well, I always like to be by when I'm alone with my sweetheart. She's asleep. I'll call her up. Halloa, Kathleen!

DERMOT

Will you be quiet, Darby? Can't you go make a noise there, under Father Luke's window?

DARBY

Ecod, if I do, he'll put me in the bishop's court! ³

DERMOT

If I wasn't so fond of Kathleen, I should think Nora, his niece there, a very handsome girl.

³ In the Catholic Church the bishop possesses the power to judge for his church

DARBY

Why so she is; but since her own sweet-heart, Patrick, full of ale and vexation, went for a soldier, she don't care a pin for the prettiest of us. By the lord, she even turned up her nose at me!

DERMOT

Well, well, you'll see how it will be. Somebody I know—

DARBY

Aye, you mean the foreign serving man to the strange officer that's just come from America and is now above at my lord's. Eh, why faith, Dermot, it would indeed be a shame to let a black muzzled mounseer⁴ of a Frenchman carry off a pretty girl from a parcel of tight Irish boys like us.

DERMOT

So 'twou'd, Darby; but my sweet Kathleen is fast asleep, and never dreams that her poor Dermot is here under her window.

DARBY

Aye; never dreams that poor Darby's under her window! But I'll have her up. Kathleen -
Kath -

DERMOT

Hush! Go away, Darby.

Pushes DARBY off

2. AIR: SLEELP ON - DERMOT.

***Sleep on—sleep on, my Kathleen, dear,
May peace possess thy breast.
Yet dost thou dream thy true love's here,
Deprived of peace and rest?***

***The birds sing sweet, the morning breaks,
These joys are none, are none to me;
Though sleep is fled, poor Dermot wakes
To none but love and thee.***

Exit DERMOT. DARBY re-enters

⁴ Common 18th and 19th century anglicisation of the French 'Monsieur'

DARBY

What a dull dog that is! Ah, poor Dermot! Ha, ha! Why, such a song couldn't wake an owl out of his sleep, let alone a pretty girl that's dreaming of I! Kathleen, upon my conscience, I'll - yes; I'll rouse her.

3. AIR: DEAR KATHLEEN —DARBY.

*Dear Kathleen, you no doubt
Find sleep how very sweet 'tis.
Dogs bark, and cocks have crowed out,
You never dream how late 'tis.
This morning gay,
I post away
To have with you a bit of play;
On two legs rid
Along to bid
Good-morrow to your night-cap.*

*Last night, a little bowsy,
With whiskey, ale, and cider,
I asked young Betty Blowsy
To let me sit beside her.
Her anger rose,
And sour as sloes,
The little gipsy cocked her nose;
Yet here I've rid
Along to bid
Good morrow to your nightcap.*

*Beneath the honey-suckle,
The daisy, and the vi'let,
Compose so sweet a truckle,
They'll tempt you sure to spoil it.
Young Sal and Bell
I've pleas'd so well—
But, hold, I mustn't kiss and tell!
So here I've rid
Along to bid
Good morrow to your nightcap.*

KATHLEEN opens the cottage window.

DARBY

Aye, there she is! Oh, I'm the boy for it!

KATHLEEN

Is that Dermot?

DARBY

Oh, dear me, she takes me for Dermot! He, he, he!

KATHLEEN

Who's there?

DARBY

Surely, 'tis only I.

KATHLEEN

What, Dermot?

DARBY

Yes, I am – Darby (*Aside*).

KATHLEEN

Stay a bit, I'm coming down. (*Retires*)

DARBY

I thought I'd bring her down; I'm a nice marksman.

Enter KATHLEEN from the Cottage.

KATHLEEN

Where are you, my dear Dermot?

DARBY (*Comes forward singing*)

"Good morrow to your nightcap."

KATHLEEN (*Starting.*)

Darby! Now hang you for an impudent fellow.

DARBY

Then hang me about your neck, my sweet Kathleen.

KATHLEEN

It's a fine thing that people can't take their rest of a morning, but you must come roaring under their windows.

DARBY

Now, what need you be so cross with a body, when you know I love you, too?

KATHLEEN

Well, let me alone, Darby; for once for all, I tell you, I will not have you.

DARBY

No!

KATHLEEN

No; as I hope for man, I won't.

DARBY

Ha, ha, ha, ha! Hope for man, and yet won't have me!

KATHLEEN

Yes; but I'll tell you what sort of a man; then look into the river, and see if you're he.

DARBY

And if not, I'll pop in head foremost.

KATHLEEN

Do, Darby and then you may whistle for me.

DARBY

How can I whistle when the speak's out of me?