

**THE MAID OF THE
MILL: AN OPERA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649416738

The Maid of the Mill: An Opera by Isaac Bickerstaff

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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ISAAC BICKERSTAFF

**THE MAID OF THE
MILL: AN OPERA**

Oxberry's Edition.

THE

MAID OF THE MILL.

AN OPERA,

By Isaac Bickerstaff.

WITH PREFATORY REMARKS.

THE ONLY EDITION EXISTING, WHICH IS FAITHFULLY
MARKED WITH THE STAGE BUSINESS,
AND STAGE DIRECTIONS,

AS IT IS PERFORMED AT THE

Theatres Royal.

By W. OXBERRY, *Comedian.*

BOSTON :

PUBLISHED BY WELLS AND LILLY—COURT-STREET :
AND A. T. GOODRICH & CO.—NEW-YORK.

1822.

17472.6.8.8

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1918

Remarks.

THE MAID OF THE MILL.

THIS opera, which has long ranked among the most successful productions of BICKERSTAFF, was brought out in the year 1765, with unqualified applause, and continues to receive a very eminent portion of public favour. From the want of broad and striking incidents, it sinks in theatrical effect beneath some popular pieces by the same author, and such is the singular infelicity with which its original music was arranged, that the chief vocal characters, till a recent period, were compelled to rely for support upon the casual assistance of auxiliary composition. It was judiciously revised at Covent-garden Theatre a few seasons since, but has not lately been repeated.

There is hardly a stage in Europe to which the celebrated novel of "Pamela" has not been brought in a dramatic form. The French and Italians had made it the subject of many different efforts, when Mr. BICKERSTAFF proceeded to the same source, and compiled his materials for the present work. The fable, however, is varied with judgment and spirit, for although a parallel may be traced to almost the minutest circumstance detailed by the writer, no positive identity of either language, or characters can be fixed upon the scenes in which that parallel is exhibited. *Giles* and *Ralph*, as they stand, are not even suggested by

the pages of RICHARDSON, though the qualities they display, the importance they command and the amusement they afford, are the results of close attention to nature, and great comic ability. *Giles* is the faithful portrait of a substantial farmer, with nothing to recommend him, morally, but inoffensive habits and a simple heart; rich in the amount of his worldly wealth, but still richer in the influence of conscious value. From rank coarseness of manners, he evinces brutality without meaning to offend, and insinuates the foulest suspicions of maiden purity as a mere proof of superior wisdom. *Ralph* forms an admirable companion to this subject, by showing the real features of rustic life, upon a lower scale, with accumulated strength, and improving fidelity. He exhibits many touches of true boorish humour, and among them, no finer effusion of untutored simplicity is before us, than his exclamation to *Patty*, when she wants a proper acknowledgment for the kindness of *Lord Aimsworth*,—"Down on your knees, and fall a crying."

How far operatical writing, under the present regulations, is intitled to expect the sanction of criticism, it can hardly be worth while to discuss. Upon public indulgence it will continue to prefer irresistible claims, while rendered an object of entertainment, because the English stage, and perhaps every other in its essence, has never scrupled to adopt the means of pleasing by innoxious expedients. It affects no rivalry with the loftier inspirations of the mimic muse, but solicits only to be made the humble instrument of that relief which the finest productions must sometimes require, and such a boon may surely be granted, without doing violence to delicate taste, or enlightened understanding.

To consider the "Maid of the Mill" in its peculiar class, as a representation of rural manners mixed with such variations of mode as social intercourse seems likely to procure, will lead us to a proper estimate of the effect it was intended to convey. Wit and satire under such an aspect we are not authorized to rank among its legitimate attributes, although their absence has been loudly censured by certain observers who would be puzzled to specify by which of the *dramatis personæ* they could be fairly supplied. It has many ebullitions of genuine humour, and is marked throughout with unerring consistency. The plot is simple, yet interesting; the scenes, though regulated by musical evolution, are in excellent dependence, and the diction, if unmarked by poetical vigour, is replete with unobtrusive propriety. From the practical virtues of *Lord Aimworth*, which are worth a volume of precept, irrational pride may derive a cure, and licentious love obtain an antidote; in *Sir Harry Sycamore*, talkative ignorance may read a salutary lesson; and *Patty* is so bright an incentive to the energies of female honour, that she cannot be seen too often, or too closely followed.

It is, perhaps, not unworthy of remark that the hero of RICHARDSON'S romance is said to have been an EARL OF GAINSBOROUGH, who married his gamekeeper's daughter, in the reign of GEORGE THE SECOND, after many fruitless attempts to corrupt the principles he so properly rewarded.

Time of Representation.

The time this piece takes in representation is about two hours and forty-two minutes. The first act occupies the space of fifty-seven minutes—The second, sixty—the third, forty-five.—The half-price commences, generally, at a quarter after nine o'clock.

Stage Directions.

By R.H.	----- is meant -----	Right Hand.
L.H.	-----	Left Hand.
S.E.	-----	Second Entrance.
U.E.	-----	Upper Entrance.
M.D.	-----	Middle Door.
D.F.	-----	Door in Flat.
R.H.D.	-----	Right Hand Door.
L.H.D.	-----	Left Hand Door.

Costume.

LORD AIMWORTH.

A dress black coat, waistcoat and breeches, hat and star.

SIR HARRY SYCAMORE.

An old gentleman's slate coloured suit, trimmed with silver, cocked hat, bound with white feather.

MERVIN.

Modern suit, a gipsy great coat as a disguise.

FAIRFIELD.

Light drab coat and breeches, red skirted waistcoat, white hat, leather gaiters.

GILES.

Drab frock, red waistcoat, buff breeches and leather gaiters.

RALPH.

White coat, red waistcoat, leather breeches, and drab frock, white hat.

LABOURERS.

Hobb frocks.

SIXTEEN GIPSIES.

Great coats and taro dresses.

LADY SYCAMORE.

A crimson satin dress, trimmed with lace and white satin ribband.

THEODOSIA.

White satin body, white muslin petticoat trimmed with white satin ribband and lace. Disguise. A gipsies dress.

FANNY.

Grey stuff body, red stuff skirt, red cloak and check apron.

PATTY

Grey calico open gown, white muslin apron. 2nd dress. Black velvet body, white petticoat with black trimming.