

**LYRICS OF THE
BEGUM: A COMIC
OPERA IN TWO ACTS**

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Lyrics of The begum: a comic opera in two acts by Reginald De Koven & Harry B. Smith

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REGINALD DE KOVEN & HARRY B. SMITH

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THE BEGUM.

A COMIC OPERA IN TWO ACTS.

Libretto by
HARRY B. SMITH.

Music by
REGINALD DE KOVEN.

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THE STORY OF "THE BEGUM."

"The Begum" is a two-act comic opera, with the scene laid in the East Indies. The *Begum* is a princess reigning over the province of Oude. She is a historical personage, and it is a fact that she was allowed as many husbands as she pleased to marry. In the opera the *Begum* (Mme. Mathilde Cottrelly) makes it her custom to marry her general-in-chief, and when he becomes a bore she declares war. The husband meets a hero's death, and the *Begum* marries his successor, who expeditiously meets a like fate. The central comedy figure is *Howja-Dhu*, the Prime Minister, played by DeWolf Hopper. This worthy has a substitute yclept *Klahm-Chowdee* (Hubert Wilke) serving for him in the army, and whenever the substitute distinguishes himself in battle *Howja*, as Prime Minister, promotes himself to higher military rank. The court astrologer, *Myhnt-Fhuleep* (Digby Bell) has a daughter *Aminah* (Marion Manola) engaged in the snake-charming business, engaged also to *Pooteh-Wehl* (Edwin Hoff), *Howja-Dhu's* son. These two cannot marry until *Pooteh-Wehl* succeeds his father as Prime Minister, so *Myhnt-Fhuleep* prophesies the demise of *Howja-Dhu*, being assisted in his cabalistic work by *Namouna*, a fortune-teller, played by Laura Joyce Bell. These two do not rely upon the black art alone, but after making a prediction they conspire zealously to secure its fulfillment. When the opera opens the *Begum* is returning from battle, wherein her husband, the general-in-chief, has been slain, as usual. The substitute, *Klahm-Chowdee*, is the sole remaining private in the army, and the *Begum* is about to make him general-in-chief and marry him, when she discovers that he is a salaried substitute, and declaring that no sordid hireling should be her bridegroom she proclaims that the employer of the substitute is the real hero, who should be promoted and married. This very disagreeable honor falls to the lot of *Howja-Dhu*, and Mr. Hopper's despair here is terrible to witness, for no one married to the *Begum* ever lives more than a few weeks, while to heighten the terror of the situation *Howja*, a middle-aged widower, is engaged to marry *Damayanti*, a popular Nautch girl, played by Miss Annie Myers.

The scene of the second act is the exterior of a temple on the banks of the Ganges, where the *Begum's* guards are keeping a death-watch on *Pooteh-Wehl*, now the betrothed

of her royal highness. She discovers that *Howja* is not defunct, but feigning dissolution, and *Klahm-Chowdee* is dispatched by *Myhnt-Fhuleep* in search of the fugitive. *Klahm* says he loves the *Legum* for herself alone, and he will only consent to play the detective on condition that *Myhnt* prophesy that he (*Klahm*) marry her. This is agreed to, and *Klahm-Chowdee* starts in search of *Howja*, having only the description that he is "a middle-aged brunette." With this description he suspects almost the entire male population, including himself. *Howja* is disguised as a water-carrier, and, on account of his attachment for *Damayanti*, he is desirous of getting into the habit of living once more. *Pooteh-Wehl* and *Aminah* also wish *Howja* to reappear in order that the *Begum* may marry him. *Howja* asserts that he cannot reappear as a general-in-chief, for he will be sacrificed to the matrimonial juggernaut at once. "Very well," says *Myhnt-Fhuleep*, "you were promoted to the position of general-in-chief because of your substitute's valor, now degrade yourself because of your substitute's cowardice."

"But," says *Howja-Dhu*, "he won't be a coward. He takes a malicious delight in being absurdly courageous."

"Bribe him," continues *Myhnt*, "offer him your cast-off title of 'General-in-Chief.'" This is done. *Klahm-Chowdee* goes to work to be a coward, *Howja* conscientiously degrades himself and confers his title of General upon *Klahm*. Then *Howja* reappears as a lowly private, while *Klahm*, appearing as General-in-Chief, is pounced upon by the *Begum* and married according to custom. It has been her hope, however, to be loved for herself alone, and as *Klahm-Chowdee* is a satisfactory husband in this respect, she proclaims this to be her final alliance, much to the satisfaction of her four pretty nieces, *Taf-eh* (Josephine Knapp), *Kahramel* (Nina Bertini), *Nou-gat* (Grace Seavey), and *Bon-bon* (Paula Franko), who could not marry till the *Begum* was wed for good. *Pooteh-Wehl* is restored to *Aminah*; *Howja-Dhu* marries *Damayanti*; *Myhnt-Fhuleep* is united to *Namouna*, and the matrimonial epidemic, characteristic of comic-opera choruses, seizes upon all the Nautch girls and the officers of the *Begum's* army. The court jester, *Fhust-Naut* (Mr. DeAngelis) and an officer, *Asch-Khart* (Mr. Macdonough), are also connected with the plot.

THE BEGUM.

A Hindoo Comic Opera.

ACT I.

SCENE. The garden of the Begum's Palace on the Banks of the Ganges, entrance of the Palace, L. Splendid Throne for the Begum. At R. the Entrance to the residence of Myhnt-Jhuleep. Nautch Girls enter R. and L. in characteristic dance.

CHORUS OF NAUTCH GIRLS.

With acrobatic trickery
We circulate around.
The beauties of Terpsichore
We gracefully expound.
In evolutions sinuous,
We picturesquely move.
Our mazy grace continuous
Spectators must approve.

Male Chorus (In the palace):—

Your dancing is convivial
We fully understand;
But dancing is but trivial
While we have war on hand.

Girls

We need not long expatiate
On grace that must ingratiate
Itself with those who satiate
Their dazzled sense of sight;
For young and old with gratitude
Admire each pose and attitude,
In epigram and platitude
Expressing their delight.
Tripping, twirling,
Wheeling, whirling,

We revolve in fashion that is pleasing to the eye.

Pirouetting
And coquetting,

Poetry of motion is what we exemplify.

(All dance enthusiastically. After dance, they retire up stage. Myhnt-Jhuleep and Asch-Khart enter R.)

RECTITATIVE.

Asch-Khart. This joy is well, oh! daughters of the dance,
All sadness to this day were contradictory.
'Tis meet and fitting thus to sing and prance
In celebration of our Begum's victory.

Myhnt-Jhuleep. To me is due the routing of the foe;
All foolish pride pray mortify and dissipate:
For I, I prophesied some time ago
That such a victory you might anticipate.

(Asch-Khart salaams and exits.)

SONG—MYHNT-JHULEEP.

When gazing in the future in capacity clairvoyant,
Great marvels I can contemplate in ages yet to be,
Phenomena whose presence now would render you all buoyant;
But, sad to say, their certainty I cannot guarantee.
For instance, men of native birth in all police positions,
And aldermen refusing proffered bribes with fiendish glee,
And conscientious jurymen and honest politicians;
But, sad to say, their certainty I cannot guarantee.
I see existing amity 'twixt capital and labor,
Monopolists and communists together taking tea,
And every European pow'r hobnobbing with its neighbor,
But, sad to say, their certainty I cannot guarantee.
All parvenus will look upon their neighbors as their equals,
An erudite attorney will accept a mod'rate fee,
And there will be no weddings with divorces for their sequels,
But, sad to say, their certainty I cannot guarantee.

(The Nautch Girls come down stage.)

Chorus. When that blissful time shall come
We will hail the millennium;

But it fills us with despair
When we reflect we may not be there.

(The girls return to their places up stage.)

Myhnt. I see, methinks, the millionaires do good in manner stealthy,
Embezzlers who have cash not given leave to go scot free,
Young damsels who will not prefer the suitors who are wealthy,
But, sad to say, their certainty I cannot guarantee.
The circus clowns and minstrel men some novel jests will
offer,

While woman will not wear her hair as short as short can be,
And sometimes will say "Thank you," when a street-car seat
you proffer,

But, sad to say, their certainty I cannot guarantee.
A race of honest tradesmen to our many wants will cater,
Acquaintances will never want to borrow "say a V,"
And one to keep from famine need not always "tip" the waiter,
But, sad to say, their certainty I cannot guarantee.
Our incomes will be longer, and our monthly bills be shorter,
Obliging friends will laugh when one relates a *jeu d'esprit*,
When riding in the sleeping car you need not fee the porter;
But, recollect, these marvels I refuse to guarantee.

(Nautch Girls come down stage as before.)

Chorus. Though that most ecstatic state
Will for us all arrive too late,
We will waive that small detail,
Singing, "Day of delights, all hail."

CHORUS OF NAUTCH GIRLS.

Strew the way with flow'rets blooming
And with garlands gay.
Let their blushing and perfuming
Make a holiday.
Come the victors with their trophies,
Fruits of stratagem,
So with dance and joyous strophes,
Let us welcome them.

*(The Nautch Girls group R. and L. The officers of the Begum's
army led by Asch-Khart, enter L. in single file.)*