

A COUNTRY GIRL or Town and Country Life

a musical play in two acts; libretto by James T Tanner. Lyrics by Adrian Ross. Additional lyrics by Percy Greenbank. Music by Lionel Monckton. Additional songs by Paul Rubens.

Daly's Theatre, London, 18 January 1902

Daly's Theatre, New York, 22 September 1902 (112 perfs)

Herald Square Theatre 29 May 1911

L'Olympia, Paris, October 1904

SYNOPSIS

Act 1

Squire Challenor presided benevolently over the little country village where his manor house lay, and disposed of much of his family fortune in an attempt to alleviate the local unemployment problem by reopening the tin mines which had once been the region's principal source of income. The Squire's son, Geoffrey, spent his youth in the company of Marjorie Joy and occasionally with the village flirt, Nan.

On the Squire's death, Geoffrey found he needed to find a way to replenish his funds. Leasing the manor to the rich and ambitious Sir Joseph Verity, Geoffrey set off to sea to seek his fortune. Marjorie too left the village but Nan stayed at home spending time with Sir Joseph and his son Douglas and a number of other gentlemen.

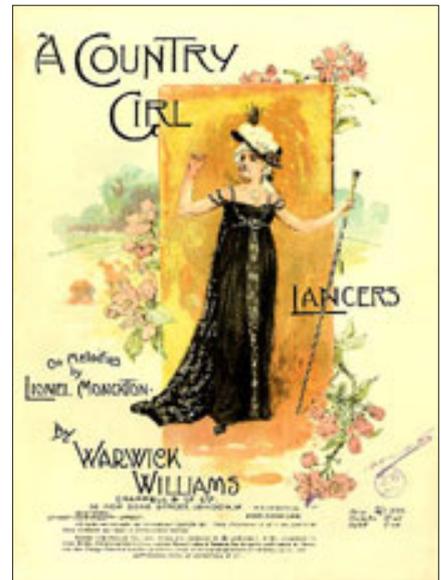
At the opening of act one it is five years since Geoffrey left the village, and the Veritys are well installed at the manor. Sir Joseph has plans for Douglas to be elected to Parliament for the borough. And he has even more pressing intentions of a different kind towards the influential society lady, Mrs Quinton Raikes, recently legally decreed a widow following the disappearance of her husband in the Himalayas.

Mrs Raikes keeps him at an arm's length but although she has position, she is distinctly short of money. She agrees that Madam Sophie should stay at the manor as a friend to compensate for not being able to pay her bill. Sophie is in seventh heaven, for this is the village where she grew up and she is delighted to be able to show her old friends how she has risen in the world.

While the electioneering, the flirting and the social-climbing go on, Geoffrey Challoner and his faithful factotum Barry arrive back in town. Barry swiftly gets the local situation weighed up and sees that the villagers would much prefer to elect Geoffrey to Parliament than the unenthusiastic Douglas. Douglas can't make any serious progress with either the electorate or, more importantly to him, with Nan.

It is the homecoming season in Devonshire, for Marjorie joy has also come back from London where, unbeknown to all at home, she has become a singing star under an assumed name. She is longing to see Geoffrey again. Although she is now a fine lady, she wants him to find her as he left her and, hiding her fine clothes, she dons her old blue dress and sunbonnet for their meeting.

Geoffrey's ship has come from the Orient and he has brought with him some Eastern passengers, the Rajah



of Bhong and his intended bride, the Princess Mehelaneh. They are by no means a traditional pair, for the Rajah is an Englishman and the Princess a young lady of a distinctly feminist turn. She has insisted on being brought to Britain to be presented at the local Emperor's court before her marriage to the Rajah, and he is strangely anxious to get their business over and leave the country again.

The cause of his fears is made plain when he bumps into Lord Anchester, an old acquaintance from the days when he was an Englishman. The Rajah, it appears, was once the husband of Mrs Quinton Raikes. It was to escape his wife that he went off to the Himalayas. When he is informed that, according to British law, he is dead he is quite happy to remain that way. The Princess, on the other hand, is not so anxious to be on her way. She has learned from Barry that in England one may choose (within reason) one's preferred spouse and she is soon busy sizing up alternatives to her nervous Rajah.

Barry has been having a fine time whipping up support for Geoffrey's unwitting Parliamentary candidature. Now he has an attempt at filling his master's empty purse by selling off the worthless old tin mine to Verity on the pretext that providing work for the locals will earn his son the votes he needs to win the election. He also indulges in a bit of chit-chat with a fancy lady from the manor only to find that she is no lady but his old sweetheart, Sophie.

Barry's meddling produces problems as well as successes. The Princess, who has installed herself at the manor, has decided that her choice of husband shall be Geoffrey whom she will set up at her side in her native land. Barry is delighted at such an advantageous bit of matchmaking and, without realising the harm he is doing, talks about the affair to Marjorie Joy. As the finale begins, and the villagers welcome Geoffrey to the polls, the Princess publicly stakes her claim. Geoffrey, politely kissing her hand, declines the oriental match. Marjorie, who has seen only the kiss, has gone, back to London and the stage.

Act 2

At Lord Anchester's London house a bal à la Directoire is being held to which all the principals in turn arrive to join in the ensemble. There is Nan, the Rajah accompanied by the Princess, desperately avoiding his widowed wife and longing for the happy land of Bhong, Sophie, still under the social protection of Mrs Raikes who clearly hasn't yet paid her dressmaker's bill, and Marjorie Joy in her London persona as Miss Montague exerting a strange fascination over Geoffrey who finds in her an amazing resemblance to his lost sweetheart. Most surprisingly, there is Barry, disguised as an old lady to get in past the doorman.

Nan has another go at the Princess who has still not renounced her pretensions to Geoffrey, while Barry ends up quarelling with Sophie who has seen through his disguise and is determined to give him plenty to be jealous about. Sir Joseph Verity, on the other hand has not penetrated the disguise and makes such heavy approaches to the 'lady' that Barry is obliged to seek refuge in the arms of the surprised Rajah.

In the hearing of Miss Montague, Geoffrey squarely refuses the Princess's renewed offer in favour of the love of his 'little country girl' and, when Lord Anchester requests the actress to favour the company with a song, she obliges revealing her double identity to a grateful Geoffrey. In the gilded galleries of Belgravia, the simple country girl gets her simple country boy while the rest of the company pair off in happy imitation.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

- Geoffrey Challoner
- Mr Quinton Raikes (The Rajah of Bhong)
- Sir Joseph Verity
- Douglas Verity
- Granfer Mummery
- Lord Anchester
- Lord Grassmere
- Major Vicat
- Sir Charles Corteylou
- Tzanticheff
- Rube Fairway
- Barry
- Marjorie Joy
- Princess Mehelaneh
- Nan
- Mrs Quinton Raikes
- Madame Sophie

Lady Anchester, Miss Powyscourt, Lady Arnott, Miss Courtlands, Miss Ecroyd, Miss Sydney, Miss Ormonde, Miss Selwyn, Miss Carruthers, etc.

MUSICAL NUMBERS:

ACT 1

1. "When the birds begin to sing" (Opening Chorus)
2. "Young Jan he were a harvester" (Song) Granfer Mummery
3. "Try Again, Johnnie" (Song) Nan
4. "Cool!" (Song) - Marjorie (Music by Paul Rubens. Lyrics by Percy Greenbank.)
5. "The Sailor's Life" (Traditional Song) - Geoffrey
6. "Yo Ho, Little Girls (Yo Ho)" (Song and Chorus) - Barry, Chorus
7. "Boy and Girl" (Duet) - Marjorie, Geoffrey
8. "My Darling Girlie" - Geoffrey (Music by Alfred D. Moulton. Lyrics by John P. Wilson.)
9. "The Rajah of Bhong" (Chorus and Scene) - Quinton, Princess Mehelaneh, Chorus
10. "Molly the Marchioness" (Song and Chorus) Nan, Chorus
11. "The Arcadians" (Chorus and Scene) Chorus
12. "Two Little Chicks" (Duet) - Barry, Madame Sophie (Music by Paul Rubens. Lyrics by Percy Greenbank.)
13. "Under the Deodar" (Song) Princess Mehelaneh
14. "Hurrah for the Squire" (Finale) Principals, Chorus

ACT 2

15. Opening Chorus (The Reception) - Chorus
16. "Take Your Pretty Partner (to the Ball)" (Sextette) - Marjorie, Nan, Madame Sophie, Quinton, Douglas, Lord Grassmere
17. "Me and Mrs. Brown" (Song) - Barry (Music by Paul Rubens. Lyrics by Percy Greenbank.)
18. "My Own Little Girl" (Song) Geoffrey
19. "Peace! Peace!" (Song and Chorus) Quinton, Chorus
20. "Quarrelling Duet" - Madame Sophie, Barry (Music by Paul Rubens. Lyrics by Percy Greenbank.)
21. Finale

SCENES AND SETTINGS

Act 1: A Devonshire Landscape.

Act 2: Interior of the Ministry of Fine Arts.