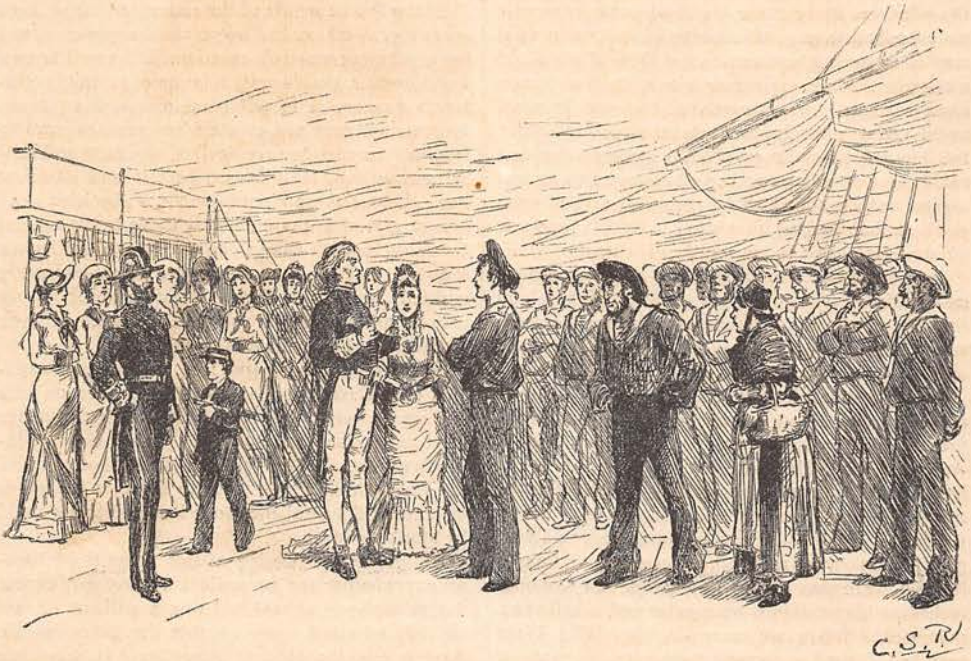


HOME AND SOCIETY.

"H. M. S. Pinafore," for Amateurs.

ENGLISH OPERA FOR COUNTRY TOWNS.



SCENE FROM THE FIRST ACT OF "H. M. S. PINAFORE," AS SET AT THE STANDARD THEATRE, NEW YORK.

In the spring of 1878 there was produced in London at a little theater in the Strand, known as the Opéra Comique, an original nautical comic opera in two acts, called "H. M. S. *Pinafore*," written by Mr. W. S. Gilbert, and composed by Mr. Arthur Sullivan. It is now nearly a year since Her Majesty's Ship *Pinafore* sailed into public favor in England, but the songs of its sailors are still heard in the same London theater night after night; the saucy ship has crossed the blue Atlantic, putting first into the harbor of Boston, then making the port of Philadelphia, while, in a very short time after its first appearance off our coasts, there were in the city of New York four theaters at once each flying the pennant of "H. M. S. *Pinafore*." So much for the success of the opera. As much can fairly be said of its merits. It is the best light musical comedy written in our language since the "Beggars' Opera,"—not excepting Sheridan's "Duenna," or Moore's "M. P." And the "Pinafore" has the advantage over the "Beggars' Opera" in that it contains nothing to offend the most fastidious. It has the lightness, the brightness, the airy cleverness, in short, all the good qualities of the best French *opéra bouffés*,—with none of the bad,—none of the blemishes

which so often disfigure even the finest French humor. "H. M. S. *Pinafore*" has a purely English story set in simple action and told in simple language. Its humor, its satire, its moral,—all these are as clean, as honest, as healthy, as the most rigid respectability could desire.

The author of this amusing play is Mr. W. S. Gilbert, well known in this country as the author of "Pygmalion and Galatea," of "Charity," of "Trial by Jury," and of the grotesquely humorous "Bab Ballads,"—from one of which, "Captain Reece, of the *Mantelpiece*," he has taken the suggestion of his plot. The composer is Mr. Arthur Sullivan, almost equally well known in the United States as the composer of many a charming ballad; his more important work, overture, oratorio, symphony, is not unfamiliar to musical experts here.

When we have said that the costumes of the "Pinafore" are modern, that only a single scene is shown during both acts, and that there are only seven parts of any prominence, it will be seen at once that the piece is one just suited for performance by amateurs. There is hardly a small city or a large village in the country which has not its soprano, its contralto, its

little knot of musical people, its somewhat large circle of people who take an intermittent interest in music, and its still larger circle of people who are only too glad to find something to be interested in, and on which they can worthily spend their energies. In any such community "H. M. S. *Pinafore*" is a possibility. The practicability of its performance depends wholly on the possession by the music-loving and amateur-acting sets of some one possessed of sufficient influence, energy and musical knowledge to manage such a performance. If he can see a good professional performance of the piece, he can obtain at first hand many of the following suggestions and many others which do not lend themselves to description.

The book of the opera, published in one volume by Oliver Ditson & Co., is sold for one dollar and contains the whole play, —the words spoken as well as those sung, —the songs and the concerted pieces, all properly scored, and the piano accompaniment. It contains, therefore, all the musical information needed. As the humor of the piece is largely in the words of the songs, the singers must not attempt to display themselves at the expense of the dramatist; the words *must* be heard distinctly, they must be enunciated with great clearness, and the accompaniment must never be loud enough to drown the voice. Too much stress cannot be laid on this point: —the lines must be heard; the musician must be subordinate to the dramatist.

But the music is so good that it will repay ample study, and with ample study it will be found possible to give due effect to the words without sacrificing the music. But it will need hard work.

As the play itself is very funny, the actors need not try to "make fun"; if they do, they will kill the humor. The piece must be played throughout gracefully and easily, with no effort to be amusing, with no straining after comic effect, but just as though the actors fully believed in the entire possibility of the impossibilities with which the piece abounds. It is in this calm acceptance by all the characters of numberless improbabilities that the humor of the play consists. Any touch of burlesque extravagance is out of tone and inharmonious.

The scenery is very simple. The same set suffices for both acts.



MR. THOMAS WHIFFIN, AS "SIR JOSEPH PORTER." (STANDARD THEATRE, NEW YORK CITY.)

It represents the deck of the *Pinafore*. For the flat at back, any view of a distant town will do; a little in front of this runs the bulwark of the ship about two or three feet high; it crosses the stage. On the right hand side of the stage is a little house, the cabin of the captain; the roof of this can be easily arranged and serves as the bridge from which the captain makes his recitative speech to the assembled crew.

A trap-door in the center of the stage, back near the bulwark, has a ladder going down, and is surrounded by a brass rail; this is supposed to be the hatch-way leading below. Any bare places can be filled up by a hanging sail or two and by any number of flags.

The costumes, as has been said, are modern. *Ralph Rackstraw* (the tenor), *Dick Deadeye*, the *Bosen*, and the rest of the crew, are all simply



SCENE FROM SECOND ACT (STANDARD THEATRE).

dressed as sailors. And here it is to be noted that the simpler and the more commonplace the costume, the more humorous seems the fundamental absurdity of the whole thing. *Captain Corcoran* should wear the uniform of a captain in the R. N., but white linen trousers and any dark blue military coat with brass buttons and gold lace may be made to serve. *Sir Joseph Porter* wears the court dress of a British minister,—pumps, silk stockings, white satin knee-breeches, dark dress-coat embroidered with gold on collar and sleeves; he has an eye-glass and either carries under his arm or puts on a flat-folding court hat, which may perhaps fairly be described as a three-cornered hat with only two corners. *Tom Tucker*, the midshipmite who has nothing at all to say, should be given to the youngest possible boy; he is dressed in dark blue navy suit with a peaked cap and carries a very long telescope under his arm; during the opening chorus, sung while the sailors are at work polishing the brass of the deck, the midshipmite superintends them with an air of authority. *Dick Deadeye*, it may be remarked, ought to be given to a gentleman of tragic aspirations.

The ladies' costumes are equally easily managed. *Josephine*, *Hebe*, and the relatives of *Sir Joseph* all wear the neat dresses a lady naturally would wear on board ship; in England they wore yachting suits of white and blue. In the second act, *Josephine* has a wedding-dress of white. *Little Buttercup* may be played either by a young or old woman, who is attired somewhat in the Mrs. Gamp style, and bears about with her a sort of peddler's basket. But a copy of the "Bab Ballads," illustrated by the author, will give an adequate notion of just what is wanted.

One word more. If "H. M. S. *Pinafore*" is played anywhere by American amateurs, let the authors benefit by it. No honest man will use the labor of others without reward. Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan have published their work, and it can be taken by any one without money and without price. They have no legal right to demand payment; and the moral right on our part therefore to pay them if we use the result of their toil is but the stronger.

A fee of £5 or \$25 would probably seem to Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan an adequate reward for any one performance by amateurs. The money might be sent to Mr. W. S. Gilbert, care of Chatto & Windus, Piccadilly, London, or to Mr. Arthur Sullivan, care of Metzler & Co., Great Marlborough street, W. London. Money sent this way will do much for international friendship. ARTHUR PENN.

"In Tea-cup Time."

TEA-LOVERS embrace a universal brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity from Elia and his cousin Bridget, who were "old-fashioned enough to drink their hyson unmixed, still, of an afternoon,"—down to Mrs. Gamp, and her familiar, Betsy Prig.

Never was there a period when the five o'clock tea-table and all of its appurtenances played so conspicuous a part in our homes, as now. Belinda and Evelina, exchanging gossip in their sacques and hoops at an eighteenth century kettle-drum, knew

not the numberless little contrivances and devices that to-day surround this enticing ante-prandial repast. It is the *fleur fine* of entertainments—a meal so purged of the grosser element that even Lord Byron could not have shuddered to view the fair participants. It is the hour for confidential revelations of the inner self, which break into shy existence as the light of lamp and candles glimmers out upon the fading day. Above all, is it not the supreme moment when woman meets woman for the discussion of their fellow-beings, an operation sometimes resembling the whipping with feathers which befell poor Graciosa at the hands of Grognon's Furies in the ancient fairy tale!

But this delicate and impalpable refection must not by any means be confounded with the tea-table of our aunts and cousins, grandmothers and other relatives, still happily to be enjoyed in rural neighborhoods. Who does not retain a vivid and cheerful recollection of that evening regalement in the country, around a groaning board, where the palate is required to run up the gamut of gustation, from chipped beef to strawberries and cream? The five o'clock tea-table of fashionable society claims but a far-away, fine-lady kinship with its rustic cousin. There is only one feature, indeed, bespeaking relationship between them—and that is the generous nectar whence they take their name.

No doubt the present passion for five o'clock tea is, in some sort, a symptom of the china mania which sits like *Atra Cura* behind so many saddles nowadays, driving us to rash and desperate lengths. We exhaust time and means in the eager acquisition of—to quote again from the gentle Elia—"those little, lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques, that, under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective—a china tea-cup." For them we explore every dingy den of a shop to be found anywhere; we coax them from the cupboards of patient spinster aunts; we palpitate for them at auction sales; we amass them by hook or by crook, and then—suffer righteous pangs until our treasures are properly displayed to the eyes of envious friends! There is no limit to the range of our tea-tray collections: they embrace Davenport and Longwy, Crown Derby and Mings, Tokio and Dresden, Minton, Spode and Copeland, Sèvres and Etruria. Cups and saucers of every age and family meet together in the symposia of to-day. And sweeter far than honey of Hymettus is the draught of "English breakfast," sipped by a collector, in the sight of her china-loving friends, from a fragile cup of which she knows no duplicate!

The dainty equipage of porcelain, thus secured, is supplemented by one equally rare and valuable in silver. If you have inherited an old English service, glittering in its purity, and hammered into charming shapes of by-gone art, so much the better. Marshal in array, as only a woman's fingers can, the cheerful hissing urn, the tea-pot, with its queer, little, old-timey strainer hanging to the spout, the liberal dish of sugar lumps, the slender jug (bearing in mind, here, Dr. Holmes's two sprightly maxims: "Cream