

The Country Innocence
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AUTHOR

Leaner, John

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TITLE + SUBTITLE

The Country Innocence; or, The Chambermaid Turned Quaker

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PRINTED

1677

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COMPANY + PLAYHOUSE

King's Co., Theatre Royal Drury Lane

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PREMIERE

1677 Mar

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ORIGINAL TITLE-PAGE:

The Country Innocence: or, The Chamber Maid Turned Quaker.

A Comedy.

With Alterations and Amendments.

As it is now Acted at the Theatre-Royal.

Written by John Learnerd.

Licensed; Apr. 6. 1677. Roger L'Estrange.

London: Printed for Charles Harper, at the Flower-de-luce, over against St. Dunstan's-Church in Fleet Street. 1677.

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MODERN EDITIONS:

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EPISTLE DEDICATORY TO:

His Honoured Friend Sir Francis Hinchman

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EPISTLE CONTENTS:

The author commends this play to the patronage of his friend, who had been his school-fellow. Although he is afraid of theatre critics, he is happy now, for both the King and his patron liked the play when it was performed, and so he hopes Sir Francis Hinchman will still be his protector in the future. He had written the first two acts, but got stuck, until Sir Francis came and gave him good encouragement, and so he says, with Homer, "Inspir'd with Friendship, and your good Advice,/ I strove to please the Age, though nere so nice." He complains about the latest fashion in the London stages, namely, gay clothes, French dances and "dull" machines, in spite of which his patron was pleased both with his more conservatibe way of writing and with the style of the performance itself, presented "in homely dress".He hopes his patron will not condemn his play, as he writes to please him. He considers himself his patron's constant admirer and servant; it is signed "John Learnerd"

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PROLOGUE AUTHOR

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PROLOGUE SPEAKER

Mr. Clark

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PROLOGUE

The author seems to be rather shy, as this is his first work for the stage, and so he begs the audience, especially the gentlemen in the pit, to pay attention to the play, rather than to the "visor-masks" or to their gossip talk, and not to hiss or damn the performance.

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EPILOGUE AUTHOR

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EPILOGUE SPEAKER

[Barbara?, i.e. Mrs Knepp]

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EPILOGUE

If the audience had expected a farce or a "thundering play" they were probably disappointed and, in fact, some people in the pit fell asleep. Some other people enjoyed the show, not so much because of the play itself, but because they were attracted by veiled beauty; there were, however, neither "gawdy Cloaths, nor Scenes" in this performance.

The speaker asks the audience, especially the men, to be kind to her, for chamber-maids may be mischievous, but also loving, if they, men, feel neglected by their own mistresses. This chamber-maid, however has reformed, as she is now a “Sister, and a Saint”, “a Convert” who abhors the “the lewd devices of the Town”, but if they applaud, she promises, “your Quaker shall reform”.

#### CAST OF CHARACTERS:

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Mr. Lydell.	Sir Oliver Bellingham,
Mr. Coysh.	Sir Robert Malory,
Mr. Goodman.	Captain Mullineux,
Mr. Wiltshire.	Plush,
Mr. Griffin.	Rash,
Mr. Haynes.	Gregory Dwindle,
Mr. Powel.	Mr. William,
Mr. Watson.	Old Thrashard,
Mr. Styles.	Abraham his Son, Two Servants. Shepherds and Shepherdesses. A Constable and Watchmen. Six Morrice Dancers, and Fiddlers.
Mrs. Marshall.	Lady Lovely, a Widow,
Mrs. Rutter.	Lady Malory,
Mrs. Baker.	Margaret Daughter to Thrashard.
Sarah Cook.	Gillian, Daughter to Thrashard.
Mrs. Knep.	Barbara, Lady Lovely's Maid,
Mr. Perrin.	Old Gentlewoman,
Two Servants. Shepherds and Shepherdesses. A Constable and Watchmen. Six Morris Dancers and Fiddlers	

#### LOCATION:

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The action is set both in London and Edmonton (a nearby country village) in the present time, and may take two or three days.

#### PLOT SUMMARY:

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There is a main plot, namely, that of Lady Lovely (a widow) and her suitors, and then two subplots: first, that of Margaret Thrashard (the “country innocence” of the title) courted by Sir Robert Malory, and then that of Mr. William, trying to marry Barbara (who is pregnant by him) to one of Lady Lovely’s suitors (Barbara is the chamber-maid of the subtitle).

Lady Lovely, a beautiful young lady whose husband died two months ago, has decided never to marry again, even if she is wooed by Sir Oliver, a city knight, and also by three “humour” fops, namely, Rash and Plush, citizens, and Gregory Dwindle, a country gentleman (who keeps saying he wishes his father were dead). A fifth suitor is added to the group when Captain Mullineux, who had been away from England for three years, appears on the scene. At the end, and after a duel fought by Sir Oliver and the Captain, she accepts Sir Oliver for a husband.

Sir Robert Malory, a married man and Lady Lovely’s brother-in-law, woos his tenant Thrashard’s daughter, Margaret. He turns up at Thrashard’s cottage and tries to seduce her, but his wife hears about it and, with the help of the Thrashard family, plays several tricks on her husband and then teaches him a moral lesson. Sir Robert promises that he will no longer court Margaret and, to make up for his past mistakes, decides to give his tenant the house and lands he lives in. Margaret Thrashard receives a marriage proposal from Captain Mullineux and accepts him.

Mr. William, who is Lady Lovely’s butler, has got Barbara (Lady Lovely’s chamber-maid) pregnant. As he is not willing to marry her himself, he tries to get her a husband from among his lady’s foppish suitors. He makes Rash, Plush and Gregory believe that Barbara is in fact Lady Lovely, since she wears her lady’s clothes and covers her face with a veil. The three characters think they have all won, at last, Lady Lovely’s hand, and believe that they are marrying her. But in fact Rash marries Barbara—after that they both convert and become quakers— Plush marries Gillian Thrashard (Margaret’s sister), and Gregory marries an old gentlewoman; as he unveils his bride’s face and

sees in it “Gutters, Channels, and Long Lanes”, he can only wish his wife “would but die once” (5. [2], p. 55).

The play comes to an end with a song, a dance, and rhymed verse spoken both by the Captain and Sir Oliver.

#### SCENE DIVISIONS AND LOCATIONS:

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1. [1] At Lady Lovely’s house, in London 2. [1] At Thrashard’s country cottage at Edmonton
2. [2] At Lady Lovely’s house
3. [1] At Thrashard’s country cottage
3. [2] At Lady Lovely’s house
3. [3] An open field
4. [1] At Thrashard’s country cottage
4. [2] At the Devil Tavern
5. [1] A room at a tavern?
5. [2] At Captain Mullinux’s house

#### STAGE DIRECTIONS:

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One, or two stage doors are needed: “Knocking within at the door” and “Knocks at the door” (1. [1], p. 2), “Offers to go the door” (1.[1], p. 2.), “Knock at the door” (1.[1], p. 4), and “Exeunt severally” (3.[1], p. 28).

At least one quick scene-change is required: “Scene drawn, Discovers the Captain in a Chair, Sir Oliver Disguis’d like the Doctor....” (5.[2], p. 50).

There are several allusions to a conventional sign-code for love scenes, particularly in 3. [2], pp. 30-33: “Greg. Approaches her after a great many ridiculous complements” (p. 30), “Gregory comes from her shaking his head amorously” (p. 31), “Rash goes to her complementing all the way” (p. 31), “Bab. clasps her hand on her breast” (p. 31), “Rash comes from Bab. Melancholy” (p. 31) and so on.

A “brave” mood or disposition is alluded to in 4.[1]: “Enter old Thrashard brave...” (P. 35), “Enter Abram brave” (p. 36), “Enter Gillian brave” (p. 37), “Enter Margaret brave” (p. 38).

Music—usually fiddles—is often heard offstage: “Musick within”; see 2.[1], pp. 13, 14 and 16, and also 5.[2], p. 52.

A “dumb show” is alluded to: “From the time that Plush and Gillian enter’d the Captain entertains Margaret in dumb show till now” (5.[2], p. 52).

A duel fought by Sir Oliver and the Captain is described in detail in 3.[3], while several directions point to violent action in 2.[2]: “Enter Captain Mulinex Rushing in” (p. 20), “Pushes him out” (p. 21), “They interpose between ‘em” (p. 22) and so on.

#### REFERENCES TO PROPS AND COSTUME

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1. [1], p. 4: “Gives him a Ring”
1. [1], p. 5: “Enter Lady Lovely in Mourning vail’d”
1. [1], p. 7: “Enter Bab, like Lady Lovely vailed”
1. [1], p. 8: “Shows his sword”
2. [1], p. 11: “Enter Old Thrashard and Margaret drest Genteelly”
2. [1], p. 16: “Reaches a chair”
3. [1], p. 25: “Enter Threshard with a Letter” and “Enter Lady Mal. Disguis’d”
3. [2], p. 28: “Enter Barb. drest...”
4. [2], p. 40: “Three Tables are set out; Enter Gregory Dwindle disguis’d as in a Tavern”
4. [2], p. 41: “Enter Drawer with Wine, and Push disguis’d”
4. [2], p. 41: “Enter Drawer with wine, and Rash disguis’d”
4. [2], p. 43: “Gives him money”
4. [2], p. 44: “Enter Drawer, with a Boot full, Shoe full, and a Bottle full of Wine; gives the Boot to Greg. The Shoe to Plush, and the Bottle to Rash”
5. [1], p. 46: “Enter Rash like a Puritan, running, and Bab like a Puritan, following him”
5. [1], p. 46: “Enter as Married Gregory and old Gent. vailed: after them a Boy with Wine”
5. [1], p. 47: “Drinks and flings the remainder in Rash’s face”

5. [1], p. 48: "Enter Mr. Will. like a Quaker" and "Plucks out a Bottle"  
 5. [2], p. 50: "...the Captain in a Chair, Sir Oliver disguis'd like the Doctor..."  
 5. [2], p. 52: "...Enter Thrashard, Abram, Margaret, and Five more drest like Shepherds and Shepherdesses..."  
 5. [2], p. 54: "Enter Plush, and Gillian veil'd" and "Enter Gregory and Old Gentlewoman veiled"

SONGS AND DANCES:

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- 2.[1].p14: Gillian (Sarah Cook) "Shall the Lasses and Lads, to the merry all Day" I?  
 2.[1].p14: Gillian (Sarah Cook) "Ex. Singing and Dancing"  
 2.[1].p17: A group of Morris dancers Dance "Enter a Morris"  
 2.[1].p17: a singer "Charming Beauty, you alone" C  
 2.[1].p17: A group of Morris Dancers Dance: "Dance again"  
 2.[1].p18: Morris dancers and Gillian Dance: "Ex. Fidlers playing, Gillian and the Morris-dancers following dancing"  
 4.[2].p42: Gregory (Mr. Haynes) first, and then all characters Song "Here is wihtout doubt/ Two Fools and a Lout" C  
 5.[2].p52: Members of the Thrashard family and several shepherds and shepherdesses Dance "Enter Thrashard, Abram, Margaret, and Five more drest like Shpeherds and Sheperdesses, they Dance"  
 5.[2].p52: All characters "Charming Beauty, you whose Eyes" C  
 5.[2].p53: Members of the Thrashard family plus shepherds and shepherdesses Dance "Song ended, they dance"  
 5.[2].p56: A singer "You that languish so long for those whom you find" C  
 5.[2].p57: All characters present Dance "A Dance"

REFERENCES TO REAL PLACES:

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- 2.[1].p13 Waltam  
 2.[2].p19 The Change  
 3.[2].pp.32-33 The Devil Tavern  
 4.[1].p38: Bedlam  
 4.[1].p45: Brainford  
 4.[2].p.45 The Chappel in Dukes-Place  
 4.[2]pp. 46-47 Hide-Park and Knight's Bridge  
 5.[1].p47 Bridewell  
 5.[2].p55 Paris

REFERENCES TO CONTEMPORARY EVENTS:

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In 2. [1] a "May-pole" (p. 14) or "Mayday" feast at Edomonton is described and shown: there is music, song and dance, and a group of Morris dancers actually performs on stage.  
 5. [1] shows three characters dressed up as Puritans or quakers, namely, Rash, Barbara and William. They are supposed to speak in the manner of the London quakers and, of course, they become rather amusing as characters.

SOURCES:

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T.B.'s The Country Girl, composed ca. 1632, printed in 1647.

REVIEWER:

R Portillo

CO-REVIEWER

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