JAMES NELSON BARKER

THE INDIAN PRINCESS

James Barker
The Indian Princess

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24172588
The Indian Princess La Belle Sauvage:

Содержание

James Nelson Barker
The Indian Princess
La Belle Sauvage

JAMES NELSON BARKER

(1784-1858)

In a letter written to William Dunlap, from Philadelphia, on June 10, 1832, James Nelson Barker very naïvely and very fully outlined his career, inasmuch as he had been informed by Manager Wood that Mr. Dunlap wished such an account for his "History of the American Stage."

From this account, we learn that whatever dramatic ability Mr. Barker possessed came from the enthusiasm created within him as a reader of wide range. For example, in 1804, he became the author of a one-act piece, entitled "Spanish Rover," furnished in plot by Cervantes. In 1805, he wrote what he describes as a Masque, entitled "America," in which poetic dialogue afforded America, Science and Liberty the opportunity of singing in unison. He confesses that this Masque was "to close a drama I had projected on the adventures of Smith in Virginia, in the olden

time." Then followed a tragedy suggested by Gibbon, entitled "Attila," but Mr. Barker had advanced only two acts when news came to him that John Augustus Stone was at work on a play of the same kind.

In his letter to Dunlap, Mr. Barker deplored this coincidence, which put a stop to "Attila." "But have you never yourself been the victim of these odd coincidences, and, just as you had fixed upon a subject or a title, found yourself superseded – a thing next in atrocity to the ancients' stealing all one's fine thoughts. My comedy of 'Tears and Smiles' was to be called 'Name it Yourself,' when out comes a 'Name it Yourself,' in England, and out comes too a 'Smiles and Tears,' with a widow, an Irishman, and almost all my *dramat. pers.* I wrote the 'Indian Princess,' and an 'Indian Princess' appears in England. Looking over the old English dramatists, I am struck with the 'Damon and Pythias' of Edwards as a subject, but am scarcely set down to it, when lo, the modern play in London; and what is worse, with the fine part of Pythias absolutely transformed into a snivelling fellow, who bellows like a calf at the prospect of dying for his friend. 'Wallace' was purloined from me in like manner, and several other heroes: at length I fix upon 'Epaminondas', as a 'learned Theban' of so philosophical a cast of character, that even the French had not thought of him for the boards. I form my plot, and begin *con amore*, when I am told that Dr. Bird has written a 'Pelopidas' and an 'Epaminondas,' comprehending the whole life of the latter."

Then, having finished with his diatribe against coincidence – a diatribe which excellently well shows the channels in which Barker's literary mind ran, and likewise the closeness with which he followed the literary activity of the period among his associates, he continued in his narrative to Dunlap:

"'Tears and Smiles' was written between May 1 and June 12, of 1806, with the character of a Yankee intended for Jefferson. By the way, such a Yankee as I drew!" he writes. "I wonder what Hackett would say to it! The truth is, I had never even seen a Yankee at the time."

Then, in view of Barker's political tastes which, in consideration of the dramatists of those days, one must always take into account, he wrote a piece called "The Embargo; or, What News?" borrowed from Murphy's "Upholsterer," and produced on March 16, 1808.

Between this play and 1809, "The Indian Princess" was written, and what Barker has to say about it will be quoted in its proper place.

Right now, we are letting him enumerate his own literary activities, which were many and continuous.

In 1809, he Americanized Cherry's "Travellers," a dramatic method which has long been in vogue between America and England, and has, in many respects, spoiled many American comedies for English consumption.

In 1812, at the request of Manager Wood, Mr. Barker made a dramatization of Scott's "Marmion," and, strange to say, it was

announced as being written by Thomas Morton, Esq.

"This was audacious enough in all conscience," says Mr. Barker, "but the finesse was successful, and a play most probably otherwise destined to neglect, ran like wild fire through all our theatres." On March 24, 1817, there was acted in Philadelphia, Barker's "The Armourer's Escape; or, Three Years at Nootka Sound," described by Mr. Barker as a melodramatic sketch, founded on the adventures of John Jewett, the armourer of the ship *Boston*, in which Jewett himself assumed the hero's rôle. This same year he likewise wrote "How to Try a Lover," suggested by Le Brun's novel. Finally, in 1824, on March 12, there was performed "Superstition," a five-act drama. This closed the account that Barker sent to Dunlap.

We see from it a number of things relative to placing Barker as a literary personage. First, his interest in literature made him draw from all sources, combining Scott with Holinshed, and turning, as was the wont of the cultivated American of that day, to the romantic literatures of the past. Secondly, Barker's interest in Colonial History was manifest by his return, time and time again, to Colonial records for dramatic material. Furthermore, as a participant in the political disputes of his day, it would have been a surprise had Barker not directed his pen to some reflection of the discussions of the period.

James Nelson Barker was the son of the Honourable John Barker, one-time Mayor of Philadelphia, and ex-Revolutionary soldier. He was born in that city on June 17, 1784.

His education was received in Philadelphia, and he must have entered the literary and political arenas at an early age. After the fashion of the day, he was trained in the old-time courtesy and in the old-time manner of defending one's honour with the sword, for it is recorded that he was once severely wounded in a duel.

At the outbreak of the War of 1812, he received a commission, fighting mostly on the Canadian frontier, and winning distinction as a Captain of Artillery. After the close of the War, he was supported by the Democratic Party, and elected Mayor of the City of Philadelphia. Later, he upheld "Old Hickory" for the Presidency, and, after filling the position of the Collector of the Port of Philadelphia from 1829-1838, on the election of Van Buren to the presidency, he was appointed First Controller of the Treasury, and moved to Washington. From that time on, he was connected with the highest offices in the department. His pen was continually dedicated to the support of Democracy, and, during the years from 1832-1836, he figured as a contributor to many papers of the time on political topics. He lived until March 9, 1858.

I have selected his play, "The Indian Princess,"[1] as an example of the numberless dramas that grew up around the character of Pocahontas. The reader will find it particularly of interest to contrast with this piece G. W. P. Custis's "Pocahontas; or, The

[1] The/Indian Princess;/or,/La Belle Sauvage./An Operatic Melo-Drame./In Three Acts./Performed at the Theatres Philadelphia and/Baltimore./By J. N. Barker./ First Acted April 6, 1808./Philadelphia,/Printed by T. & G. Palmer,/For G. E. Blake, No. 1, South Third-Street./1808./

Settlers of Virginia" (1830), and John Brougham's burlesque, "Po-ca-hon-tas; or, The Gentle Savage."

The Indian Drama, in America, is a subject well worth careful attention. There are numberless plays mentioned by Laurence Hutton in his "Curiosities of the American Stage" which, though interesting as titles, have not been located as far as manuscripts are concerned.

Barker's "The Indian Princess" is one of the earliest that deal with the character of Pocahontas. The subject has been interestingly treated in an article by Mr. E. J. Streubel (*The Colonnade*, New York University, September, 1915).

Barker had originally intended his play, "The Indian Princess," to be a legitimate drama, instead of which, when it was first produced, it formed the libretto for the music by a man named John Bray, of the New Theatre. In his letter to Dunlap, he says:

"'The Indian Princess,' in three acts … begun some time before, was taken up in 1808, at the request of Bray, and worked up into an opera, the music to which he composed. It was first performed for his benefit on the 6th of April, 1808, to a crowded house; but Webster, particularly obnoxious, at that period, to a large party, having a part in it, a tremendous tumult took place, and it was scarcely heard. I was on the stage, and directed the curtain to be dropped. It has since been frequently acted in, I believe, all the theatres of the United States. A few years since, I observed, in an English magazine, a critique on a drama

called 'Pocahontas; or, the Indian Princess,' produced at Drury Lane. From the sketch given, this piece differs essentially from mine in the plan and arrangement; and yet, according to the critic, they were indebted for this very stupid production 'to America, where it is a great favourite, and is to be found in all the printed collections of stock plays.' The copyright of the 'Indian Princess' was also given to Blake, and transferred to Longworth. It was printed in 1808 or 1809. George Washington Custis, of Arlington, has, I am told, written a drama on the same subject."

An account of the riot is to be found in Durang's "History of the Philadelphia Stage," and the reader, in order to gain some knowledge of the popularity of "The Indian Princess," may likewise obtain interesting material in Manager Wood's "Diary," the manuscript of which is now in possession of the University of Pennsylvania. When the play was given in Philadelphia, the advertisement announced, "The principal materials forming this dramatic trifle are extracted from the General History of Virginia, written by Captain Smith, and printed London, folio, 1624; and as close an adherence to historic truth has been preserved as dramatic rules would allow of."

It was given its first New York production at the Park Theatre on June 14, 1808.

PREFACE

While I am proud to acknowledge my grateful sense of those flattering marks of liberal kindness with which my dramatic entrée has been greeted by an indulgent audience, I feel so fully conscious of the very humble merit of this little piece, that perhaps nothing but the peculiar circumstances under which it was acted should have induced me to publish it. In sending it to the press I am perfectly apprized of the probability that it goes only to add one more to the list of those unfortunate children of the American drama, who, in the brief space that lies between their birth and death, are doomed to wander, without house or home, unknown and unregarded, or who, if heeded at all, are only picked up by some critic beadle to receive the usual treatment of vagrants. Indeed, were I disposed to draw comfort from the misfortunes of others, I might make myself happy with the reflection, that however my vagabond might deserve the lash, it would receive no more punishment than those who deserved none at all; for the gentlemen castigators seldom take the pains to distinguish Innocence from Guilt, but most liberally bestow their stripes on all poor wanderers who are unhappily of American parentage. Far, however, from rejoicing at this circumstance, I sincerely deplore it. In all ages, and in every country, even the sturdiest offspring of genius have felt the necessity and received the aid of a protecting hand of favour

to support and guide their first trembling and devious footsteps; it is not, therefore, wonderful, that here, where every art is yet but in its infancy, the youthful exertions of dramatic poetry, unaided and unsupported, should fail, and that its imbecile efforts should for ever cease with the failure; that chilled by total neglect, or chid with undeserved severity; depressed by ridicule, starved by envy, and stricken to the earth by malevolence, the poor orphan, heartless and spirit-broken, should pine away a short and sickly life. I am not, I believe, quite coxcomb enough to advance the most distant hint that the child of my brain deserves a better fate; that it may meet with it I might, however, be indulged in hoping, under the profession that the hope proceeds from considerations distinct from either it or myself. Dramatic genius, with genius of every other kind, is assuredly native of our soil, and there wants but the wholesome and kindly breath of favour to invigourate its delicate frame, and bid it rapidly arise from its cradle to blooming maturity. But alas! poor weak ones! what a climate are ye doomed to draw your first breath in! the teeming press has scarcely ceased groaning at your delivery, ere you are suffocated with the stagnant atmosphere of entire apathy, or swept out of existence by the hurricane of unsparing, indiscriminating censure!

Good reader, I begin to suspect that I have held you long enough by the button. Yet, maugre my terror of being tiresome, and in despite of my clear anticipation of the severe puns which will be made in this punning city, on my *childish* preface, I

must push my allusion a little further, to deprecate the wrath of the critics, and arouse the sympathies of the ladies. Then, O ye sage censors! ye goody gossips at poetic births! I vehemently importune ye to be convinced, that for my bantling I desire neither rattle nor bells; neither the lullaby of praise, nor the pap of patronage, nor the hobby-horse of honour. 'Tis a plain-palated, home-bred, and I may add independent urchin, who laughs at sugar plums, and from its little heart disdains gilded gingerbread. If you like it – so; if not – why so; yet, without being mischievous, it would fain be amusing; therefore, if its gambols be pleasant, and your gravities permit, laugh; if not, e'en turn aside your heads, and let the wanton youngling laugh by itself. If it speak like a sensible child, prithee, pat its cheek, and say so; but if it be ridiculous when it would be serious, smile, and permit the foolish attempt to pass. But do not, O goody critic, apply the birch, because its unpractised tongue cannot lisp the language of Shakspeare, nor be very much enraged, if you find it has to creep before it can possibly walk.

To your bosoms, ladies, sweet ladies! the little stranger flies with confidence for protection; shield it, I pray you, from the iron rod of rigour, and scold it yourselves, as much as you will, for on *your* smooth and polished brows it can never read wrinkled cruelty; the mild anger of *your* eyes will not blast it like the fierce scowl of the critic; the chidings of *your* voice will be soothing music to it, and it will discover the dimple of kindness in your very frowns. Caresses it does not ask; its

modesty would shrink from that it thought it deserved not; but if its faults be infantile, its punishment should be gentle, and from you, dear ladies, correction would be as thrillingly sweet as that the little *Jean Jacques* received from the fair hand of Mademoiselle Lambercier.

The Author.

ADVERTISEMENT

The principal materials that form this dramatic trifle are extracted from the General History of Virginia, written by Captain Smith, and printed London, folio, 1624; and as close an adherence to historic truth has been preserved as dramatic rules would allow of. The music[2] was furnished by Mr. John Bray, of the New Theatre.

[2] The music is now published and sold by Mr. G. E. Blake, No. 1, South Third-street, Philadelphia.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

EUROPEANS.

DELAWAR,	Mr. Warren.
CAPTAIN SMITH,	Mr. Rutherford.
LIEUTENANT ROLFE,	Mr. Wood.
PERCY,	Mr. Charnock.
WALTER,	Mr. Bray.
LARRY,	Mr. Webster.
ROBIN,	Mr. Jefferson.
TALMAN,	Mr. Durang.
GERALDINE,	Mrs. Francis.
KATE,	Miss Hunt.
ALICE,	Mrs. Mills.

SOLDIERS *and* ADVENTURERS.

VIRGINIANS.

POWHATAN, *king*,	Mr. Serson.
NANTAQUAS, *his son*,	Mr. Cone.
MIAMI, *a prince*,	Mr. Mills.
GRIMOSCO, *a priest*,	Mr. Cross.
POCAHONTAS, *the princess*,	Mrs. Wilmot.
NIMA, *her attendant*,	Miss Mullen.

WARRIORS *and* INDIAN GIRLS.

SCENE, Virginia.

ACT I

Scene I. *Powhatan River; wild and picturesque. Ships appear. Barges approach the shore, from which land* Smith, Rolfe, Percy, Walter, Larry, Robin, Alice, *&c*

Chorus

Jolly comrades, raise the glee,
Chorus it right cheerily;
For the tempest's roar is heard no more,
And gaily we tread the wish'd-for shore:
Then raise the glee merrily,
Chorus it cheerily,
For past are the perils of the blust'ring sea.

Smith.

Once more, my bold associates, welcome. Mark
What cheery aspects look upon our landing:
The face of Nature dimples o'er with smiles,
The heav'ns are cloudless, whiles the princely sun,

As glad to greet us in his fair domain,
Gives us gay salutation —

Larry. [*To* Walter.]

By St. Patrick
His fiery majesty does give warm welcome.
Arrah! his gracious smiles are melting —

Walter.

Plague!
He burthens us with favours till we sweat.

Smith.

What think ye, Percy, Rolfe, have we not found
Sir Walter Raleigh faithful in his tale?
Is 't not a goodly land? Along the bay,
How gay and lovely lie its skirting shores,
Fring'd with the summer's rich embroidery!

Percy.

Believe me, sir, I ne'er beheld that spot
Where Nature holds more sweet varieties.

Smith.

The gale was kind that blew us hitherward.
This noble bay were undiscover'd still,
Had not that storm arose propitious,
And, like the ever kindly breath of heav'n,
Which sometimes rides upon the tempest's wing,
Driv'n us to happiest destinies, e'en then
When most we fear'd destruction from the blast.

Rolfe.

Let our dull, sluggish countrymen at home
Still creep around their little isle of fogs,
Drink its dank vapours, and then hang themselves.
In this free atmosphere and ample range
The bosom can dilate, the pulses play,
And man, erect, can walk a manly round.

Robin. [*Aside.*]

Aye, and be scalp'd and roasted by the Indians.

Smith.

Now, gallant cavalier adventurers,
On this our landing spot we'll rear a town
Shall bear our good king's name to after-time,
And yours along with it; for ye are men
Well worth the handing down; whose paged names

Will not disgrace posterity to read:
Men born for acts of hardihood and valour,
Whose stirring spirits scorn'd to lie inert,
Base atoms in the mass of population
That rots in stagnant Europe. Ye are men
Who a high wealth and fame will bravely win,
And wear full worthily. I still shall be
The foremost in all troubles, toil, and danger,
Your leader and your captain, nought exacting
Save strict obedience to the watchful care
Which points to your own good: be wary then,
And let not any mutinous hand unravel
Our close knit compact. Union is its strength:
Be that remember'd ever. Gallant gentlemen,
We have a noble stage, on which to act
A noble drama; let us then sustain
Our sev'ral parts with credit and with honour.
Now, sturdy comrades, cheerly to our tasks!

[Exeunt Smith, Rolfe, &c.

Scene II. *A grove*

Enter Walter *and* Larry

Larry. Now by the black eyes of my Katy, but that master of

yours and captain of mine is a prince!

Walter. Tut, you hav'n't seen an inch yet of the whole hero. Had you followed him as I have, from a knee-high urchin, you'd confess that there never was soldier fit to cry comrade to him. O! 'twould have made your blood frisk in your veins to have seen him in Turkey and Tartary, when he made the clumsy infidels dance to the music of his broad sword!

Larry. Troth now, the mussulmans may have been mightily amused by the caper; but for my part I should modestly prefer skipping to the simple jig of an Irish bag-pipe.

Walter. Then he had the prettiest mode of forming their manners —

Larry. Arrah, how might that be?

Walter. For example: whenever they were so ill-bred as to appear with their turbans on before him, he uses me this keen argument to convince them they shewed discourtesy. He whips me out his sword, and knocks their turbans off —

Larry. Knocks their turbans off?

Walter. Aye, egad, and their heads to boot.

Larry. A dev'lish cutting way of reasoning indeed; that argument cou'dn't be answered asily.

Walter. Devil a tongue ever wagg'd in replication, Larry. – Ah! my fairy of felicity – my mouthful of melody – my wife —

Enter Alice

Well, Alice, we are now in the wilds of Virginia, and, tell me truly, doesn't repent following me over the ocean, wench? wilt be content in these wild woods, with only a little husband, and a great deal of love, pretty Alice?

Alice. Can you ask that? are not all places alike if you are with me, Walter?

Song.– Alice

In this wild wood will I range;
Listen, listen, dear!
Nor sigh for towns so fine, to change
This forest drear.
Toils and dangers I'll despise,
Never, never weary;
And be, while love is in thine eyes,
Ever cheery.
Ah! what to me were cities gay;
Listen, listen, dear!
If from me thou wert away,
Alas! how drear!
Oh! still o'er sea, o'er land I'll rove,
Never, never weary;

And follow on where leads my love,
Ever cheery.

Larry. Och! the creature!

Walter. Let my lips tell thee what my tongue cannot.

[Kiss.

Larry. Aye, do, do stop her mellifluous mouth; for the little nightingale warbles so like my Kate, she makes me sigh for Ballinamoné; ah! just so would the constant creature carol all day about, roving through the seas and over the woods.

Enter Robin

Robin. Master Walter, the captain is a going to explore the country, and you must along.

Walter. That's our fine captain, always stirring.

Robin. Plague on his industry! would you think it, we are all incontinently to fall a chopping down trees, and building our own houses, like the beavers.

Larry. Well, sure, that's the fashionable mode of paying rent in this country.

Alice. O, Walter, these merciless savages! I sha'n't be merry till you return —

Robin. I warrant ye, mistress Alice – Lord love you I shall be here.

Walter. Cheerly, girl; our captain will make the red rogues

scamper like so many dun deer. Savages, quotha! at sight of him, their copper skins will turn pale as silver, with the very alchemy of fear. Come, a few kisses, *en passant*, and then away! cheerly, my dainty Alice.

[Exeunt Walter and Alice.

Robin. Aye, go your ways, master Walter, and when you are gone —

Larry. What then! I suppose you'll be after talking nonsense to his wife. But if ever I catch you saying your silly things —

Robin. Mum, Lord love you, how can you think it? But hark ye, master Larry, in this same drama that our captain spoke of, you and I act parts, do we not?

Larry. Arrah, to be sure, we are men of parts.

Robin. Shall I tell you in earnest what we play in this merry comedy?

Larry. Be doing it.

Robin. Then we play the parts of two fools, look you, to part with all at home, and come to these savage parts, where, Heaven shield us, our heads may be parted from our bodies. Think what a catastrophe, master Larry!

Larry. So the merry comedy ends a doleful tragedy, and exit fool in the character of a hero! That's glory, sirrah, a very feather in our cap.

Robin. A light gain to weigh against the heavy loss of one's head. Feather quotha! what use of a plumed hat without a head to wear it withal?

Larry. Tut, man, our captain will lead us through all dangers.

Robin. Will he? an' he catch me following him through these same dangers —

Larry. Och, you spalpeen! I mean he'll lead us out of peril.

Robin. Thank him for nothing; for I've predetermined, look you, not to be led into peril. Oh, master Larry, what a plague had I to do to leave my snug cot and my brown lass, to follow master Rolfe to this devil of a country, where there's never a girl nor a house!

Larry. Out, you driveller! didn't I leave as neat a black-ey'd girl, and as pretty a prolific potato-patch all in tears —

Robin. Your potato-patch in tears! that's a bull, master Larry —

Larry. You're a calf, master Robin. Wasn't it raining? Och, I shall never forget it; the thunder rolling, and her tongue a-going, and her tears and the rain; och, bother, but it was a dismal morning!

Song– Larry

I

Och! dismal and dark was the day, to be sure,
When Larry took leave of sweet Katy Maclure;

And clouds dark as pitch hung just like a black lace
O'er the sweet face of Heav'n and my Katy's sweet face.
Then, while the wind blow'd, and she sigh'd might and main,
Drops from the black skies
Fell – and from her black eyes;
Och! how I was soak'd with her tears – and the rain.

[*Speaks.*] And then she gave me this beautiful keep-sake [*Shows a pair of scissors.*], which if ever I part with, may a tailor clip me in two with his big shears. Och! when Katy took you in hand, how nicely did you snip and snap my bushy, carroty locks; and now you're cutting the hairs of my heart to pieces, you tieves you —

[*Sings.*] Och! Hubbaboo – Gramachree – Hone!

II

When I went in the garden, each bush seem'd to sigh
Because I was going – and nod me good-bye;
Each stem hung its head, drooping bent like a bow,
With the weight of the water – or else of its woe;
And while sorrow, or wind, laid some flat on the ground,
Drops of rain, or of grief,
Fell from every leaf,
Till I thought in a big show'r of tears I was drown'd.

[*Speaks.*] And then each bush and leaf seem'd to sigh, and say, "don't forget us, Larry." I won't, said I. – "But arrah, take something for remembrance," said they; and then I dug up this neat jewel [*Shows a potato.*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.