

The Chimes of Normandy

[Opéra comique, in three acts; text by Clairville and Gabet. First produced at the Folies Dramatiques, Paris, April 19, 1877.]

PERSONAGES.

Serpolette, the good-for-nothing. Germaine, the lost Marchioness. Susanne. Jeanne. Henri, Marquis of Corneville. Jean Grenicheux, a fisherman. Gaspard, an old miser. Baillie, magistrate. Notary.

[Peasants, sailors, servants, waiting-maids, etc.]

The scene is laid in Normandy; time of Louis the Fifteenth.

The first act of this charming opera, one of the most popular of its class, opens in an old Norman village during the progress of a fair. Henri, the Marquis of Villeroi, who has been an exile since childhood, has just returned. The first scene discloses a number of village gossips who are retailing scandals about Serpolette, the good-for-nothing, who arrives in time to vindicate herself and retaliate upon the gossips. Gaspard, the miser, has arranged to give his niece Germaine in marriage to the sheriff, who is the chief dignitary in the village. Germaine, however, objects to the proposition, since if she marries at all she claims she must marry Jean Grenicheux, a young fisherman, in gratitude for saving her life. To escape the marriage she and Jean become the servants of the Marquis, and are joined by Serpolette, which is one of the privileges of fair-time.

The second act is occupied with the exposure of the ghosts in the castle of Villeroi. The Marquis is confident that there is nothing supernatural about the apparition which has been seen or the sounds which have been heard in the various apartments. He therefore introduces his servants into the castle, and after careful searching discovers that the ghost of Villeroi is old Gaspard, the miser, who,

when he is found out, becomes crazy through fear of losing treasures which are concealed there.

In the last act the castle is restored to its old splendor, and the Marquis takes possession as master. He gives a fête and the villagers are invited, the crazy Gaspard being among them. Serpolette appears as a grand lady with Jean as her factotum, some papers found in the castle indicating she is the lost heiress. After a love scene between Henri and Germaine, however, Gaspard, who has recovered his reason, discloses that Germaine, and not Serpolette, is the rightful heiress and the true claimant to the title of marchioness. All the complications are now unravelled. Gaspard's treasure is restored to its rightful owner. Germaine comes to her rights, and Serpolette remains with her as her friend.

The music of the opera is delightful throughout, and has scarcely a dull moment. Its most conspicuous numbers are Serpolette's rondo, "In my Mysterious History"; a delightful little fantaisie, "Go, Little Sailor"; the legend of the chimes, "Alas! we have lost Excellent Masters"; Henri's grand aria, "I have thrice made the Tour of the World"; and his couplets, "Under the Armor from Top to Toe"; Serpolette's sprightly aria, "Viscountess and Marchioness"; the chorus with the chimes, a most graceful and interesting number closing the second act; and in the last act Gaspard's quaint old Norman song, "We were full Five Hundred Rogues"; Serpolette's rondo, "The Apple's a Fruit full of Vigor"; and Henri's romance, "A Servant, what Matter to me?"