

Patience

or, Bunthorne's Bride

An Entirely New and Original Æsthetic Opera, in Two Acts

Synopsis by Fredric Woodbridge Wilson

First produced at the Opera Comique Theatre, London, under the management of R. D'Oyly Carte, on Saturday, April 23, 1881; the opera was transferred to Carte's new Savoy Theatre on Monday, October 10, 1881, through November 23, 1882, for a total of 578 performances. Sullivan conducted the first performance at both theatres.

REGINALD BUNTHORNE, a Fleshly Poet	<i>Light Baritone</i>	George Grossmith
ARCHIBALD GROSVENOR, an Idyllic Poet	<i>Baritone</i>	Rutland Barrington
MR. BUNTHORNE'S SOLICITOR	<i>Non-singing</i>	George Bowley
Officers of the Dragoon Guards		
COLONEL CALVERLEY	<i>Baritone</i>	Richard Temple
MAJOR MURGATROYD	<i>Baritone</i>	Frank Thornton
LIEUTENANT THE DUKE OF DUNSTABLE	<i>Tenor</i>	Durward Lely
Rapturous Maidens		
THE LADY ANGELA	<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>	Jessie Bond
THE LADY SAPHIR	<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>	Julia Gwynne
THE LADY ELLA	<i>Soprano</i>	Miss Fortescue
THE LADY JANE	<i>Contralto</i>	Alice Barnett
PATIENCE, a Village Milkmaid	<i>Soprano</i>	Leonora Braham

OFFICERS OF THE DRAGOON GUARDS, and RAPTUREOUS MAIDENS

Produced by D'Oyly Carte's Opera Company at the Standard Theatre, New York, under the management of William Henderson, on September 22, 1881, for 177 performances through March 23, 1882. First revived at the Savoy Theatre, under the management of R. D'Oyly Carte, on November 7, 1900, for 150 performances through April 20, 1901.

ACT I — THE EXTERIOR OF CASTLE BUNTHORNE

The first act opens on a chorus of young ladies, dressed in æsthetic draperies, playing instruments as they sing. They despair, for they are in love with Reginald Bunthorne, an æsthetic poet (Chorus, *Twenty love-sick maidens we*). Lady Jane enters, reproving their vain affections, for Reginald is in love with Patience, the village milkmaid.

Patience appears on an eminence, looking upon the ladies with pity (Recitative, *Still brooding on their mad infatuation!*); she herself has never loved (Song, *I cannot tell what this love may be*), but she does not relish the prospect: “The truly happy never seem quite well.” The ladies depart, singing and playing, as the officers of the Thirty-fifth Dragoon Guards arrive in the village (Chorus, *The soldiers of our Queen*). They are led by Colonel Calverley, who offers a colorful portrait of the “Heavy Dragoon” (Song, *If you want a receipt for that popular mystery*). His Lieutenant, the Duke of Dunstable, is in low spirits; he finds the adulation and flattery with which he is invariably met to be tiresome. Bunthorne enters, composing a poem. He is followed by the ladies, who sing and play as before (Chorus, *In a melancholy train*). The ladies take no notice of the officers, who are visibly indignant (Chorus, *Now is not this ridiculous — and is not this preposterous?*). They had considered themselves engaged to the ladies, who reply that they have been “idealized.” Bunthorne emerges from the throes of creativity, and he recites his poem: “Oh, Hollow! Hollow! Hollow!” The ladies fawn over the doggerel, but when the officers pronounce it nonsense the ladies spurn them: “You are not Empyrean. You are not Della Cruscan. You are not even Early English.” They even criticize the officers’ uniforms (“Primary colours!”). The maidens take their leave, and the Colonel voices the puzzlement all the officers feel (Song, *When I first put this uniform on*). They depart in anger.

Left alone, Bunthorne’s manner becomes intensely melodramatic (Recitative, *Am I alone And unobserved? I am!*). He confesses “I am an æsthetic sham!” — his affectations have been calculated to satisfy his “morbid love of admiration” (Song, *If you’re anxious for to shine in the high æsthetic line as a man of culture rare*). Patience enters, and Bunthorne entrusts her with his secret, proclaiming his love for her. A forthright girl, she owns that “in the matter of love I am untaught,” but “under any circumstances, I couldn’t possibly love you.” Bunthorne exits, and Lady Angela joins Patience. Angela counsels Patience on the ennobling qualities of unselfish love, and Patience is ashamed that she has never experienced love of this sort. Apart from a great-aunt, she has only loved once, her playmate when she was a baby (Duet, *Long years ago, fourteen, maybe*).

Angela leaves, and a stranger enters. He addresses Patience (Duet, *Prithee, pretty maiden — prithee tell me true*). He recognizes her — he is none other than Archibald Grosvenor, Patience’s friend in babyhood. Patience is delighted that her “little playfellow” has grown up so well. Archibald concurs: “Yes, Patience, I am very beautiful!” But he is unhappy; despite his “hideous destiny to be loved by every woman I come across,” his child-love for her has never faded. He, too, is a poet, the infallible Apostle of Simplicity. They swear eternal love, until Patience recalls the unselfish ideal of love: it would be wrong “to monopolize those features on which all women love to linger!” (Duet, *Though to marry you would very selfish be*). They exit, despairingly, in opposite directions.

Bunthorne enters, crowned with roses and accompanied by his following of singing maidens (Chorus, *Let the merry cymbal sound*). They meet the Dragoons, to whom the

proceedings seem puzzling (Chorus, *Now tell us, we pray you*). Bunthorne declares (Recitative, *Heart-broken at my Patience's barbarity*) that, in the face of Patience's rejection, and on the advice of his solicitor, he has "put myself up to be raffled for." The Dragoons, seeing an end to the distraction of their fiancées, support this plan (Chorus, *Stay, we implore you*); and the Duke expresses their devotion to the ladies (Solo, *Your maiden hearts, ah, do not steel*). Bunthorne impatiently begins the raffle (*Come, walk up, and purchase with avidity*), and all of the maidens buy tickets — even Lady Jane, despite Bunthorne's obvious aversion to her (Recitative, *And are you going a ticket for to buy?*). The ladies blindfold themselves in preparation for the drawing (Chorus, *Oh, Fortune, to my aching heart be kind*). Lady Jane draws a ticket, but Patience snatches it from her (Recitative, *Hold! Stay your hand!*). She asks Bunthorne's forgiveness (Solo, *If there be pardon in your breast*), and she asks him to take her for his bride. Patience explains that love must be unselfish (Song, *True love must single-hearted be*), and that in marrying Bunthorne there could be no selfish motive whatever. Bunthorne is happy to accept her, and they embrace. Immediately the maidens resume their old liaisons with the officers (Sestet, *I hear the soft note of the echoing voice*).

But Grosvenor enters, reading, and the maidens are strangely fascinated by him (Ensemble, *But who is this, whose god-like grace*). Grosvenor proclaims "I am a broken-hearted troubadour, Whose mind's æsthetic, and whose tastes are pure!" The act ends as the maidens withdraw from the Dragoons and proclaim their ardent admiration for Grosvenor (Ensemble, *Oh, list while we a love confess*).

ACT II — A GLADE, SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Lady Jane is discovered alone, leaning on a violoncello. She alone remains steadfast to Bunthorne. Lady Jane is confident he will soon tire of Patience, but she is aware that her charms are fading (Recitative, *Sad is that woman's lot who, year by year, Sees, one by one, her beauties disappear*; Song, *Silvered is the raven hair*). Grosvenor enters, followed by the maidens, playing and singing (*Turn, oh, turn, in this direction*). They group around him as he sits, and they beg him to read one of his poems. He accedes; his doggerel is every bit as prosaic as Bunthorne's, and it affects the maidens just as profoundly. But Archibald finds their attentions cloying, and he tells them plainly that "I can never love you in return, for my heart is fixed elsewhere!" To illustrate his point he sings them the fable of the Magnet and the Churn (Song, *A magnet hung in a hardware shop*), and the maidens depart in low spirits.

Patience greets Grosvenor, and asks if he loves her as before. When he proclaims his endless devotion she thwarts his advances, but she admits to deriving a certain satisfaction in his continued passion toward her: it is only fitting, since she too is "miserable beyond description." As Grosvenor exits, sighing, Patience bursts into tears. Bunthorne enters, moody and preoccupied; he is followed only by Lady Jane, singing (*In a melancholy train*).

Bunthorne asks Patience why she is crying, and she tells him of her love for Grosvenor. He is angry; but when Lady Jane tries to take his side he crushes her contemptuously. Bunthorne asserts, “I don’t believe you know what love is!” but Patience sings of the knowledge gained by bitter experience (Ballad, *Love is a plaintive song*), and she leaves. Bunthorne places the blame on his rival, Grosvenor, and he vows to “beat him on his own ground”: “If they want insipidity, they shall have it.” Jane promises to help him (Duet, *So go to him and say to him, with compliment ironical*), and they go off together.

The Duke of Dunstable, Colonel Calverley, and Major Murgatroyd enter; they have abandoned their military uniforms and have adopted æsthetic dress. They present a grotesque imitation of the æsthetic attitudes earlier adopted by Bunthorne and the maidens (Trio, *It’s clear that medi’val art alone retains its zest*), and it is clear that this change has been effected for the impression it is calculated to have on the maidens. As they practice their poses (which have the appearance of a military drill), the Ladies Angela and Saphir enter and admire the officers’ transformation. They consider how three officers are to choose between the two maidens (Quintet, *If Saphir I choose to marry*), and finally they all dance off arm in arm.

Grosvenor enters, admiring his own beauty (“Ah! I am a very Narcissus!”), and, seeing Bunthorne, greets him. Bunthorne menaces him, but without effect — Grosvenor is a “man with a mission” — until Bunthorne threatens to curse Grosvenor, whereupon his rival readily yields. At last, Grosvenor has a pretext to make the change that he himself had long desired: “I do it on compulsion!” Grosvenor determines henceforth to be an “everyday young man” (Duet, *When I go out of door*), and, reconciled with Bunthorne, he dances off.

Patience is astonished to see Bunthorne dancing. He tells her that he is a changed man, and that henceforth he will model himself after Grosvenor: he will be “mildly cheerful,” and his “æstheticism will be of the most pastoral kind.” Patience is overjoyed: “It will no longer be a duty to love you, but a pleasure.” But immediately she realizes the woeful implication of his transformation: she can no longer be his, because to love him would no longer be an act of unselfishness.

They are joined by Grosvenor and all of the maidens, followed by the Dragoons. Grosvenor has had his hair cut, and he is dressed in a very ordinary suit of clothes (Chorus, *I’m a Waterloo House young man*). The maidens too have cast aside their picturesque garb; their dress, too, is commonplace, and their demeanor is decidedly cheerful. “Archibald the All-right cannot be wrong; and if the All-right chooses to discard æstheticism, it proves that æstheticism ought to be discarded!” Patience is horrified; but then it dawns on her that if he is resolved to be a commonplace young man, then “there’s nothing to prevent my loving you with all the fervour at my command.” Lady Jane — who alone has remained æsthetic — clings to Bunthorne.

The Colonel, Duke, and Major return. The Duke has determined to select a bride. Since

the maidens have, in their beauty, “all that is required to make a woman happy,” he will marry, “in common fairness” the only one “who has the misfortune to be distinctly plain” — he chooses Lady Jane! The opera closes (Finale, *After much debate internal*) as the Ladies Saphir and Angela pair off with Colonel Calverley and Major Murgatroyd, Lady Ella with Bunthorne’s solicitor, and Patience with Grosvenor — but “Nobody be Bunthorne’s Bride!”

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