

Wreck from Chiskia - an early poem.

A lovely prospect they had found -  
The deep woods, & trees all around  
Kiss'd plants & flowers & flowering trees,  
A silent world of Faerie.  
Soon felt the force the British sped;  
Soon saw the cottage in the shade;  
One wreck had they, one wreck had I,  
Here let us live! here let us die!  
My natural toil was Nature's wealth,  
Fort, primrose, cheerfulness & health.  
Love at one side, we heard the call  
Of Homage here, & bestowed all.

M. R. Milford.

Three Quills Club  
June 18th 1850



MISS MARY RUSSELL MILFORD.

AUTHRESS OF JULIAN A TRAGEDY, &c.

V PLAY-MAKERS.

shire, December 16, 1787, and was the only child of George Mitford. Her father, though wealthy, was a risky speculator, with a great and unfortunate love for whist, and after losing some £70,000, he became dependent upon his daughter's literary earnings.

Mary early evinced a talent for literature, and in 1802 accomplished the great task of reading fifty-six volumes in thirty-one days. In 1811 she published "Poems on the French Character" and "Blanche of Castile," and although severely criticised in the *London Quarterly*, the volume passed into a second edition, and met with much success in America.

In 1820, having been reduced to the utmost poverty through her father's extravagance, Mary removed to Three Mile Cross, a small village on the turnpike between Reading and Basingstoke. While here she wrote her first dramatic works, but they were all refused by the managers; an introduction was secured to Macready, however, who accepted her tragedy "Julian," and the great actor appeared in the title rôle at Covent Garden, on March 15, 1823. It was acted eight times, and brought Mary £200. Her next play, "Foscari," also a tragedy, was brought out with Charles Kemble as the hero, at Covent Garden, in 1826. This was seen in America in the same year. Her best and most successful work was "Rienzi," a poetical tragedy, first performed at Drury Lane on October 9, 1828, with Young as the hero. It was played thirty-four times, and secured for Miss Mitford £400, besides selling eight thousand copies of the printed play. "Rienzi" became very popular in America. It was seen here originally at the old Park Theatre, in 1829, with James W. Wallack in the title rôle, and Charlotte Cushman in the part of *Claudia*. It was revived in 1857, at Wallack's Theatre, then at Broadway and Broome Street, with James Wallack, E. H. Sothern (the father of the present E. H. Sothern), and Mrs. John Hoey in the cast. The late Lawrence Barrett gave the play a most elaborate production a few seasons previous to his association

Mary Russell Mitford, the last of this talented coterie of early women writers, was one of the most distinguished, having been a woman of high, noble character, and well remembered for her clever and beautiful verse.

She was born at Alresford, Hamp-

with Edwin Booth, and the part of *Rienzi* was conceded to be one of his best. Another tragedy, "Charles I.," was rejected by Colman, as the Lord Chamberlain had refused a license for it; but in 1834, when greatly in need of money, Miss Mitford disposed of the play on very liberal terms to the manager of the Victoria Theatre, which was situated on the Surrey side of the Thames, and beyond the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain. Her plays were collected and published in two volumes in 1854.

Happily the pressing necessity of earning money led Miss Mitford to turn, as she herself expresses it, "from the lofty steep of tragic poetry to the every-day path of village stories." Her series of country sketches, drawn from her own experiences at Three Mile Cross, entitled "Our Village," appeared in the *Lady's Magazine*, in 1819, and their success was so enormous that they were collected and published in five volumes in 1824. This book is said to have laid the foundation of a new branch of literature, until then untried, and made Miss Mitford famous throughout Europe. Although earning large sums for her work, her

father's increasing extravagance kept her poor, but she remained a faithful and loyal friend to him until the end.

Miss Mitford appears to have been an admirable talker, and many of her distinguished friends—particularly Mrs. Browning, the poetess—said that they enjoyed her brilliant conversation even more than they did her delightful books.

Her death, which was hastened by a carriage accident, occurred in 1855. All of Miss Mitford's plays were written with great care, and are distinguished for their poetical beauty and purity of verse; she is worthy of all honor and admiration, for not catering, as did Aphra Behn, to the low popular taste, but, rather endeavoring to educate the public up to her own high standard of morality and excellence. Let us hope that before the end of the present century some one of our bright women play-makers of to-day may be stimulated by the success of Miss Mitford's "Rienzi," and contribute to the stage a play as beautiful in theme and as enduring as this, her last effort, which undoubtedly is the best dramatic literary product from a woman's pen.

Mary Penfield.



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OF MISS MITFORD.—The manners of the English peasantry are not as pleasant as those of the French, but they are improving, thanks to better schools. It was “Sunny Berkshire” that Mary Russell Mitford was wont to extol to her friends for the courtesy and suavity of its people, and it was in the same country that she met, so the story goes, her unprovoked Waterloo. She was walking through a pasture one day with a London visitor, who had no such faith in rustic light and sweetness as her hostess, and they saw ahead of them a lad driving a cow. Here was a test case. “Now,” said Miss Mitford, “you will see how gallant are our country folk.” There was a gate to be opened, and the boy opened it, and the ladies passed through. There was triumph on the part of Miss Mitford, and an “I told you so.” The London lady put a question to the boy: “You’re not Berkshire, I’m sure?” This was the gentle boy’s reply: “Thee’rt a liar, vor I be.”

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