A Book of the Play eBook

A Book of the Play by Edward Dutton Cook

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Page 1

A BOOK OF THE PLAY.

* * * * *

CHAPTER I.

Playgoers.

The man who, having witnessed and enjoyed the earliest performance of Thespis and his company, followed the travelling theatre of that primeval actor and manager, and attended a second and a third histrionic exhibition, has good claim to be accounted the first playgoer. For recurrence is involved in playgoing, until something of a habit is constituted. And usually, we may note, the playgoer is youthful. An old playgoer is almost a contradiction in terms. He is merely a young playgoer who has grown old. He talks of the plays and players of his youth, but he does not, in truth, visit the theatre much in his age; and invariably he condemns the present, and applauds the past. Things have much degenerated and decayed, he finds; himself among them, but of that fact he is not fully conscious. There are no such actors now as once there were, nor such actresses. The drama has declined into a state almost past praying for. This is, of course, a very old story. “Palmy days” have always been yesterdays. Our imaginary friend, mentioned above, who was present at the earliest of stage exhibitions, probably deemed the second and third to be less excellent than the first; at any rate, he assuredly informed his friends and neighbours, who had been absent from that performance, that they had missed very much indeed, and had by no means seen Thespis at his best. Even nowadays, middle-aged playgoers, old enough to remember the late Mr. Macready, are trumped, as it were, by older playgoers, boastful of their memories of Kemble and the elder Kean. And these players, in their day and in their turn, underwent disparagement at the hands of veterans who had seen Garrick. Pope, much as he admired Garrick, yet held fast to his old faith in Betterton. From a boy he had been acquainted with Betterton. He maintained Betterton to be the best actor he had ever seen. “But I ought to tell you, at the same time,” he candidly admitted, “that in Betterton’s time the older sort of people talked of Hart’s being his superior, just as we do of Betterton’s being superior to those now.” So in the old-world tract, called “Historia Histrionica”—a dialogue upon the condition of the early stage, first published in 1699—-Trueman, the veteran Cavalier playgoer, in reply to Lovewit, who had decided that the actors of his time were far inferior to Hart, Mohun, Burt, Lacy, Clun, and Shatterel, ventures to observe: “If my fancy and memory are not partial (for men of age are apt to be over-indulgent to the thoughts of their youthful days), I dare assure you that the actors I have seen before the war—Lowin, Taylor, Pollard, and some others—were almost as far beyond Hart and his company as those were beyond these now in being.” In truth, age brings with it to the playhouse recollections, regrets, and palled appetite; middle life is too much prone to criticism, too little inclined to enthusiasm, for the

securing of unmixed satisfaction; but youth is endowed with the faculty of admiring exceedingly, with hopefulness, and a keen sense of enjoyment, and, above all, with very complete power of self-deception. It is the youthful playgoers who are ever the best friends of the players.

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As a rule, a boy will do anything, or almost anything, to go to a theatre. His delight in the drama is extreme—it possesses and absorbs him completely. Mr. Pepys has left on record Tom Killigrew's "way of getting to see plays when he was a boy." "He would go to the 'Red Bull' (at the upper end of St. John Street, Clerkenwell), and when the man cried to the boys—'Who will go and be a devil, and he shall see the play for nothing?' then would he go in and be a devil upon the stage, and so get to see plays." In one of his most delightful papers, Charles Lamb has described his first visit to a theatre. He "was not past six years old, and the play was 'Artaxerxes!' I had dabbled a little in the 'Universal History'—the ancient part of it—and here was the Court of Persia. It was being admitted to a sight of the past. I took no proper interest in the action going on, for I understood not its import, but I heard the word Darius, and I was in the midst of 'Daniel.' All feeling was absorbed in vision. Gorgeous vests, gardens, palaces, princesses, passed before me. I knew not players. I was in Persepolis for the time, and the burning idol of their devotion almost converted me into a worshipper. I was awe-struck, and believed those significations to be something more than elemental fires. It was all enchantment and a dream. No such pleasure has since visited me but in dreams." Returning to the theatre after an interval of some years, he vainly looked for the same feelings to recur with the same occasion. He was disappointed. "At the first period I knew nothing, understood nothing, discriminated nothing. I felt all, loved all, wondered all—'was nourished I could not tell how.' I had left the temple a devotee, and was returned a rationalist. The same things were there materially; but the emblem, the reference was gone! The green curtain was no longer a veil drawn between two worlds, the unfolding of which was to bring back past ages, to present a 'royal ghost'—but a certain quantity of green baize, which was to separate the audience for a given time from certain of their fellow-men who were to come forward and pretend those parts. The lights—the orchestra lights—came up a clumsy machinery. The first ring, and the second ring, was now but a trick of the prompter's bell—which had been, like the note of the cuckoo, a phantom of a voice; no hand seen or guessed at which ministered to its warning. The actors were men and women painted. I thought the fault was in them; but it was in myself, and the alteration which those many centuries—of six short twelvemonths—had wrought in me." Presently, however, Lamb recovered tone, so to speak, as a playgoer. Comparison and retrospection soon yielded to the present attraction of the scene, and the theatre became to him, "upon a new stock, the most delightful of recreations."

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Audiences have always been miscellaneous. Among them not only youth and age, but rich and poor, wise and ignorant, good and bad, virtuous and vicious, have alike found representation. The gallery and the groundlings have been catered for not less than the spectators of the boxes and private rooms; yet, upon the whole, the stage, from its earliest period, has always provided entertainment of a reputable and wholesome kind. Even in its least commendable condition—and this, so far as England is concerned, we may judge to have been during the reign of King Charles II.—it yet possessed redeeming elements. It was never wholly bad, though it might now and then come very near to seeming so. And what it was, the audience had made it. It reflected their sentiments and opinions; it accorded with their moods and humours; it was their creature; its performers were their most faithful and zealous servants.

Playgoers, it appears, were not wont to ride to the theatre in coaches until late in the reign of James I. Taylor, the water-poet, in his invective against coaches, 1623, dedicated to all grieved "with the world running on wheels," writes: "Within our memories our nobility and gentry could ride well mounted, and sometimes walk on foot, gallantly attended with fourscore brave fellows in blue coats, which was a glory to our nation, far greater than forty of these leathern tumbrels! Then, the name of coach was heathen Greek. Who ever saw, but upon extraordinary occasions, Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Francis Drake ride in a coach? They made small use of coaches; there were but few in those times; and they were deadly foes to sloth and effeminacy. It is in the memory of many when, in the whole kingdom, there was not one! It is a doubtful question whether the devil brought tobacco into England in a coach, for both appeared at the same time." According to Stow, coaches were introduced here 1564, by Guilliam Boonen, who afterwards became coachman to the queen. The first he ever made was for the Earl of Rutland; but the demand rapidly increased, until there ensued a great trade in coach-making, insomuch that a bill was brought into Parliament, in 1601, to restrain the excessive use of such vehicles. Between the coachmen and the watermen there was no very cordial understanding, as the above quotation from Taylor sufficiently demonstrates. In 1613 the Thames watermen petitioned the king, that the players should not be permitted to have a theatre in London, or Middlesex, within four miles of the Thames, in order that the inhabitants might be induced, as formerly, to make use of boats in their visits to the playhouses in Southwark. Not long afterwards sedans came into fashion, still further to the prejudice of the watermen. In the Induction to Ben Jonson's "Cynthia's Revels," performed in 1600, mention is made of "coaches, hobby-horses, and foot-cloth nags," as in ordinary use. In 1631 the churchwardens and constables, on behalf of the inhabitants of Blackfriars, in a petition to

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Laud, then Bishop of London, prayed for the removal of the playhouse from their parish, on the score of the many inconveniences they endured as shopkeepers, “being hindered by the great recourse to the playes, especially of coaches, from selling their commodities, and having their wares many times broken and beaten off their stalls.” Further, they alleged that, owing to the great “recourse of coaches,” and the narrowness of the streets, the inhabitants could not, in an afternoon, “take in any provision of beere, coales, wood, or hay;” the passage through Ludgate was many times stopped up, people “in their ordinary going” much endangered, quarrels and bloodshed occasioned, and disorderly people, towards night, gathered together under pretence of waiting for those at the plays. Christenings and burials were many times disturbed; persons of honour and quality dwelling in the parish were restrained, by the number of coaches, from going out or coming home in seasonable time, to “the prejudice of their occasions;” and it was suggested that, “if there should happen any misfortune of fire,” it was not likely that any order could possibly be taken, since, owing to the number of the coaches, no speedy passage could be made for quenching the fire, to the endangering both of the parish and of the city. It does not appear that any action on the part of Laud or the Privy Council followed this curious petition.

It seems clear that the Elizabethan audiences were rather an unruly congregation. There was much cracking of nuts and consuming of pippins in the old playhouses; ale and wine were on sale, and tobacco was freely smoked by the upper class of spectators, for it was hardly yet common to all conditions. Previous to the performance, and during its pauses, the visitors read pamphlets or copies of plays bought at the playhouse-doors, and, as they drank and smoked, played at cards. In his “Gull’s Horn Book,” 1609, Dekker tells his hero, “before the play begins, fall to cards;” and, winning or losing, he is bidden to tear some of the cards and to throw them about, just before the entrance of the prologue. The ladies were treated to apples, and sometimes applied their lips to a tobacco-pipe. Prynne, in his “Histriomastix,” 1633, states that, even in his time, ladies were occasionally “offered the tobacco-pipe” at plays. Then, as now, new plays attracted larger audiences than ordinary. Dekker observes, in his “News from Hell,” 1606, “It was a comedy to see what a crowding, as if it had been at a new play, there was upon the Acherontic strand.” How the spectators comported themselves upon these occasions, Ben Jonson, “the Mirror of Manners,” as Mr. Collier well surnames him, has described in his comedy “The Case is Altered,” acted at Blackfriars about 1599. “But the sport is, at a new play, to observe the sway and variety of opinion that passeth it. A man shall have such a confused mixture of judgment poured out in the throng there, as ridiculous as laughter itself.

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One says he likes not the writing; another likes not the plot; another not the playing; and sometimes a fellow that comes not there past once in five years, at a Parliament time or so, will be as deep-mired in censuring as the best, and swear, by God's foot, he would never stir his foot to see a hundred such as that is!" The conduct of the gallants, among whom were included those who deemed themselves critics and wits, appears to have usually been of a very unseemly and offensive kind. They sat upon the stage, paying sixpence or a shilling for the hire of a stool, or reclined upon the rushes with which the boards were strewn. Their pages were in attendance to fill their pipes; and they were noted for the capriciousness and severity of their criticisms. "They had taken such a habit of dislike in all things," says Valentine, in "The Case is Altered," "that they will approve nothing, be it ever so conceited or elaborate; but sit dispersed, making faces and spitting, wagging their upright ears, and cry: 'Filthy, filthy!'" Ben Jonson had suffered much from the censure of his audiences. In "The Devil is an Ass," he describes the demeanour of a gallant occupying a seat upon the stage. Fitsdottrell says:

> To day I go to the Blackfriars playhouse,
> Sit in the view, salute all my acquaintance;
> Rise up between the acts, let fall my cloak;
> Publish a handsome man and a rich suit—
> And that's a special end why we go thither.

Of the cutpurses, rogues, and evil characters of both sexes who frequented the old theatres, abundant mention is made by the poets and satirists of the past. In this respect there can be no question that the censure which was so liberally awarded was also richly merited. Mr. Collier quotes from Edmund Gayton, an author who avowedly "wrote trite things merely to get bread to sustain him and his wife," and who published, in 1654, "Festivous Notes on the History of the renowned Don Quixote," a curious account of the behaviour of our early audiences at certain of the public theatres. "Men," it is observed, "come not to study at a playhouse, but love such expressions and passages which with ease insinuate themselves into their capacities.... On holidays, when sailors, watermen, shoemakers, butchers, and apprentices are at leisure, then it is good policy to amaze those violent spirits with some tearing tragedy full of fights and skirmishes ... the spectators frequently mounting the stage, and making a more bloody catastrophe among themselves than the players did." Occasionally, it appears, the audience compelled the actors to perform, not the drama their programmes had announced, but some other, such as "the major part of the company had a mind to: sometimes 'Tamerlane;' sometimes 'Jugurtha;' sometimes 'The Jew of Malta;' and, sometimes, parts of all these; and, at last, none of the three taking, they were forced to undress and put off their tragic habits, and conclude the day with 'The

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Merry Milkmaids.'" If it so chanced that the players were refractory, then "the benches, the tiles, the lathes, the stones, oranges, apples, nuts, flew about most liberally; and as there were mechanics of all professions, everyone fell to his own trade, and dissolved a house on the instant, and made a ruin of a stately fabric. It was not then the most mimical nor fighting man could pacify; prologues nor epilogues would prevail; the Devil and the Fool [evidently two popular characters at this time] were quite out of favour; nothing but noise and tumult fills the house," &c. &c.

Concerning the dramatist of the time, upon the occasion of the first performance of his play, his anxiety, irascibility, and peculiarities generally, Ben Jonson provides sufficient information. "We are not so officiously befriended by him," says one of the characters in the Induction to "Cynthia's Revels," "as to have his presence in the tiring-house, to prompt us aloud, stamp at the bookholder [or prompter], swear at our properties, curse the poor tireman, rail the musick out of tune, and sweat for every venial trespass we commit as some author would." While, in the Induction to his "Staple of News," Jonson has clearly portrayed himself. "Yonder he is," says Mirth, in reply to some remark touching the poet of the performance, "within—I was in the tiring-house awhile, to see the actors dressed—rolling himself up and down like a tun in the midst of them ... never did vessel, or wort, or wine, work so ... a stewed poet!... he doth sit like an unbraced drum, with one of his heads beaten out," &c. The dramatic poets, it may be noted, were admitted gratis to the theatres, and duly took their places among the spectators. Not a few of them were also actors. Dekker, in his "Satiromastix," accuses Jonson of sitting in the gallery during the performance of his own plays, distorting his countenance at every line, "to make gentlemen have an eye on him, and to make players afraid" to act their parts. A further charge is thus worded: "Besides, you must forswear to venture on the stage, when your play is ended, and exchange courtesies and compliments with the gallants in the lords' rooms (or boxes), to make all the house rise up in arms, and cry: 'That's Horace! that's he! that's he! that's he that purges humours and diseases!'"

Jonson makes frequent complaint of the growing fastidiousness of his audience, and nearly fifty years later, the same charge against the public is repeated by Davenant, in the Prologue to his "Unfortunate Lovers." He tells the spectators that they expect to have in two hours ten times more wit than was allowed their silly ancestors in twenty years, who

> to the theatre would come,
> Ere they had dined, to take up the best room;
> There sit on benches not adorned with mats,
> And graciously did vail their high-crowned hats
> To every half-dressed player, as he still
> Through the hangings peeped

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to see how the house did fill.
Good easy judging souls! with what delight
They would expect a jig or target fight;
A furious tale of Troy, which they ne'er thought
Was weakly written so 'twere strongly fought.

As to the playgoers of the Restoration we have abundant information from the poet Dryden, and the diarist Pepys. For some eighteen years the theatres had been absolutely closed, and during that interval very great changes had occurred. England, under Charles II., seemed as a new and different country to the England of preceding monarchs. The restored king and his courtiers brought with them from their exile in France strange manners, and customs, and tastes. The theatre they favoured was scarcely the theatre that had flourished in England before the Civil War. Dryden reminds the spectators, in one of his prologues—

You now have habits, dances, scenes, and rhymes,
High language often, ay, and sense sometimes.

There was an end of dramatic poetry, as it was understood under Elizabeth. Blank verse had expired or swooned away, never again to be wholly reanimated. Fantastic tragedies in rhyme, after the French pattern, became the vogue; and absolute translations from the French and Spanish for the first time occupied the English stage. Shakespeare and his colleagues had converted existing materials to dramatic uses, but not as did the playwrights of the Restoration. In the Epilogue to the comedy of "An Evening's Love; or, The Mock Astrologer," borrowed from "Le Feint Astrologue" of the younger Corneille, Dryden, the adapter of the play, makes jesting defence of the system of adaptation. The critics are described as conferring together in the pit on the subject of the performance:

They kept a fearful stir
In whispering that he stole the Astrologer:
And said, betwixt a French and English plot,
He eased his half-tired muse on pace and trot.
Up starts a Monsieur, new come o'er, and warm
In the French stoop and pull-back of the arm:
"Morbleu," dit-il, and cocks, "I am a rogue,
But he has quite spoiled the 'Feigned Astrologue!'"

The poet is supposed to make excuse:

He neither swore, nor stormed, as poets do,
But, most unlike an author, vowed 'twas true;

Yet said he used the French like enemies,
And did not steal their plots but made them prize.

Dryden concludes with a sort of apology for his own productiveness, and the necessity of borrowing that it involved:

He still must write, and banquier-like, each day
Accept new bills, and he must break or pay.
When through his hands such sums must yearly run,
You cannot think the stock is all his own.

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Pepys, who, born in 1633, must have had experiences of youthful playgoing before the great Civil War, finds evidence afterwards of “the vanity and prodigality of the age” in the nightly company of citizens, ’prentices, and others attending the theatre, and holds it a grievance that there should be so many “mean people” in the pit at two shillings and sixpence apiece. For several years, he mentions, he had gone no higher than the twelvepenny, and then the eighteenpenny places. Oftentimes, however, the king and his court, the Duke and Duchess of York, and the young Duke of Monmouth, were to be seen in the boxes. In 1662 Charles’s consort, Catherine, was first exhibited to the English public at the Cockpit Theatre in Drury Lane, when Shirley’s “Cardinal” was represented. Then there are accounts of scandals and indecorums in the theatre. Evelyn reprovingly speaks of the public theatres being abused to an “atheistical liberty.” Nell Gwynne is in front of the curtain prattling with the fops, lounging across and leaning over them, and conducting herself saucily and impudently enough. Moll Davis is in one box, and my Lady Castlemaine, with the king, in another. Moll makes eyes at the king, and he at her. My Lady Castlemaine detects the interchange of glances, and “when she saw Moll Davies she looked like fire, which troubled me,” said Mr. Pepys, who, to do him justice, was often needlessly troubled about matters with which, in truth, he had very little concern. There were brawls in the theatre, and tipsiness, and much license generally. In 1682 two gentlemen, disagreeing in the pit, drew their swords and climbed to the stage. There they fought furiously until a sudden sword-thrust stretched one of the combatants upon the boards. The wound was not mortal, however, and the duellists, after a brief confinement by order of the authorities, were duly set at liberty.

The fop of the Restoration was a different creature to the Elizabethan gallant. Etherege satirised him in his “Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter,” Dryden supplying the comedy with an epilogue, in which he fully described certain of the prevailing follies of the time in regard to dress and manners. The audience are informed that

> None Sir Fopling him or him can call,

He’s knight of the shire and represents you all!
From each he meets he culls whate’er he can;
Legion’s his name, a people in a man.

* * * * *

His various modes from various fathers follow;
One taught the toss, and one the new French wallow;
His sword-knot this, his cravat that designed;
And this the yard-long snake he twirls behind.
From one the sacred periwig he gained,
Which wind ne’er blew nor touch of hat profaned.
Another’s diving bow he did adore,
Which, with a shog, casts all the hair before,

Till he with full decorum brings it back,
And rises with a water-spaniel shake.

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Upon another occasion the poet writes:

> But only fools, and they of vast estate,
> The extremity of modes will imitate,
> The dangling knee-fringe and the bib-cravat.

While the fops were thus equipped, the ladies wore vizard-masks, and upon the appearance of one of these in the pit—

> Straight every man who thinks himself a wit,
> Perks up, and managing his comb with grace,
> With his white wig sets off his nut-brown face.

For it was the fashion of the gentlemen to toy with their soaring, large-curled periwigs, smoothing them with a comb. Between the fops and the ladies goodwill did not always prevail. The former were, no doubt, addicted to gross impertinence in their conversation.

> Fop Corner now is free from civil war,
> White wig and vizard-mask no longer jar,
> France and the fleet have swept the town so clear.

So Dryden “prologuised” in 1672, attributing the absence of “all our braves and all our wits” to the war which England, in conjunction with France, had undertaken against the Dutch.

Queen Anne, in 1704, expressly ordered that “no woman should be allowed, or presume to wear, a vizard-mask in either of the theatres.” At the same time it was commanded that no person, of what quality soever, should presume to go behind the scenes, or come upon the stage, either before or during the acting of any play; and that no person should come into either house without paying the price established for their respective places. And the disobedient were publicly warned that they would be proceeded against, as “contemners of our royal authority and disturbers of the public peace.”

These royal commands were not very implicitly obeyed. Vizard-masks may have been discarded promptly, but there was much crowding, behind the scenes and upon the stage, of persons of quality for many years after. Garrick, in 1762, once and for ever, succeeded in clearing the boards of the unruly mob of spectators, and secured room to move upon the scene for himself and his company. But it was only by enlarging his theatre, and in such wise increasing the number of seats available for spectators in the auditory of the house, that he was enabled to effect this reform. From that date the playgoers of the past grew more and more like the playgoers of the present, until the flight of time rendered distinction between them no longer possible, and merged yesterday in to-day. There must have been a very important change in the aspect of the

house, however, when hair powder went out of fashion in 1795; when swords ceased to be worn—for, of course, then there could be no more rising of the pit to slash the curtain and scenery, to prick the performers, and to lunge at the mirrors and decorations; when gold and silver lace vanished from coats and waistcoats, silks and velvets gave place to broadcloth and pantaloons; and when, afterwards, trousers covered those nether

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limbs which had before, and for so long a period, been exhibited in silk stockings. Yet these alterations were accomplished gradually, no doubt. All was not done in a single night. Fashion makes first one convert, and then another, and so on, until all are numbered among her followers and wear the livery she has prescribed. Garrick's opinion of those playgoers of his time, whom he at last banished from his stage, may be gathered from the dialogue between AEsop and the Fine Gentleman, in his farce of "Lethe." AEsop inquires: "How do you spend your evening, sir?" "I dress in the evening," says the Fine Gentleman, "and go generally behind the scenes of both playhouses; not, you may imagine, to be diverted with the play, but to intrigue and show myself. I stand upon the stage, talk loud, and stare about, which confounds the actors and disturbs the audience. Upon which the galleries, who hate the appearance of one of us, begin to hiss, and cry, 'Off, off!' while I, undaunted, stamp my foot, so; loll with my shoulder, thus; take snuff with my right hand, and smile scornfully, thus. This exasperates the savages, and they attack us with volleys of sucked oranges and half-eaten pippins." "And you retire?" "Without doubt, if I am sober; for orange will stain silk, and an apple may disfigure a feature."

In the Italian opera-houses of London there have long prevailed managerial ordinances touching the style of dress to be assumed by the patrons of those establishments; the British playgoer, however, attending histrionic performances in his native tongue has been left to his own devices in that respect. It cannot be said that much harm has resulted from the full liberty permitted him, or that neglect on his part has impaired the generally attractive aspect of our theatrical auditories. Nevertheless, occasional eccentricity has been forthcoming, if only to incur rebuke. We may cite an instance or two.

In December, 1738, the editor of *The London Evening Post* was thus addressed by a correspondent assuming the character of Miss Townley:

"I am a young woman of fashion who love plays, and should be glad to frequent them as an agreeable and instructive entertainment, but am debarred that diversion by my relations upon account of a sort of people who now fill or rather infest the boxes. I went the other night to the play with an aunt of mine, a well-bred woman of the last age, though a little formal. When we sat down in the front boxes we found ourselves surrounded by a parcel of the strangest fellows that ever I saw in my life; some of them had those loose kind of great-coats on which I have heard called *wrap-rascals*, with gold-laced hats, slouched in humble imitation of *stage-coachmen*; others aspired at being *grooms*, and had dirty boots and spurs, with black caps on, and long whips in their hands; a third sort wore scanty frocks, with little, shabby hats, put on one side, and clubs in their hands. My aunt whispered

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me that she never saw such a set of slovenly, unmannerly footmen sent to keep places in her life, when, to her great surprise, she saw those fellows, at the end of the act, pay the box-keeper for their places."

In 1730 the "Universal Spectator" notes: "The wearing of swords, at the Court end of the town, is, by many polite young gentlemen, laid aside; and instead thereof they carry large oak sticks, with great heads and ugly faces carved thereon."

Elliston was, in 1827, lessee and manager of the Surrey Theatre. "Quite an opera pit," he said to Charles Lamb, conducting him over the benches of that establishment, described by Lamb as "the last retreat of his every-day waning grandeur." The following letter—the authenticity of which seems to be vouched for by the actor's biographer—-supplies a different view of the Surrey audience of that date:

"*August 10th, 1827.*

"*Sir*,—I really must beg to call your attention to a most abominable nuisance which exists in your house, and which is, in a great measure, the cause of the minor theatres not holding the rank they should amongst playhouses. I mean the admission of *sweeps* into the theatre in the very dress in which they climb chimneys. This not only incommodes ladies and gentlemen by the obnoxious odour arising from their attire, but these sweeps take up twice the room of other people because the ladies, in particular, object to their clothes being soiled by such unpleasant neighbours. I have with my wife been much in the habit of visiting the Surrey Theatre, and on three occasions we have been annoyed by these sweeps. People will not go, sir, where sweeps are; and you will find, sooner or later, these gentlemen will have the whole theatre to themselves unless an alteration be made. I own, at some theatres, the managers are too particular in dress; those days are passed, and the public have a right to go to theatrical entertainments in their morning costumes; but this ought not to include the sweeps. It is not a week ago since a lady in a nice white gown sat down on the very spot which a nasty sweep had just quitted, and, when she got up, the sight was most horrible, for she was a very heavy lady and had laughed a good deal during the performance; but it was no laughing matter to her when she got home. I hope I have said quite enough, and am your

"*Well-Wisher*."

"R.W. Elliston, Esq."

No doubt some reform followed upon this urgent complaint.

Regulations as to dress are peculiar to our Italian opera-houses, are unknown, as Mr. Sutherland Edwards writes in his "History of the Opera," "even in St. Petersburg and

Moscow, where, as the theatres are directed by the Imperial Government, one might expect to find a more despotic code of laws in force than in a country like England. When an Englishman goes to a morning or evening concert, he does not present himself in the attire of a scavenger,

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and there is no reason for supposing that he would appear in any unbecoming garb if liberty of dress were permitted to him at the opera.... If the check-takers are empowered to inspect and decide as to the propriety of the cut and colour of clothes, why should they not also be allowed to examine the texture? On the same principle, too, the cleanliness of opera-goers ought to be inquired into. No one whose hair is not properly brushed should be permitted to enter the stalls, and visitors to the pit should be compelled to show their nails."

There have been, from time to time, protests, unavailing however, against the tyranny of the opera-managers. In his "Seven Years of the King's Theatre" (1828), Mr. Ebers publishes the remonstrance of a gentleman refused admission to the opera on the score of his imperfect costume, much to his amazement; "for," he writes, "I was dressed in a superfine blue coat with gold buttons, white waistcoat, fashionable tight drab pantaloons, white silk stockings and dress shoes, *all worn but once, a few days before, at a dress concert, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern*." He proceeds to express his indignation at the idea of the manager presuming to enact sumptuary laws without the intervention of the Legislature, and adds threats of legal proceedings and an appeal to a British jury. "I have mixed," he continues, "too much in genteel society not to know that black breeches, or pantaloons, with black silk stockings, is a very prevailing full dress, and why is it so? Because it is convenient and economical, *for you can wear a pair of white silk stockings but once without washing, and a fair of black is frequently worn for weeks without ablution.* P.S.—I have no objection to submit an inspection of my dress of the evening in question to you or any competent person you may appoint." Of this offer it would seem that Mr. Ebers did not avail himself.

CHAPTER II.

The master of the revels.

Lords of Misrule and Abbots of Unreason had long presided over the Yuletide festivities of Old England; in addition to these functionaries King Henry VIII. nominated a Master and Yeoman of the Revels to act as the subordinates of his Lord Chamberlain, and expressly to provide and supervise the general entertainments and pastimes of the court. These had already been ordered and established after a manner that seemed extravagant by contrast with the economical tastes of the preceding sovereign, who yet had not shown indifference to the attractions of poetry, music, and the stage. But Henry VIII., according to the testimony of Hall, was a proficient, not less in arms than in arts; he exercised himself daily in shooting, singing, dancing, wrestling, "casting of the bar, playing at the recorders, flute, virginals, and in setting of songs, making of ballettes; and did set two goodly masses, every in them five parts, which were sung oftentimes in his

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chapel, and afterwards in divers other places." Early in his reign he appointed Richard Gibson, one of his father's company of players, to be "yeoman tailor to the king," and subsequently "serjeant-at-arms and of the tents and revels;" and in 1546 he granted a patent to Sir Thomas Cawarden, conferring upon him the office of "Magistri Jocorum, Revellorum et Mascorum, omnium et singulorum nostrorum, vulgariter nuncupatorum Revells et Masks," with a salary of L10 sterling—a very modest stipend; but then Sir Thomas enjoyed other emoluments from his situation as one of the gentlemen of the Privy Chamber. The Yeoman of the Revels, who assisted the Master and probably discharged the chief duties of his office, received an annual allowance of L9 2s. 6d., and eight players of interludes were awarded incomes, of L3 6s. 8d. To these remote appointments of "yeoman tailor," and "Master of the Revels," is due that office of "Licenser of Plays," which, strange to say, is extant and even flourishing in the present year of grace.

As Chalmers has pointed out, however, in his "Apology for the Believers in the Shakespearean Papers," the King's Chamberlain, or, as he was styled in all formal proceedings of the time, Camerarius Hospitii, had the government and superintendence of the king's hunting and revels, of the comedians, musicians, and other royal servants; and was, by virtue of the original constitution of his office, the real Master of the Revels, "the great director of the sports of the court by night as well as of the sports of the field by day." Still the odium of his office, especially in its relation to plays and players, could not but attach to his subordinates and deputies the Masters of the Revels; "tasteless and officious tyrants," as Gifford describes them in a note to Ben Jonson's "Alchemist," "who acted with little discrimination, and were always more ready to prove their authority than their judgment, the most hateful of them all being Sir Henry Herbert," appointed by Charles I. to an office which naturally expired when the Puritans suppressed the stage and did their utmost to exterminate the players. At the Restoration, however, Herbert resumed his duties; but he found, as Chalmers relates, "that the recent times had given men new habits of reasoning, notions of privileges, and propensities to resistance. He applied to the courts of justice for redress; but the verdicts of judges were contradictory; he appealed to the ruler of the state, but without receiving redress or exciting sympathy: like other disputed jurisdictions, the authority of the Master of the Revels continued to be oppressive till the Revolution taught new lessons to all parties."

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It is to be observed, however, that the early severities and arbitrary caprices to which the players were subjected, were not attributable solely to the action of the Masters of the Revels. The Privy Council was constant in its interference with the affairs of the theatre. A suspicion was for a long time rife that the dramatic representations of the sixteenth century touched upon matters of religion or points of doctrine, and oftentimes contained matters "tending to sedition and to the contempt of sundry good orders and laws." Proclamations were from time to time issued inhibiting the players and forbidding the representation of plays and interludes. In 1551 even the actors attached to the households of noblemen were not allowed to perform without special leave from the Privy Council; and the authorities of Gray's Inn, once famous for its dramatic representations, expressly ordered that there should be "no comedies called interludes in this house out of term time, but when the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord is solemnly observed." Upon the accession of Queen Mary, in 1553, dramatic representations, whether or not touching upon points of religious doctrine, appear to have been forbidden for a period of two years. In 1556 the Star Chamber issued orders, addressed to the justices of the peace in every county in the kingdom, with instructions that they should be rigorously enforced, forbidding the representation of dramatic productions of all kinds. Still, in Mary's reign, certain miracle plays, designed to inculcate and enforce the tenets of the Roman Catholic religion, were now and then encouraged by the public authorities; and in 1557 the Queen sanctioned various sports and pageants of a dramatic kind, apparently for the entertainment of King Philip, then arrived from Flanders, and of the Russian ambassador, who had reached England a short time before.

The players had for a long while few temptations to resist authority, whether rightfully or wrongfully exercised. Sufferance was the badge of their tribe. They felt constrained to submit without question or repining, when loud-toned commands were addressed to them, dreading lest worse things should come about. It was a sort of satisfaction to them, at last, to find themselves governed by so distinguished a personage as the Lord Chamberlain, or even by his inferior officer the Master of the Revels. It was true that he might, as he often did, deal with them absurdly and severely; but even in this abuse of his power there was valuable recognition of their profession—it became invested with a measure of lawfulness, otherwise often denied it by common opinion. How it chanced that a member of the royal household ruled not only the dramatic representations of the court, but controlled arbitrarily enough, plays and players generally, no one appeared to know, or thought it worth while to inquire. As Colley Cibber writes: "Though in all the letters patent for acting plays, &c., since King Charles I.'s

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time, there has been no mention of the Lord Chamberlain, or of any subordination to his command or authority, yet it was still taken for granted that no letters patent, by the bare omission of such a great officer's name, could have superseded or taken out of his hands that power which time out of mind he always had exercised over the theatre. But as the truth of the question seemed to be wrapt in a great deal of obscurity in the old laws, made in former reigns, relating to players, &c., it may be no wonder that the best companies of actors should be desirous of taking shelter under the visible power of a Lord Chamberlain, who, they knew, had at his pleasure favoured and protected, or borne hard upon them; but be all this as it may, a Lord Chamberlain, from whencesoever his power might be derived, had, till of later years, had always an implicit obedience paid to it."

Among the duties undertaken by the Lord Chamberlain was the licensing or refusing new plays, with the suppression of such portions of them *as* he might deem objectionable; which province was assigned to his inferior, the Master of the Revels. This, be it understood, was long before the passing of the Licensing Act of 1737, which indeed, although it gave legal sanction to the power of the Lord Chamberlain, did not really invest him with much more power than he had often before exercised. Even in Charles II.'s time, the representation of "The Maid's Tragedy," of Beaumont and Fletcher, had been forbidden by an order from the Lord Chamberlain. It was conjectured that "the killing of the king in that play, while the tragical death of King Charles I. was then so fresh in people's memory, was an object too horribly impious for a public entertainment;" and, accordingly, the courtly poet Waller occupied himself in altering the catastrophe of the story, so as to save the life of the king. Another opinion prevailed, to the effect that the murder accomplished by the heroine Evadne offered "a dangerous example to other Evadnes then shining at court in the same rank of royal distinction." In the same reign also, Nat Lee's tragedy of "Lucius Junius Brutus," "was silenced after three performances;" it being objected that the plan and sentiments of it had too boldly vindicated, and might inflame, Republican principles. A prologue, by Dryden, to "The Prophetess," was prohibited, on account of certain "familiar metaphorical sneers at the Revolution" it was supposed to contain, at a time when King William was prosecuting the war in Ireland. Bank's tragedy of "Mary, Queen of Scotland," was withheld from the stage for twenty years, owing to "the profound penetration of the Master of the Revels, who saw political spectres in it that never appeared in the presentation." From Cibber's version of "Richard III.," the first act was wholly expunged, lest "the distresses of King Henry VI., who is killed by Richard in the first act, should put weak people too much in mind of King James, then living in France."

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In vain did Cibber petition the Master of the Revels “for the small indulgence of a speech or two, that the other four acts might limp on with a little less absurdity. No! He had not leisure to consider what might be separately inoffensive!” So, too, some eight years before the passing of the Licensing Act, Gay’s ballad opera of “Polly,” designed as a sequel to “The Beggar’s Opera,” incurred the displeasure of the Chamberlain, and was denied the honours of representation.

Nor was it only on political grounds that the Lord Chamberlain or the Master of the Revels exercised his power. The “View of the Stage,” published by the nonjuring clergyman, Jeremy Collier, in 1697, first drew public attention to the immorality and profanity of the dramatic writers of that period. The diatribes and rebukes of Collier, if here and there a trifle overstrained, were certainly, for the most part, provoked by the nature of the case, and were justified by the result. Even Cibber, who had been cited as one of the offenders, admits that “his calling our dramatic writers to this strict account had a very wholesome effect upon those who wrote after this time. They were now a great deal more upon their guard ... and, by degrees, the fair sex came again to fill the boxes on the first day of a new comedy, without fear of censure.” For some time, it seems, the ladies had been afraid of venturing “bare-faced” to a new comedy, till they had been assured that they could do it without risk of affront; “or if,” as Cibber says, “their curiosity was too strong for their patience, they took care, at least, to save appearances, and rarely came upon the first days of acting but in masks, then daily worn and admitted in the pit, the side-boxes, and gallery.” This reform of the drama, it is to be observed, was really effected, not by the agency of the Chamberlain or any other court official, but by force of the just criticism, strenuously delivered, of a private individual. But now, following the example of Collier, the Master of the Revels, in his turn, insisted upon amendment in this matter, and oftentimes forbade the performance of whole scenes that he judged to be vicious or immoral. He had constituted himself a *Censor Morum*; a character in which the modern Licenser of Plays still commends himself to our notice.

Moreover, the Chamberlain had arrogated to himself the right of interfering in dramatic affairs upon all occasions that he judged fitting. Upon his authority the theatres were closed at any moment, even for a period of six weeks, in the case of the death of the sovereign. If any disputes occurred between managers and actors, even in relation to so small a matter as the privileges of the latter, the Chamberlain interfered to arrange the difficulty according to his own notion of justice. No actor could quit the company of one patent theatre, to join the forces of the other, without the permission of the Chamberlain, in addition to the formal discharge of

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his manager. Powell, the actor, even suffered imprisonment on this account, although it was thought as well, after a day or two, to abandon the proceedings that had been taken against him. “Upon this occasion,” says Cibber, with a mysterious air, and in very involved terms, “behind the scenes at Drury Lane, a person of great quality, in my hearing, inquiring of Powell into the nature of his offence ... told him, that if he had patience, or spirit enough to have stayed in his confinement till he had given him notice of it, he would have found him a handsomer way of coming out of it!” Of the same actor, Powell, it is recorded that he once, at Will’s Coffee House, “in a dispute about playhouse affairs, struck a gentleman whose family had been some time masters of it.” A complaint of the actor’s violence was lodged at the Chamberlain’s office, and Powell having a part in the play announced for performance upon the following day, an order was sent to silence the whole company, and to close the theatre, although it was admitted that the managers had been without cognisance of their actor’s misconduct! “However,” Cibber narrates, “this order was obeyed, and remained in force for two or three days, till the same authority was pleased, or advised, to revoke it. From the measures this injured gentleman took for his redress, it may be judged how far it was taken for granted that a Lord Chamberlain had an absolute power over the theatre.” An attempt, however, upon the authority of the Chamberlain to imprison Dogget, the actor, for breach of his engagement with the patentees of Drury Lane Theatre, met with signal discomfiture. Dogget forthwith applied to the Lord Chief Justice Holt for his discharge under the Habeas Corpus Act, and readily obtained it, with, it may be gathered, liberal compensation for the violence to which he had been subjected.

The proceedings of the Lord Chamberlain had, indeed, become most oppressive. Early in 1720, the Duke of Newcastle, then Lord Chamberlain, took upon himself to close Drury Lane Theatre. Steele, then one of the patentees, addressed the public upon the subject. He had lived in friendship with the duke; he owed his seat in Parliament to the duke’s influence. He commenced with saying: “The injury which I have received, great as it is, has nothing in it so painful as that it comes from whence it does. When I complained of it in a private letter to the Chamberlain, he was pleased to send his secretary to me with a message to forbid me writing, speaking, corresponding, or applying to him in any manner whatsoever. Since he has been pleased to send an English gentleman a banishment from his person and counsels in a style thus royal, I doubt not but that the reader will justify me in the method I take to explain this matter to the town.” Steele could obtain no redress, however. He was virtually dispossessed of his rights as patentee. He estimated his loss at nine thousand eight hundred pounds, and concluded

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his statement of the case with the words: “But it is apparent the King is grossly and shamelessly injured ... I never did one act to provoke this attempt, nor does the Chamberlain pretend to assign any direct reason of forfeiture, but openly and wittingly declares that he will ruin Steele.... The Lord Chamberlain and many others may, perhaps, have done more for the House of Hanover than I have, but I am the only man in his majesty’s dominions, who did all he could.” For some months Steele was replaced by other patentees, of whom Cibber was one, more submissive to “the lawful monarch of the stage,” as Dennis designated the Chamberlain; but in 1721, upon the intervention of Walpole, Steele was restored to his privileges. It is not clear, however, that he took any legal measures to obtain compensation for the wrong done him. Cibber is silent upon the subject; because, it has been suggested, the Chamberlain had been instrumental in obtaining him the appointment of poet laureate, which could hardly have devolved upon him in right of his poetic qualifications.

Nevertheless, Cibber had been active in organising a form of opposition to the authority of the Chamberlain and the Master of the Revels, which, although it seemed of a trifling kind, had yet its importance. For it turned upon the question of fees. The holders of the patents considered themselves sole judges of the plays proper to be acted in their theatres. The Master of the Revels claimed his fee of forty shillings for each play produced. The managers, it seems, were at liberty to represent new plays without consulting him, and to spare him the trouble of reading the same—provided always they paid him his fees. But these they now thought it expedient to withhold from him. Cibber was deputed to attend the Master of the Revels, and to inquire into the justice of his demand, with full powers to settle the dispute amicably. Charles Killigrew at this time filled the office, having succeeded his father Thomas, who had obtained the appointment of Master of the Revels upon the death of Sir Henry Herbert in 1673. Killigrew could produce no warrant for his demand. Cibber concluded with telling him that “as his pretensions were not backed with any visible instrument of right, and as his strongest plea was custom, the managers could not so far extend their complaisance as to continue the payment of fees upon so slender a claim to them.” From that time neither their plays nor his fees gave either party any further trouble. In 1725 Killigrew was succeeded as Master of the Revels by Charles Henry Lea, who for some years continued to exercise “such authority as was not opposed, and received such fees as he could find the managers willing to pay.”

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The first step towards legislation in regard to the theatres and the licensing of plays was made in 1734, when Sir John Barnard moved the House of Commons “for leave to bring in a bill for restraining the number of houses for playing of interludes and for the better regulating common players of interludes.” It was represented that great mischief had been done in the city of London by the playhouses: youth had been corrupted, vice encouraged, trade and industry prejudiced. Already the number of theatres in London was double that of Paris. In addition to the opera-house, the French playhouse in the Haymarket, and the theatres in Covent Garden, Drury Lane, Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and Goodman’s Fields, there was now a project to erect a new playhouse in St. Martin’s-le-Grand. It was no less surprising than shameful to see so great a change in the temper and inclination of the British people; “we now exceeded in levity even the French themselves, from whom we learned these and many other ridiculous customs, as much unsuitable to the mien and manners of an Englishman or a Scot, as they were agreeable to the air and levity of a Monsieur.” Moreover, it was remarked that, to the amazement and indignation of all Europe, Italian singers received here “set salaries equal to those of the Lords of the Treasury and Judges of England!” The bill was duly brought in, but was afterwards dropped, “on account of a clause offered to be inserted ... for enlarging the power of the Lord Chamberlain with respect to the licensing of plays.” It is curious to find that Tony Aston, a popular comedian of the time, who had been bred an attorney, was, upon his own petition, permitted to deliver a speech in the House of Commons against Sir John Barnard’s bill.

But two years later the measure was substantially passed into law. The theatres had certainly given in the meantime serious provocation to the authorities. The power of the Chamberlain and the Master of the Revels had been derided. Playhouses were opened and plays produced without any kind of license. At the Haymarket, under the management of Fielding, who styled his actors “The Great Mogul’s Comedians,” the bills announcing that they had “dropped from the clouds” (in mockery, probably, of “His Majesty’s Servants” at Drury Lane, or of another troop describing themselves as “The Comedians of His Majesty’s Revels"), the plays produced had been in the nature of political lampoons. Walpole and his arts of government were openly satirised, Fielding having no particular desire to spare the prime minister, whose patronage he had vainly solicited. In the play entitled “Pasquin, a Dramatic Satire on the Times; being the rehearsal of two plays, *viz*., a Comedy, called The Election, and a Tragedy, called the Life and Death of Common Sense,” the satire was chiefly aimed at the electoral corruptions of the age, the abuses prevailing in the learned professions, and the servility of place-men who derided public virtue, and denied the existence

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of political honesty. “Pasquin,” it may be noted, was received with extraordinary favour, enjoyed a run of fifty nights, and proved a source of both fame and profit to its author. But the play of “The Historical Register of 1736,” produced in the spring of 1737, contained allusions of a more pointed and personal kind, and gravely offended the government. Indeed, the result could hardly have been otherwise. Walpole himself was brought upon the stage, and under the name of Quidam violently caricatured. He was exhibited silencing noisy patriots with bribes, and then joining with them in a dance—the proceedings being explained by Medley, another of the characters, supposed to be an author: “Sir, every one of these patriots has a hole in his pocket, as Mr. Quidam the fiddler there knows; so that he intends to make them dance till all the money has fallen through, which he will pick up again, and so not lose a halfpenny by his generosity!” The play, indeed, abounded in satire of the boldest kind, in witty and unsparing invective; as the biographer of Fielding acknowledges, there was much in the work “well calculated both to offend and alarm a wary minister of state.” Soon both “Pasquin” and “The Historical Register” were brought under the notice of the Cabinet. Walpole felt “that it would be inexpedient to allow the stage to become the vehicle of anti-ministerial abuse.” The Licensing Act was resolved upon.

The new measure was not avowedly aimed at Fielding, however. It was preceded by incidents of rather a suspicious kind. Gifford, the manager of Goodman’s Fields Theatre, professing to have received from some anonymous writer a play of singular scurrility, carried the work to the prime minister. The obsequious manager was rewarded with one thousand pounds for his patriotic conduct, and the libellous nature of the play he had surrendered was made the excuse for the legislation that ensued. It was freely observed at the time, however, that Gifford had profited more by suppressing the play than he could possibly have gained by representing it, and that there was something more than natural in the appositeness of his receipt of it. If honest, it was suggested that he had been trapped by a government spy, who had sent him the play, solely that he might deal with it as he did; but it was rather assumed that he had disingenuously curried favour with the authorities, and sold himself for treasury gold. The play in question was never acted or printed; nor was the name of the author, or of the person from whom the manager professed to have received it, ever disclosed. Horace Walpole, indeed, boldly ascribed it to Fielding, and asserted that he had discovered among his father’s papers an imperfect copy of the play. But the statement has not obtained much acceptance.

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The ministry hurried on their Licensing Bill. It was entitled “An Act to explain and amend so much of an Act made in the twelfth year of Queen Anne, entitled ’An Act for reducing the laws relating to rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars, and vagrants, into one Act of Parliament; and for a more effectual punishing such rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars, and vagrants, and sending them whither they ought to be sent,’ as relates to common players of interludes.” But its chief object—undisclosed by its title, was the enactment that, for the future, every dramatic piece, including prologues and epilogues, should, previous to performance, receive the license of the Lord Chamberlain, and that, without his permission, no London theatre, unprotected by a patent, should open its doors. Read a first time on the 24th of May, 1737, the bill was passed through both Houses with such despatch that it received the royal assent on the 8th of June following. It was opposed in the House of Commons by Mr. Pulteney, and in the House of Lords by the Earl of Chesterfield, whose impressive speech on the occasion is one of the few specimens that survive of the parliamentary eloquence of the period. With the passing of the Licensing Act, Fielding’s career as manager and dramatist was brought to a close. He was constrained to devote himself to the study of the law, and subsequently to the production of novels. And with the passing of the Licensing Act terminated the existence of the Master of the Revels; the Act, indeed, made no mention of him, ignored him altogether. He survived, however, under another name—still as the Chamberlain’s subordinate and deputy. Thence forward he was known as the Licenser of Playhouses and Examiner of Plays.

CHAPTER III.

THE LICENSER OF PLAYHOUSES.

The Act of 1737 for licensing plays, playhouses, and players, and legalising the power the Lord Chamberlain had long been accustomed to exercise, although readily passed by both Houses of Parliament, gave great offence to the public. The Abbe Le Blanc, who was visiting England at this period, describes the new law as provoking a “universal murmur in the nation.” It was openly complained of in the newspapers; at the coffee-houses it was denounced as unjust and “contrary to the liberties of the people of England.” Fear prevailed that the freedom of the press would next be invaded. In the House of Lords Chesterfield had stigmatised the measure both as an encroachment on liberty and an attack on property. “Wit, my lords,” he said, “is a sort of property. It is the property of those that have it, and too often the only property they have to depend on. It is, indeed; but a precarious dependence. Thank God, we, my lords, have a dependence of another kind. We have a much less precarious support, and, therefore, cannot feel the inconveniences of the bill now before us; but it is our duty to encourage and protect wit,

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whosoever's property it may be.... I must own I cannot easily agree to the laying of a tax upon wit; but by this bill it is to be heavily taxed—it is to be excised; for if this bill passes, it cannot be retailed in a proper way without a permit; and the Lord Chamberlain is to have the honour of being chief gauger, supervisor, commissioner, judge and jury." At this time, however, it is to be noted that parliamentary reporting was forbidden by both Houses. The general public, therefore, knew little of Lord Chesterfield's eloquent defence of the liberty of the stage.

The Act was passed in June, when the patent theatres, according to custom, were closed for the summer. Some two months after their reopening in the autumn all dramatic representations were suspended for six weeks, in consequence of the death of Queen Caroline. In January was presented at Covent Garden "A Nest of Plays," as the author, one Hildebrand Jacob, described his production: a combination of three short plays, each consisting of one act only, entitled respectively, "The Prodigal Reformed," "Happy Constancy," and "The Trial of Conjugal Love." The performance met with a very unfavourable reception. The author attributed the ill success of his work to its being the first play licensed by the authority of the Lord Chamberlain under the new bill, many spectators having predetermined to silence, under any circumstances, "the first fruits of that Act of Parliament." And this seems, indeed, to have been the case. The Abbe Le Blanc, who was present on the occasion, writes: "The best play in the world would not have succeeded that night. There was a disposition to damn whatever might appear. The farce in question was damned, indeed, without the least compassion. Nor was that all, for the actors were driven off the stage, and happy was it for the author that he did not fall into the hands of this furious assembly." And the Abbe proceeds to explain that the originators of this disturbance were not "schoolboys, apprentices, clerks, or mechanics," but lawyers, "a body of gentlemen perhaps less honoured, but certainly more feared here than they are in France," who, "from living in colleges (Inns of Court), and from conversing always with one another, mutually preserve a spirit of independency through the body, and with great ease form cabals.... At Paris the cabals of the pit are only among young fellows, whose years may excuse their folly, or persons of the meanest education and stamp; here they are the fruit of deliberation in a very grave body of people, who are not less formidable to the minister in place than to the theatrical writers." But the Abbe relates that on a subsequent occasion, when another new play having been announced, he had looked for further disturbance, the judicious dramatist of the night succeeded in calming the pit by administering in his prologue a double dose of incense to their vanity. "Half-an-hour before the play was to begin the spectators gave notice of their dispositions

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by frightful hisses and outcries, equal, perhaps, to what were ever heard at a Roman amphitheatre." The author, however, having in part tamed this wild audience by his flattery, secured ultimately its absolute favour by humouring its prejudices after the grossest fashion. He brought upon the stage a figure "with black eyebrows, a ribbon of an ell long under his chin, a bag-peruke immoderately powdered, and his nose all bedaubed with snuff. What Englishman could not know a Frenchman by this ridiculous figure?" The Frenchman was presently shown to be, for all the lace down every seam of his coat, nothing but a cook, and then followed severe satire and criticism upon the manners and customs of France. "The excellence and virtues of English beef were extolled, and the author maintained that it was owing to the qualities of its juice that the English were so courageous and had such a solidity of understanding, which raised them above all the nations in Europe; he preferred the noble old English pudding beyond all the finest ragouts that ever were invented by the greatest geniuses that France ever produced." These "ingenious strokes" were loudly applauded by the audience, it seems, who, in their delight at the abuse lavished upon the French, forgot that they came to condemn the play and to uphold the ancient liberties of the stage. From that time forward, the Abbe states, "the law was executed without the least trouble; all the plays since have been quietly heard, and either succeeded or not according to their merits."

When Garrick visited Paris he declined to be introduced to the Abbe Le Blanc, "on account of the irreverence with which he had treated Shakespeare." There can, indeed, be no doubt that the Abbe, although he wrote amusing letters, was a very prejudiced person, and his evidence and opinions touching the English stage must be received with caution. So far as can be ascertained, especially by study of the "History of the Stage" (compiled by that industrious clergyman, Mr. Genest, from the playbills in the British Museum), but few new plays were produced in the course of the season immediately following the passing of the Licensing Act; certainly no new play can be found answering the description furnished by the Abbe with due regard to the period he has fixed for its production. Possibly he referred to the "Beaux' Stratagem," in which appear a French officer and an Irish-French priest, and which was certainly represented some few nights after the condemnation of Mr. Jacob's "Nest of Plays." Farquhar's comedy was then thirty years old, however. Nor has the Abbe done full justice to the public opposition offered to the Licensing Act. At the Haymarket Theatre a serious riot occurred in October, 1738, fifteen months after the passing of the measure. Closed against the English actors the theatre was opened by a French company, armed with a license from the Lord Chamberlain. A comedy, called "L'Embarras de Richesses," was announced for representation

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"by authority." The house was crowded immediately after the opening of the doors. But the audience soon gave evidence of their sentiments by singing in chorus "The Roast Beef of Old England." Then followed loud huzzas and general tumult. Deveil, one of the Justices of the Peace for Westminster, who was present, declared the proceedings to be riotous, and announced his intention to maintain the King's authority. He stated, further, that it was the King's command that the play should be acted, and that all offenders would be immediately secured by the guards in waiting. In opposition to the magistrate it was maintained "that the audience had a legal right to show their dislike to any play or actor; that the judicature of the pit had been acquiesced in, time immemorial; and as the present set of actors were to take their fate from the public, they were free to receive them as they pleased." When the curtain drew up the actors were discovered standing between two files of grenadiers, with their bayonets fixed and resting on their firelocks. This seeming endeavour to secure the success of French acting by the aid of British bayonets still more infuriated the audience. Even Justice Deveil thought it prudent to order the withdrawal of the military. The actors attempted to speak, but their voices were overborne by hisses, groans, and "not only catcalls, but all the various portable instruments that could make a disagreeable noise." A dance was next essayed; but even this had been provided against: showers of peas descended upon the stage, and "made capering very unsafe." The French and Spanish Ambassadors, with their ladies, who had occupied the stage-box, now withdrew, only to be insulted outside the theatre by the mob, who had cut the traces of their carriages. The curtain at last fell, and the attempt to present French plays at the Haymarket was abandoned, "the public being justly indignant that whilst an arbitrary Act suppressed native talent, foreign adventurers should be patronised and encouraged." It must be said, however, that the French actors suffered for sins not their own, and that the wrath of the public did not really reach the Lord Chamberlain, or effect any change in the Licensing Act.

For twenty years the Haymarket remained without a license of any endurance. The theatre was occasionally opened, however, for brief seasons, by special permission of the Chamberlain, or in defiance of his authority, many ingenious subterfuges being resorted to, so that the penalties imposed by the Act might be evaded. One of the advertisements ran—"At Cibber's Academy, in the Haymarket, will be a concert, after which will be exhibited (gratis) a rehearsal, in form of a play, called Romeo and Juliet." Macklin, the actor, opened the theatre in 1744, and under the pretence of instructing "unfledged performers" in "the science of acting," gave a variety of dramatic representations. It was expressly announced that no money would be taken

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at the doors, “nor any person admitted but by printed tickets, which will be delivered by Mr. Macklin, at his house in Bow Street, Covent Garden.” At one of these performances Samuel Foote made his first appearance upon the stage, sustaining the part of Othello. Presently, Foote ventured to give upon the stage of the Haymarket, a monologue entertainment, called “Diversions of a Morning.” At the instance of Lacy, however, one of the patentees of Drury Lane Theatre, whom Foote had satirised, the performance was soon prohibited. But Foote was not easily discouraged; and, by dint of wit and impudence, for some time baffled the authorities. He invited his friends to attend the theatre, at noon, and “drink a dish of chocolate with him.” He promised that he would “endeavour to make the morning as diverting as possible;” and notified that “Sir Dilbury Diddle would be there, and Lady Betty Frisk had absolutely promised.” Tickets, without which no person would be admitted, were to be obtained at George’s Coffee House, Temple Bar. Some simple visitors, no doubt, expected that chocolate would be really served to them. But the majority were content with an announcement from the stage that, while chocolate was preparing, Mr. Foote would, with the permission of his friends, proceed with his instruction of certain pupils he was educating in the art of acting. Under this pretence a dramatic representation was really given, and repeated on some forty occasions. Then he grew bolder, and opened the theatre in the evening, at the request, as he stated, “of several persons who are desirous of spending an hour with Mr. Foote, but find the time inconvenient.” Instead of chocolate in the morning, Mr. Foot’s friends were therefore invited to drink “a dish of tea” with him at half-past six in the evening. By-and-by, his entertainment was slightly varied, and described as an Auction of Pictures. Eventually, Foote obtained from the Duke of Devonshire, the Lord Chamberlain, a permanent license for the theatre, and the Haymarket took rank as a regular and legal place of entertainment, to be open, however, only during the summer months. Upon Foote’s decease, the theatre devolved upon George Colman, who obtained a continuance of the license.

The theatre in Goodman’s Fields underwent experiences very similar to those of the Haymarket. Under the provisions of the Licensing Act its performances became liable to the charge of illegality. It was without a patent or a license. It was kept open professedly for concerts of vocal and instrumental music, divided into two parts. Between these parts dramatic performances were presented gratis. The obscurity of the theatre, combined with its remote position, probably protected it for some time from interference and suppression. But on the 19th October, 1741, at this unlicensed theatre, a gentleman, who, as the playbill of the night untruly stated, had never before appeared on any stage, undertook the part of Richard III. in Cibber’s version

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of Shakespeare's tragedy. The gentleman's name was David Garrick. Had he failed the theatre might have lived on. But his success was fatal to it. The public went in crowds from all parts of the town to see the new actor. "From the polite ends of Westminster the most elegant company flocked to Goodman's Fields, insomuch that from Temple Bar the whole way was covered with a string of coaches." The patentees of Drury Lane and Covent Garden interfered, "alarmed at the deficiency of their own receipts," and invoked the aid of the Lord Chamberlain. The Goodman's Fields Theatre was closed, and Garrick was spirited away to Drury Lane, with a salary of 600 guineas a-year, a larger sum than had ever before been awarded to any performer.

It will be seen that the Chamberlain had deemed it his mission to limit, as much as possible, the number of places of theatrical entertainment in London. Playgoers were bidden to be content with Drury Lane and Covent Garden; it was not conceivable to the noblemen and commoners occupying the Houses of Parliament, or to the place-holders in the Chamberlain's office, or in the royal household, that other theatres could possibly be required.

Still attempts were occasionally made to establish additional places of entertainment. In 1785, John Palmer, the actor famous as the original Joseph Surface, laid the first stone of a new theatre, to be called the East London, or Royalty, in the neighbourhood of the old Goodman's Fields Theatre, which had been many years abandoned of the actors and converted into a goods warehouse. The building was completed in 1787. The opening representation was announced; when the proprietors of the patent theatres gave warning that any infringement of their privileges would be followed by the prosecution of Mr. Palmer and his company. The performances took place, nevertheless, but they were stated to be for the benefit of the London Hospital, and not, therefore, for "hire, gain, or reward;" so the actors avoided risk of commitment as rogues and vagabonds. But necessarily the enterprise ended in disaster. Palmer, his friends alleged, lost his whole fortune; it was shrewdly suspected, however, that he had, in truth, no fortune to lose. In any case he speedily retired from the new theatre. It was open for brief seasons with such exhibitions of music, dancing, and pantomime, as were held to be unaffected by the Act, and permissible under the license of the local magistrates. From time to time, however, the relentless patentees took proceedings against the actors. Delpini, the clown, was even committed to prison for exclaiming "Roast Beef!" in a Christmas pantomime. By uttering words without the accompaniment of music he had, it appeared, constituted himself an actor of a stage play.

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Some five-and-twenty years later, Elliston was now memorialising the king, now petitioning the House of Commons and the Privy Council, in reference to the opening of an additional theatre. He had been in treaty for the Pantheon, in Oxford Street, and urged that "the intellectual community would be benefited by an extension of license for the regular drama." As lessee of the Royal Circus or Surrey Theatre, he besought liberty to exhibit and perform "all such entertainments of music and action as were commonly called pantomimes and ballets, together with operatic or musical pieces, accompanied with dialogue in the ordinary mode of dramatic representations," subject, at all times, to the control and restraint of the Lord Chamberlain, "in conformity to the laws by which theatres possessing those extensive privileges were regulated." But all was in vain. The king would not "notice any representation connected with the establishment of another theatre." The other petitions were without result.

Gradually, however, it became necessary for the authorities to recognise the fact that the public really did require more amusements of a theatrical kind than the privileged theatres could furnish. But the regular drama, it was held, must still be protected: performed only on the patent boards. So now "burletta licenses" were issued, under cover of which melodramas were presented, with entertainments of music and dancing, spectacle and pantomime. In 1809, the Lyceum or English Opera House, which for some years before had been licensed for music and dancing, was licensed for "musical dramatic entertainments and ballets of action." The Adelphi, then called the Sans Pareil Theatre, received a "burletta license" about the same time. In 1813 the Olympic was licensed for similar performances and for horsemanship; but it was for a while closed again by the Chamberlain's order, upon Elliston's attempt to call the theatre Little Drury Lane, and to represent upon its stage something more like the "regular drama" than had been previously essayed at a minor house. "Burletta licenses" were also granted for the St. James's in 1835, and for the Strand in 1836.

And, in despite of the authorities, theatres had been established on the Surrey side of the Thames; but, in truth, for the accommodation of the dwellers on the Middlesex shore. Under the Licensing Act, while the Chamberlain was constituted licenser of all new plays throughout Great Britain, his power to grant licenses for theatrical entertainments was confined within the city and liberties of Westminster, and wherever the sovereign might reside. The Surrey, the Coburg (afterwards the Victoria), Astley's, &c., were, therefore, out of his jurisdiction. There seemed, indeed, to be no law in existence under which they could be licensed. They affected to be open under a magistrate's license for "music, dancing, and public entertainments." But this, in truth, afforded them no protection when it

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was thought worth while to prosecute the managers for presenting dramatic exhibitions. For although an Act, passed in the 28th year of George III., enabled justices of the peace, under certain restrictions, to grant licenses for dramatic entertainments, their powers did not extend to within twenty miles of London. Lambeth was thus neutral ground, over which neither the Lord Chamberlain nor the country justices had any real authority, with this difficulty about the case—performances that could not be licensed could not be legalised.

The law continued in this unsatisfactory state till the passing, in 1843, of the Act for Regulating Theatres. This deprived the patent theatres of their monopoly of the "regular drama," in that it extended the Lord Chamberlain's power to grant licenses for the performance of stage plays to all theatres within the parliamentary boundaries of the City of London and Westminster, and of the Boroughs of Finsbury and Marylebone, the Tower Hamlets, Lambeth, and Southwark, and also "within those places where Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, shall, in their royal persons, occasionally reside;" it being fully understood that all the theatres then existing in London would receive forthwith the Chamberlain's license "to give stage plays in the fullest sense of the word;" to be taken to include, according to the terms of the Act, "every tragedy, comedy, farce, opera, burletta, interlude, melodrama, pantomime, or other entertainment of the stage, or any part thereof."

Thus, at last, more than a century after the passing of the Licensing Act, certain of its more mischievous restrictions were in effect repealed. A measure of free trade in theatres was established. The Lord Chamberlain was still to be "the lawful monarch of the stage," but in the future his rule was to be more constitutional, less absolute than it had been. The public were no longer to be confined to Drury Lane and Covent Garden in the winter, and the Haymarket in the summer. Actors were enabled, managers and public consenting, to personate Hamlet or Macbeth, or other heroes of the poetic stage, at Lambeth, Clerkenwell, or Shoreditch, anywhere indeed, without risk of committal to gaol. It was no longer necessary to call a play a "burletta," or to touch a note upon the piano, now and then, in the course of a performance, so as to justify its claim to be a musical entertainment; all subterfuges of this kind ceased.

It was with considerable reluctance, however, that the Chamberlain, in his character of Licenser of Playhouses, divested himself of the paternal authority he had so long exercised. He still clung to the notion that he was a far better judge of the requirements and desires of playgoers than they could possibly be themselves. He was strongly of opinion that the number of theatres was "sufficient for the theatrical wants of the metropolis." He could not allow that the matter should be regulated by the ordinary laws of supply and demand, or by any

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regard for the large annual increase of the population. Systematically he hindered all enterprise in the direction of new theatres. It was always doubtful whether his license would be granted, even after a new building had been completed. He decided that he must be guided by his own views of “the interests of the public.” It is not clear that he possessed authority in this respect other than that derived from custom and the traditions of his office. The Act of 1843 contained no special provisions on the subject. But he insisted that all applicants for the licensing of new theatres should be armed with petitions in favour of the proposal, signed by many of the inhabitants in the immediate vicinity of the projected building; he ’required the Police Commissioners to verify the truth of these petitions, and to report whether inconvenience was likely to result in the way of interruption of traffic, or otherwise, from the establishment of a new theatre. Further, he obtained the opinion of the parish authorities, the churchwardens, &c., of the district; he was even suspected of taking counsel with the managers of neighbouring establishments; “in short, he endeavoured to convince himself generally that the grant of the license would satisfy a legitimate want”—or what the Chamberlain in his wisdom, or his unwisdom, held to be such.

Under these conditions it is not surprising that for nearly a quarter of a century there was no addition made to the list of London theatres. But time moves on, and even Chamberlains have to move with it. Of late years there has been no difficulty in regard to the licensing of new theatres, and the metropolis has been the richer by many well-conducted houses of dramatic entertainment.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXAMINER OF PLAYS.

The Lord Chamberlain holds office only so long as the political party to which he is attached remains in power. He comes in and goes out with the ministry. Any peculiar fitness for the appointment is not required of him; it is simply a reward for his political services. Of course different Chamberlains have entertained different opinions of the duties to be performed in regard to the theatres; and, in such wise, much embarrassment has arisen. The Chamberlain’s office is supported by a grant from the Civil List, which is settled upon the accession of the sovereign. In addition, fees are received for the licensing of theatres, and for the examination of plays.

The Examiner of Plays has long been recognised as a more permanent functionary than the Lord Chamberlain, although it would seem the precise nature of his appointment has never been clearly understood. “I believe,” said Mr. Donne, the late Examiner, in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee of 1866, “that it is an appointment that expires with the sovereign (at least, I infer so from the evidence which Mr. Colman gave

in the year 1833), but I cannot say that from my own knowledge: I believe it to be an appointment for life."

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In truth, the Examiner is simply the employe of the Chamberlain, appointed by him, and holding the office only so long as the superior functionary shall deem fitting. There is no instance on record, however, of the displacement of an Examiner, or of the cancelling by one Chamberlain of the appointment made by his predecessor. Power of this kind, however, would seem to be vested in the Chamberlain for the time being. Colman's evidence, it may be noted, is of no present worth. He was appointed as a consequence of the old Licensing Act, repealed in 1843.

The first Licenser of Plays sworn in after the passing of the Licensing Act of 1737 was William Chetwynd, with a salary of L400 a-year. But this deputy of the Chamberlain was in his turn allowed a deputy, and one Thomas Odell was appointed assistant examiner, with a salary of L200 a-year. Strange to say, it was this Odell who had first opened a theatre in Goodman's Fields, which, upon the complaint of the civic authorities, who believed the drama to be a source of danger to the London apprentices of the period, he had been compelled forthwith to close. He applied to George II, for a royal license, but met with a peremptory refusal. In 1731 he sold his property to one Giffard, who rebuilt the theatre, and, dispensing with official permission, performed stage plays between the intervals of a concert, until producing Garrick, and obtaining extraordinary success by that measure, he roused the jealousy of the authorities, and was compelled to forego his undertaking.

The Licenser's power of prohibition was exercised very shortly after his appointment, in the case of two tragedies: "Gustavus Vasa," by Henry Brooke, and "Edward and Eleonora," by James Thomson. Political allusions of an offensive kind were supposed to lurk somewhere in these works. "Gustavus Vasa" was especially forbidden "on account of some strokes of liberty which breathed through several parts of it." On the Irish stage, however, over which the Chamberlain had no power, the play was performed as "The Patriot;" while, by the publication of "Gustavus Vasa," Mr. Brooke obtained L1000 or so from a public curious as to the improprieties it was alleged to contain, and anxious to protest against the oppressive conduct of the Licenser. In 1805, with the permission of the Chamberlain, the play was produced at Covent Garden, in order that Master Betty, the Young Roscius, might personate the hero. But the youthful actor failed in the part, and the tragedy, being found rather dull, was represented but once. At this time Mr. Brooke had been dead some years. In a preface to his play he had vouched for its purity, and denounced the conduct of the Licenser, as opposed to the intention of the Legislature, Dr. Johnson assisting his cause by the publication of an ironical pamphlet—"A Vindication of the Licenser from the malicious and scandalous aspersions of Mr. Brooke." Modern readers may well be excused for knowing little of the

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dramatist whose “Gustavus Vasa” had no great deal to recommend it, perhaps, beyond the fact of its performance having been prohibited. Yet some few years since, it may be noted, the late Charles Kingsley made endeavours, more strenuous than successful, to obtain applause for Brooke’s novel, “The Fool of Quality;” but although a new and handsome edition of this work was published, it was received with some apathy by the romance-reading public.

The author of “The Seasons” hardly seems a writer likely to give offence designedly to a Chamberlain. But Thomson was a sort of Poet Laureate to Frederick, Prince of Wales, then carrying on fierce opposition to the court of his father, and the play of “Edward and Eleonora”—a dramatic setting of the old legend of Queen Eleanor sucking the poison from her husband’s arm—certainly contained passages applicable to the differences existing between the king and his heir-apparent. In the first scene, one of the characters demands—

> Has not the royal heir a juster claim
> To share his father’s inmost heart and counsels,
> Than aliens to his interest, those who make
> A property, a market of his honour?

And King Edward apostrophises his dead sire—

> O my deluded father! little joy
> Hadst thou in life, led from thy real good
> And genuine glory, from thy people’s love,
> The noblest aim of kings, by smiling traitors!

In 1775, however, the play was produced at Covent Garden. George III. was king, and the allusions to the squabbles of his father and grandfather were not, perhaps, supposed to be any longer of the remotest concern or significance to anybody.

At this time and long afterwards, the Licenser regarded it as his chief duty to protect the court against all possibility of attack from the stage. With the morality of plays he did not meddle much; but he still clung to the old superstition that the British drama had only a right to exist as the pastime of royalty; plays and players were still to be subservient to the pleasure of the sovereign. The British public, who, after all, really supported the stage, he declined to consider in the matter; conceding, however, that they were at liberty to be amused at the theatre, provided they could achieve that end in strict accordance with the prescription of the court and its Chamberlain. In George III.’s time King Lear was prohibited, because it was judged inexpedient that royal insanity should be exhibited upon the stage. In 1808 a play, called “The Wanderer,” adapted from Kotzebue, was forbidden at Covent Garden, in that it dealt with the adventures of

Prince Charles Edward, the Pretender. Even after the accession of Queen Victoria, a license was refused to an English version of Victor Hugo's "Ruy Blas," lest playgoers should perceive in it allusions to the matrimonial choice her Majesty was then about to make.

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The Licenser's keenness in scenting a political allusion oftentimes, indeed, entailed upon him much and richly-merited ridicule. The production, some fifty years ago, of a tragedy called "Alasco" furnishes a notable instance of the absurdity of his conduct in this respect. "Alasco" was written by Mr. Shee, a harmless gentleman enough, if at that time a less fully-developed courtier than he appeared when, as Sir Martin Archer Shee, he occupied the presidential chair of the Royal Academy. Possibly some suspicion attached to the dramatist by reason of his being an Irishman and a Roman Catholic. In any case, the Licenser found much to object to in "Alasco." The play was in rehearsal at Covent Garden; but so many alterations and suppressions were insisted on, that its representation became impracticable. We may note a few of the lines expunged by the Licenser:

With most unworthy patience have I seen
My country shackled and her sons oppressed;
And though I've felt their injuries, and avow
My ardent hope hereafter to avenge them, &c.

Tyrants, proud lord, are never safe, nor should be;
The ground is mined beneath them as they tread;
Haunted by plots, cabals, conspiracies,
Their lives are long convulsions, and they shake,
Surrounded by their guards and garrisons!

Some slanderous tool of state,
Some taunting, dull, unmannered deputy!

The words in italics were to be expunged from the following passages:

Tis ours to rescue from the oblivious grave *Where tyrants have contrived to bury them,* A gallant race—a nation—*and her fame; To gather up the fragments of our state, And in its cold, dismembered body, breathe The living soul of empire.* Fear God and love the king—the soldier's faith— Was always my religion; and I know No heretics but cowards, knaves, and traitors— *No, no, whate'er the colour of his creed, The man of honour's orthodox.*

It is difficult now to discover what offence was contained in these lines, and many more such as these, which were also denounced by the Licenser. Shee expostulated—for he was not a meek sort of man by any means, and he knew the advantages of a stir to one aiming at publicity—appealed from the subordinate to the superior, from the Examiner to the Chamberlain, then the Duke of Montrose, and wrote to the newspapers; but all in vain. The tragedy could not be performed. That the stage lost much it would be rash to assert. "Alasco" was published, and those who read it—they were not many—found it certainly harmless; but not less certainly pompous and wearisome. However, that Shee was furnished with a legitimate grievance was generally agreed, although in

“Blackwood’s Magazine,” then very intense in its Toryism, it was hinted that the dramatist, his religion and his nationality being considered, might be in league

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with the author of “Captain Rock,” and engaged in seditious designs against the peace and Protestantism of Ireland! Some five years later, it may be noted, “Alasco” was played at the Surrey Theatre, without the slightest regard for the opinion of the Examiner of Plays, or with any change in the passages he had ordered to be expunged. Westminster was not then very well informed as to what happened in Lambeth, and probably it was not generally known that “Alasco,” with all its supposed seditious utterances unsilenced, could be witnessed upon the Surrey stage. Nor is there any record that anybody was at all the worse, or the treasury of the theatre any the better, for the representation of the forbidden tragedy.

The Examiner of Plays at this time was George Colman the younger, who was appointed to the office, less on account of the distinction he enjoyed as a dramatist, than because he was a favourite and a sort of boon companion of George IV. Colman had succeeded a Mr. Larpent, who had filled the post for some twenty years, and who, notwithstanding that, as a strict Methodist, he scarcely seemed a very fit person to pronounce judgment upon stage plays, had exercised the powers entrusted to him with moderation. It was generally agreed that he was a considerate and benignant ruler, and that his career as Examiner offered few occasions for remark, although upon its close some surprise was excited at the exposure for sale by public auction of the many manuscripts of plays, &c., which were found in his possession, and which should certainly have been preserved among the archives of the Chamberlain’s office. Colman, however, proved a very tyrant—a consummate Jack-in-office. As a gentleman of rather unbridled habits of life, and the author of “Broad Grins” and other works certainly paying small heed to the respectabilities, it had been hoped that he would deal leniently with his brother playwrights. But he carried to fanatic extravagance his devotion to the purity of the stage. Warned by earlier example, few dramas which could possibly be considered of a political complexion were now submitted for examination. Still the diction of the stage demanded a measure of liberty. But Mr. Colman would not allow a lover to describe his mistress as “an angel.” He avowed that “an angel was a character in Scripture, and not to be profaned on the stage by being applied to a woman!” The exclamation, “Oh, Providence!” was not permitted. The words “heaven” and “hell” he uniformly expunged. “Oh, lud!” and “Oh, la!” were condemned for irreverence. Oaths and all violent expletives were strictly prohibited.

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Now it was rather an imprecatory age. Men swore in those days, not meaning much harm, or particularly conscious of what they were doing, but as a matter of bad habit, in pursuance of a custom certainly odious enough, but which they had not originated, and could hardly be expected immediately to overcome. In this way malediction formed part of the manners of the time. How could these be depicted upon the stage in the face of Mr. Colman's new ordinance? There was great consternation among actors and authors. Plays came back from the Examiner's office so slashed with red ink that they seemed to be bleeding from numerous wounds; line after line had been prohibited; and by Colman of all people! Critics amused themselves by searching through his own dramatic writings, and cataloguing the bad language they contained. The list was very formidable. There were comminations and anathemas in almost every scene. The matter was pointed out to him, but he treated it with indifference. He was a writer of plays then; but now he was Examiner of Plays. His point of view was changed, that was all. It was no fault of his if there had been neglect of duty on the part of previous examiners. Mr. Arnold, the proprietor and manager of the Lyceum Theatre, expostulated with him on the subject. In a play by John Banim, one of the authors of the "Tales of the O'Hara Family," Colman had forbidden certain lines to be chanted by monks and nuns in a scene of a foreign cathedral. It was too profane. What about the singing of "God save the King" upon the stage? That had been sanctioned by custom, Colman maintained; but he could not regard it as a precedent. Was he prepared to mutilate Portia's great speech in the "Merchant of Venice?" Certainly he was; but then custom had sanctioned it, and playgoers were not prepared for any meddling with the text of Shakespeare. He admitted, however, that he did not trouble himself to ascertain whether his excisions were carried into effect when the plays came to be represented. "My duty," he said, "is simply to object to everything immoral or politically dangerous. When I have marked my objections the play is licensed, subject to the omission of the passages objected to; beyond this I have nothing to do, or an examiner would become a spy as well as a censor on the theatre." Any breach of the law was therefore left to be remedied by the action of the "common informer" of the period.

As evidence of Colman's lack of conscientiousness in this matter, a letter he wrote to Mr. Frederick Yates, in 1829, may be cited. A dramatic author, the friend both of Colman and Yates, had bitterly complained of the retrenchments made by the Examiner in a certain play, or, to follow Colman's own words, had stated "that his comedy would be sure to be damned by the public, owing to the removal of some devilish good jokes by the Examiner." "Cannot you, my dear Fred, instruct him better?" wrote Colman. "The play, you know, must be printed in strict accordance with my obliterations; but if the parts be previously given out, it will be difficult to induce the actors to preach from my text!" No doubt upon this hint the actors spake. Only, in that case, of what good was the Examiner, regarded as a public servant?

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It was questioned at the time whether the Chamberlain, by his deputy, was not exercising more authority than he was really clothed with, under virtue of the Licensing Act. He was entitled to prohibit the performance of any play; but could he make terms with the managers, and cut and carve their manuscripts, forcing upon them his capricious alterations? Further, it was asked by what right he delegated his power to another? The Act made no mention of his deputy or of such an officer as an Examiner of Plays. And then, as to the question of fees. What right had he to exact fees? There was no mention of fees in the Act. No doubt the managers had long been in the habit of paying fees—L2 2s. for every piece, song, &c. But it was urged that this was simply to secure expedition in the examination of their plays, which they were bound to submit to the Chamberlain fourteen days at least before representation, and not in pursuance of any legal enactment. The Examiner of Plays received a salary from the Chamberlain for the labour he performed; why should he levy a tax upon managers and authors, and so be paid twice over for the same work?

Now, on the subject of fees Colman was certainly most rapacious. He spared no effort to increase, in this way, the emoluments of his office. Did an actor on a benefit night advertise any new songs, glees, or other musical performance—Colman was prompt to demand a fee of L2 2s. for every separate production. Occasional addresses, prologues, and epilogues, were all rated as distinct stage plays, and the customary fees insisted upon. One actor, long famous as “Little Knight,” so far defeated this systematic extortion that he strung together a long list of songs, recitations, imitations, &c., which he wished to have performed at his benefit with any nonsense of dialogue that came into his head, and so sent them to be licensed as one piece. They were licensed accordingly; the dialogue was all omitted, and the ingenious actor aided his benefit by saving L8 8s. or L10 10s., which would otherwise have found their way into the pocket of the Examiner. When the French plays were performed in London, in 1829, Colman insisted that a fee must be paid for every vaudeville or other light piece of that class produced. As some three or four of such works were presented every night—the same plays being rarely repeated—it was computed that the Examiner’s fees amounted upon an average to L6 6s. a night. During an interval, however, the Duke of Devonshire succeeding the Duke of Montrose as Chamberlain, this demand was not enforced; eventually a compromise was agreed upon, and a reduced fee of L1 1s. was levied upon each vaudeville, &c. Colman even succeeded in rating as a stage play, an astronomical lecture, delivered at the Lyceum. The “At Homes” of Mathews were of course taxed, a “slight sketch and title” being submitted to the Examiner, the actor professing to speak without any precise text, but simply from “heads and hints before him to refer to should his memory falter.” In an attempt to levy a fee on account of an oratorio performed at Covent Garden, Colman failed, however; it was proved that the libretto was entirely composed of passages from the Scriptures. After great discussion it was ultimately decided that the Bible did not need the license of the Lord Chamberlain.

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Colman died in 1836, and was succeeded as Examiner of Plays by Mr. Charles Kemble, who, strange to say, while holding that appointment returned to the stage for a short season and performed certain of his most celebrated characters. He resigned the office in 1840, and his son John Mitchell Kemble then held it in his stead. On the death of John Mitchell Kemble, in 1857, Mr. William Bodham Donne, the late Examiner, received the appointment. Mr. Donne, however, had in truth performed the duties of the office as the deputy of the Chamberlain's deputy since the year 1849. As he informed the Parliamentary committee of 1866, he had received a salary of L320, subject to deduction on account of income-tax. Further, the Examiner receives fees for every play examined. Two guineas are paid for every play of three acts or more; under three acts the fee is L1 1s. For every song sung in a theatre a fee of 5s. is paid. As Mr. Donne explained to the committee, he had examined between 1857 and 1866 about 1800 plays.

It is to be noted that in 1843 the Act for Regulating Theatres, commonly known as Sir James Graham's Act, became law. By this measure the powers of the Lord Chamberlain were enlarged and more firmly established; he was empowered to charge such fees as he might deem fit in regard to every play, prologue, epilogue, or part thereof, intended to be produced or acted in Great Britain, although no fee was in any case to exceed L2 2s. in amount. Further, it was made lawful for him, whenever he should be of opinion that it was fitting for the preservation of good manners, decorum, or of the public peace so to do, to forbid the performance of any stage play, or any act, scene or part thereof, or any prologue or epilogue or any part thereof, anywhere in Great Britain or in any such theatre as he should specify, and either absolutely or for such time as he should think fit. It was enacted, moreover, that the term "stage play" should be taken to include "every tragedy, comedy, farce, opera, burletta, interlude, melodrama, pantomime, or other entertainment of the stage."

The Act provides for no appeal against the decision of the Chamberlain. His government was to be quite absolute. If he chose to prohibit the performance of Shakespeare's plays, for instance, no one could question his right to take that strong measure; only another Act of Parliament could, under such circumstances, restore Shakespeare, to the stage. Of the Examiner of Plays the Act made no mention: that office continued to be the creation simply of the Lord Chamberlain, and without any sort of legal status. The old Licensing Act of 1737 was absolutely repealed; yet, unaccountably enough, Mr. Donne's appointment, bearing date 1857, and signed by the Marquis of Breadalbane, then Lord Chamberlain, began: "Whereas in consequence of an Act of Parliament, made in the tenth year of the reign of His late Majesty King George the Second," &c. &c.

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The intensity of George Colman's regard for "good manners and decorum" has no doubt furnished a precedent to later Examiners. For some time little effort was made again to apply the stage to the purposes of political satire. Mr. Buckstone informed the Parliamentary Committee that an attempt made about 1846, to represent the House of Commons upon the stage of the Adelphi—Mr. Buckstone was to have personated the Lord John Russell of that date—had been promptly forbidden; and the late Mr. Shirley Brooks stated that a project of dramatising Mr. Disraeli's novel of "Coningsby" had also, in regard to its political bearing, been interdicted by the Chamberlain. Few other essays in this direction appear worth noting, until we come to a few seasons back, when certain members of the administration were caricatured upon the stage of the Court Theatre, after a fashion that speedily brought down the rebuke of the Chamberlain, and the exhibition was prohibited within his jurisdiction. But the question of "good manners and decorum" has induced much controversy. For where, indeed, is discoverable an acceptable standard of "good manners and decorum"? In such matters there is always growth and change of opinion. Sir Walter Scott makes mention of an elderly lady, who, reading over again certain books she had deemed in her youth to be of a most harmless kind, was shocked at their exceeding grossness. She had unconsciously moved on with the civilising and refining influences of her time. And the question of morality in relation to the drama is confessedly very difficult to deal with. "It must be something almost of a scandalous character to warrant interference," says Mr. Donne. "If you sift the matter to the very dross, two-thirds of the plays of any period in the history of the stage must be condemned. Where there is an obvious intention, or a very strong suspicion of an intention to make wrong appear right or right appear wrong, those are the cases in which I interfere, or those in which there is any open scandal, or any inducement to do wrong is offered; but stage morality is—the morality of the stage, and generally, quite as good as the morality of the literature of fiction." This does not define the Examiner's principle of action very clearly. As instances of his procedure, it may be stated that upon religious grounds he has forbidden such operas as the "Nabuco" of Verdi and the "Mose in Egitto" of Rossini, allowing them to be presented, however, when their names were changed to "Nino" and "Zora" or "Pietro l'Eremita" respectively. On the other hand, while prohibiting "La Dame aux Camelias"[1] of M. Alexandre Dumas fils, he has sanctioned its performance as the opera "La Traviata." "I think," explained Mr. Donne, "that if there is a musical version of a piece it makes a difference, for the story is then subsidiary to the music and singing." Prohibiting "Jack Sheppard" he yet licensed for representation an adaptation of a French version of the same piece. Madame Ristori was not allowed

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to appear in the tragedy of “Myrrha,” and the dramas which French companies of players visiting this country from time to time have designed to produce, have been severely dealt with, the Examiner forgetting, apparently, that such works should rather be judged by a foreign than a native standard of “good manners and decorum.” As a result, we have the strange fact of the Examiner stepping between the English public and what have been judged to be the masterpieces of the French stage.
[1] “La Dame aux Camelias” obtained a license at last, and was played for the first time in England at the Gaiety Theatre, on the 11th June, 1881, with Mdlle. Sarah Bernhardt as the representative of the leading character.

The Chamberlain has also held it to be a part of his duty to interfere in regard to certain of the costumes of the theatre, when these seemed to be more scanty than seemliness required, and from time to time he has addressed expostulations to the managers upon the subject. It must not be concluded, however, that from his action in the matter, much change or amendment has ensued.

In America there is no Lord Chamberlain, Examiner of Plays, or any corresponding functionary. The stage may be no better for the absence of such an officer, but it does not seem to be any the worse.

In 1832, the late Lord Lytton (then Mr. Bulwer), addressing the House of Commons on the laws affecting dramatic literature, said of the authority vested in the Lord Chamberlain: “I am at a loss to know what advantages we have gained by the grant of this almost unconstitutional power. Certainly, with regard to a censor, a censor upon plays seems to me as idle and unnecessary as a censor upon books.... The public taste, backed by the vigilant admonition of the public press, may, perhaps, be more safely trusted for the preservation of theatrical decorum, than any ignorant and bungling censor who (however well the office may be now fulfilled) might be appointed hereafter; who, while he might strain at gnats and cavil at straws, would be without any other real power than that of preventing men of genius from submitting to the caprice of his opinions.”

CHAPTER V.

A BILL OF THE PLAY.

Are there, nowadays, any collectors of playbills? In the catalogues of secondhand booksellers are occasionally to be found such entries as: “Playbills of the Theatre Royal, Bath, 1807 to 1812;” or “Hull Theatre Royal—various bills of performances between 1815 and 1850;” or “Covent Garden Theatre—variety of old bills of the last century pasted in a volume;” yet these evidences of the care and diligence of past collectors would not seem to obtain much appreciation in the present. The old

treasures can generally be purchased at a very moderate outlay. Still, if scarceness is an element of value, these things should be precious. It is in the nature of such ephemera of the printing-press

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to live their short hour, and disappear with exceeding suddenness. They may be originally issued in hundreds or even in thousands; but once gone they are gone for ever. Relative to such matters there is an energy of destruction that keeps pace with the industry of production. The demands of "waste" must be met: fires must be lighted. So away go the loose papers, sheets and pamphlets of the minute. They have served their turn, and there is an end of them. Hence the difficulty of obtaining, when needed, a copy of a newspaper of old date, or the guide-book or programme of a departed entertainment, or the catalogue of a past auction of books or pictures. It has been noted that, notwithstanding the enormous circulation it enjoyed, the catalogue of our Great Exhibition of a score of years ago is already a somewhat rare volume. Complete sets of the catalogues of the Royal Academy's century of exhibitions are possessed by very few. And of playbills of the English stage from the Restoration down to the present time, although the British Museum can certainly boast a rich collection, yet this is disfigured here and there by gaps and deficiencies which cannot now possibly be supplied.

The playbill is an ancient thing. Mr. Payne Collier states that the practice of printing information as to the time, place, and nature of the performances to be presented by the players was certainly common prior to the year 1563. John Northbrooke, in his treatise against theatrical performers, published about 1579, says: "They used to set up their bills upon posts some certain days before, to admonish people to make resort to their theatres." The old plays make frequent reference to this posting of the playbills. Thus, in the Induction to "A Warning for Fair Women," 1599, Tragedy whips Comedy from the stage, crying:

> 'Tis you have kept the theatre so long
> Painted in playbills upon every post,
> While I am scorned of the multitude.

Taylor, the water-poet, in his "Wit and Mirth," records the story of Field the actor's riding rapidly up Fleet Street, and being stopped by a gentleman with an inquiry as to the play that was to be played that night. Field, "being angry to be stayed upon so frivolous a demand, answered, that he might see what play was to be played upon every post. 'I cry you mercy,' said the gentleman. 'I took you for a post, you rode so fast.'"

It is strange to find that the right of printing playbills was originally monopolised by the Stationers' Company. At a later period, however, the privilege was assumed and exercised by the Crown. In 1620, James I. granted a patent to Roger Wood and Thomas Symcock for the sole printing, among other things, of "all bills for playes, pastimes, showes, challenges, prizes, or sportes whatsoever." It was not until after the Restoration that the playbills contained a list of the *dramatis personae*, or of the names of the actors. But it had been usual, apparently, with the title of the drama, to supply the

name of its author, and its description as a tragedy or comedy. Shirley, in the prologue to his “Cardinal,” apologises for calling it only a “play” in the bill:

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Think what you please, we call it but a “play:”
Whether the comic muse, or lady’s love,
Romance or direful tragedy it prove,
The bill determines not.

From a later passage in the same prologue Mr. Collier judges that the titles of tragedies were usually printed, for the sake of distinction, in red ink:

——and you would be
Persuaded I would have’t a comedy
For all the purple in the name.

But this may be a reference to the colour of a cardinal’s robes. There is probably no playbill extant of an earlier date than 1663. About this time, in the case of a new play, it was usual to state in the bill that it had been “never acted before.”

In the earliest days of the stage, before the invention of printing, the announcement that theatrical performances were about to be exhibited was made by sound of trumpet, much after the manner of modern strollers and showmen at fairs and street-corners. Indeed, long after playbills had become common, this musical advertisement was still requisite for the due information of the unlettered patrons of the stage. In certain towns the musicians were long looked upon as the indispensable heralds of the actors. Tate Wilkinson, writing in 1790, records that a custom obtained at Norwich, “and if abolished it has not been many years,” of proclaiming in every street with drum and trumpet the performances to be presented at the theatre in the evening. A like practice also prevailed at Grantham. To the Lincolnshire company of players, however, this musical preface to their efforts seemed objectionable and derogatory, and they determined, on one of their visits to the town, to dispense with the old-established sounds. But the reform resulted in empty benches. Thereupon the “revered, well-remembered, and beloved Marquis of Granby” sent for the manager of the troop and thus addressed him: “Mr. Manager, I like a play; I like a player; and I shall be glad to serve you. But, my good friend, why are you all so offended at and averse to the noble sound of a drum? I like it, and all the inhabitants like it. Put my name on your playbill, provided you drum, but not otherwise. Try the effect on to-morrow night; if then you are as thinly attended as you have lately been, shut up your playhouse at once; but if it succeeds, drum away!” The players withdrew their opposition and followed the counsel of the marquis. The musical prelude was again heard in the streets of Grantham, and crowded houses were obtained. The company enjoyed a prosperous season, and left the town in great credit. “And I am told,” adds Wilkinson, “the custom is continued at Grantham to this day.”

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An early instance of the explanatory address, signed by the dramatist or manager, which so frequently accompanies the modern playbill, is to be found in the fly-sheet issued by Dryden in 1665. The poet thought it expedient in this way to inform the audience that his tragedy of "The Indian Emperor" was to be regarded as a sequel to a former work, "The Indian Queen," which he had written in conjunction with his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard. The handbill excited some amusement, by reason of its novelty, for in itself it was but a simple and useful intimation. In ridicule of this proceeding, Bayes, the hero of the Duke of Buckingham's burlesque, "The Rehearsal," is made to say: "I have printed above a hundred sheets of paper to insinuate the plot into the boxes."

Chetwood, who had been twenty years prompter at Drury Lane, and in 1749 published a "History of the Stage," describes a difficulty that had arisen in regard to printing the playbills. Of old the list of characters had been set forth according to the books of the plays, without regard to the merits of the performers. "As, for example, in 'Macbeth,' Duncan, King of Scotland, appeared first in the bill, though acted by an insignificant person, and so every other actor appeared according to his dramatic dignity, all of the same-sized letter. But latterly, I can assure my readers, I have found it a difficult task to please some ladies as well as gentlemen, because I could not find letters large enough to please them; and some were so fond of elbow room that they would have shoved everybody out but themselves, as if one person was to do all and have the merit of all, like generals of an army." Garrick seems to have been the first actor honoured by capital letters of extra size in the playbills. "The Connoisseur," in 1754, says: "The writer of the playbills deals out his capitals in so just a proportion that you may tell the salary of each actor by the size of the letter in which his name is printed. When the present manager of Drury Lane first came on the stage, a new set of types, two inches long, were cast on purpose to do honour to his extraordinary merit." These distinctions in the matter of printing occasioned endless jealousies among the actors. Macklin made it an express charge against his manager, Sheridan, the actor, that he was accustomed to print his own name in larger type than was permitted the other performers. Kean threatened to throw up his engagement at Drury Lane on account of his name having been printed in capitals of a smaller size than usual. His engagement of 1818 contained a condition, "and also that his name shall be continued in the bills of performance in the same manner as it is at present," *viz*., large letters. On the other hand, Dowton, the comedian, greatly objected to having his name thus particularised, and expostulated with Elliston, his manager, on the subject. "I am sorry you have done this," he wrote. "You know well what I mean. This cursed quackery.

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These big letters. There is a want of respectability about it, or rather a notoriety, which gives one the feeling of an absconded felon, against whom a hue-and-cry is made public. Or if there be really any advantage in it, why should I, or any single individual, take it over the rest of our brethren? But it has a nasty disreputable look, and I have fancied the whole day the finger of the town pointed at me, as much as to say, 'That is he! Now for the reward!' Leave this expedient to the police officers, or to those who have a taste for it. I have none."

Macready, under date of 28th September, 1840, enters in his journal: "Spoke to Webster on the subject of next year's engagement. He said that he understood I had said that while I was comfortable at the Haymarket I would stay. *I mentioned the position of my name on the playbills; that it should not, on any occasion be put under any other person's, as it had been*; that I should have the right to a private box when they were not let," &c.

O'Keeffe relates that once when an itinerant showman brought over to Dublin a trained monkey of great acquirements, Mossop engaged the animal at a large salary to appear for a limited number of nights at his theatre. Mossop's name in the playbill was always in a type nearly two inches long, the rest of the performers' names being in very small letters. But to the monkey were devoted capitals of equal size to Mossop's; so that, greatly to the amusement of the public, on the playbills pasted about the town, nothing could be distinguished but the words, MOSSOP, MONKEY. Under John Kemble's management, "for his greater ease and the quiet of the theatre," letters of unreasonable size were abandoned, and the playbills were printed after an amended and more modest pattern.

With the rise and growth of the press came the expediency of advertising the performances of the theatres in the columns of the newspapers. To the modern manager advertisements are a very formidable expense. The methods he is compelled to resort to in order to bring his plays and players well under the notice of the public, involve a serious charge upon his receipts. But of old the case was precisely the reverse. The theatres were strong, the newspapers were weak. So far from the manager paying money for the insertion of his advertisements in the journals, he absolutely received profits on this account. The press then suffered under severe restrictions, and was most jealously regarded by the governing powers; leading articles were as yet unknown; the printing of parliamentary debates was strictly prohibited; foreign intelligence was scarcely obtainable; of home news there was little stirring that could with safety be promulgated. So that the proceedings of the theatres became of real importance to the newspaper proprietor, and it was worth his while to pay considerable sums for early information in this respect. Moreover, in those days, not merely by reason of its own merits, but

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because of the absence of competing attractions and other sources of entertainment, the stage was much more than at present an object of general regard. In Andrew's "History of British Journalism" it is recorded on the authority of the ledger of Henry Woodfall, the publisher of the *Public Advertiser*: "The theatres are a great expense to the papers. Amongst the items of payment are: Playhouses, L100. Drury Lane advertisements, L64 8s. 6d.; Covent Garden ditto, L66 11s. The papers paid L200 a-year to each theatre for the accounts of new plays, and would reward the messenger with a shilling or half-a-crown who brought them the first copy of a playbill." In 1721, the following announcement appeared in the *Daily Post*: "The managers of Drury Lane think it proper to give notice that advertisements of their plays, by their authority, are published only in this paper and the *Daily Courant*, and that the publishers of all other papers who insert advertisements of the same plays, can do it only by some surreptitious intelligence or hearsay, which frequently leads them to commit gross errors, as, mentioning one play for another, falsely representing the parts, &c., to the misinformation of the town, and the great detriment of the said theatre." And the *Public Advertiser* of January 1st, 1765, contains a notice: "To prevent any mistake in future in advertising the plays and entertainments of Drury Lane Theatre, the managers think it proper to declare that the playbills are inserted by their direction in this paper only." It is clear that the science of advertising was but dimly understood at this date. Even the shopkeepers then paid for the privilege of exhibiting bills in their windows, whereas now they require to be rewarded for all exertions of this kind, by, at any rate, free admissions to the entertainments advertised, if not by a specific payment of money. The exact date when the managers began to pay instead of receive on the score of their advertisements, is hardly to be ascertained. Genest, in his laborious "History of the Stage," says obscurely of the year 1745: "At this time the plays were advertised at three shillings and sixpence each night or advertisement in the *General Advertiser*." It may be that the adverse systems went on together for some time. The managers may have paid certain journals for the regular insertion of advertisements, and received payment from less favoured or less influential newspapers for theatrical news or information.

One of Charles Lamb's most pleasant papers arose from "the casual sight of an old playbill which I picked up the other day; I know not by what chance it was preserved so long." It was but two-and-thirty years old, however, and presented the cast of parts in "Twelfth Night" at Old Drury Lane Theatre, destroyed by fire in 1809. Lamb's delight in the stage needs not to be again referred to. "There is something very touching in these old remembrances," he writes. "They make

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us think how we once used to read a playbill, not as now, peradventure singling out a favourite performer and casting a negligent eye over the rest; but spelling out every name down to the very mutes and servants of the scene; when it was a matter of no small moment to us whether Whitfield or Packer took the part of Fabian; when Benson, and Burton, and Phillimore—names of small account—had an importance beyond what we can be content to attribute now to the time's best actors." The fond industry with which a youthful devotee of the theatre studies the playbills could hardly be more happily indicated than in this extract.

Mention of Old Drury Lane and its burning bring us naturally to the admirable "story of the flying playbill," contained in the parody of Crabbe, perhaps the most perfect specimen in that unique collection of parodies, "Rejected Addresses." The verses by the pseudo-Crabbe include the following lines:

> Perchance while pit and gallery cry "Hats off!"
> And awed consumption checks his chided cough,
> Some giggling daughter of the Queen of Love
> Drops, reft of pin, her playbill from above;
> Like Icarus, while laughing galleries clap,
> Soars, ducks, and dives in air the printed scrap;
> But, wiser far than he, combustion fears;
> And, as it flies, eludes the chandeliers;
> Till, sinking gradual, with repeated twirl,
> It settles, curling, on a fiddler's curl,
> Who from his powdered pate the intruder strikes,
> And, for mere malice, sticks it on the spikes.

"The story of the flying playbill," says the mock-preface, "is calculated to expose a practice, much too common, of pinning playbills to the cushions insecurely, and frequently, I fear, not pinning them at all. If these lines save one playbill only from the fate I have recorded, I shall not deem my labour ill employed."

Modern playbills may be described as of two classes, indoor and out-of-door. The latter are known also as "posters," and may thus manifest their connection with the early method of "setting up playbills upon posts." Shakespeare's audiences were not supplied with handbills as our present playgoers are; such of them as could read were probably content to derive all the information they needed from the notices affixed to the doors of the theatre, or otherwise publicly exhibited. Of late years the vendors of playbills, who were wont urgently to pursue every vehicle that seemed to them bound to the theatre, in the hope of disposing of their wares, have greatly diminished in numbers, if they have not wholly disappeared. Many managers have forbidden altogether the sale of bills outside the doors of their establishments. The indoor programmes are

again divided into two kinds. To the lower-priced portions of the house an inferior bill is devoted; a folio sheet of thin paper, heavily laden and strongly odorous with printers' ink. Visitors to the more expensive seats are now supplied

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with a scented bill of octavo size, which is generally, in addition, the means of advertising the goods and inventions of an individual perfumer. Attempts to follow Parisian example, and to make the playbill at once a vehicle for general advertisements and a source of amusing information upon theatrical subjects, have been ventured here occasionally, but without decided success. From time to time papers started with this object under such titles as the “Opera Glass,” the “Curtain,” the “Drop Scene,” &c., have appeared, but they have failed to secure a sufficiency of patronage. The playgoer’s openness to receive impressions or information of any kind by way of employment during the intervals of representation, has not been unperceived by the advertisers, however, and now and then, as a result, a monstrosity called an “advertising curtain” has disfigured the stage. Some new development of the playbill in this direction may be in store for us in the future. The difficulty lies, perhaps, in the gilding of the pill. Advertisements by themselves are not very attractive reading, and a mixed audience cannot safely be credited with a ruling appetite merely for dramatic intelligence.

CHAPTER VI.

STROLLING PLAYERS.

It is rather the public than the player that strolls nowadays. The theatre is stationary—-the audience peripatetic. The wheels have been taken off the cart of Thespis. Hamlet’s line, “Then came each actor on his ass,” or the stage direction in the old “Taming of the Shrew” (1594), “Enter two players with packs on their backs,” no longer describes accurately the travelling habits of the histrionic profession. But of old the country folk had the drama brought as it were to their doors, and just as they purchased their lawn and cambric, ribbons and gloves, and other raiment and bravery of the wandering pedlar—the Autolycus of the period—so all their playhouse learning and experience they acquired from the itinerant actors. These were rarely the leading performers of the established London companies, however, unless it so happened that the capital was suffering from a visitation of the plague. “Starring in the provinces” was not an early occupation of the players of good repute. As a rule, it was only the inferior actors who quitted town, and as Dekker contemptuously says, “travelled upon the hard hoof from village to village for cheese and buttermilk.” “How chances it they travel?” inquires Hamlet concerning “the tragedians of the city”—“their *residence* both in reputation and profit were better both ways.” John Stephens, writing in 1615, and describing “a common player,” observes, “I prefix the epithet ‘common’ to distinguish the base and artless appendants of our City companies, which oftentimes start away into rustical wanderings, and then, like Proteus, start back again into the City number.” The strollers were of two classes, however. First, the theatrical

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companies protected by some great personage, wearing his badge or crest, and styling themselves his “servants”—just as to this day the Drury Lane troop, under warrant of Davenant’s patent, still boast the title of “Her Majesty’s Servants”—who attended at country seats, and gave representations at the request or by the permission of the great people of the neighbourhood; and secondly, the mere unauthorised itinerants, with no claim to distinction beyond such as their own merits accorded to them, who played in barns, or in large inn-yards and rooms, and against whom was especially levelled the Act of Elizabeth declaring that all players, &c., “not licensed by any baron or person of high rank, or by two justices of the peace, should be deemed and treated as rogues and vagabonds.”

The suppression of the theatres by the Puritans reduced all the players to the condition of strollers of the lowest class. Legally their occupation was gone altogether. Stringent measures were taken to abolish stage-plays and interludes, and by an Act passed in 1647, all actors of plays for the time to come were declared rogues within the meaning of the Act of Elizabeth, and upon conviction were to be publicly whipped for the first offence, and for the second to be deemed incorrigible rogues, and dealt with accordingly; all stage galleries, seats, and boxes were to be pulled down by warrant of two justices of the peace; all money collected from the spectators was to be appropriated to the poor of the parish; and all spectators of plays, for every offence, fined five shillings. Assuredly these were very hard times for players, playhouses, and playgoers. Still the theatre was hard to kill. In 1648, a provost-marshal was nominated to stimulate the vigilance and activity of the lord mayor, justices, and sheriffs, and among other duties, “to seize all ballad-singers and sellers of malignant pamphlets, and to send them to the several militias, and to suppress stage-plays.” Yet, all this notwithstanding, some little show of life stirred now and then in the seeming corpse of the drama. A few players met furtively, assembled a select audience, and gave a clandestine performance, more or less complete, in some obscure quarter. Secret Royalists and but half-hearted Puritans abounded, and these did not scruple to abet a breach of the law, and to be entertained now and then in the old time-honoured way.

With the Restoration, however, Thespis enjoyed his own again, and sock and buskin became once more lawful articles of apparel. Charles II. mounted the throne arm-in-arm, as it were, with a player-king and queen. The London theatres reopened under royal patronage, and in the provinces the stroller was abroad. He had his enemies, no doubt. Prejudice is long-lived, of robust constitution. Puritanism had struck deep root in the land, and though the triumphant Cavaliers might hew its branches, strip off its foliage, and hack at its trunk, they could by no means extirpate

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it altogether. Religious zealotry, strenuous and stubborn, however narrow, had fostered, and parliamentary enactments had warranted, hostility of the most uncompromising kind to the player and his profession. To many he was still, his new liberty and privileges notwithstanding, but “a son of Belial”—ever of near kin to the rogue and the vagabond, with the stocks and the whipping-post still in his immediate neighbourhood, let him turn which way he would. And then, certainly, his occupation had its seamy side. With this the satirists, who loved censure rather for its wounding than its healing properties, made great play. They were never tired of pointing out and ridiculing the rents in the stroller’s coat; his shifts, trials, misfortunes, follies, were subjects for ceaseless derision. What Grub Street and “penny-a-lining” have been to the vocation of letters, strolling and “barn-strutting” became to the histrionic profession—an excuse for scorn, underrating, and mirth, more or less bitter.

Still strolling had its charms. To the beginner it afforded a kind of informal apprenticeship, with the advantage that while a learner of its mysteries, he could yet style himself a full member of the profession of the stage, and share in its profits. He was at once bud and flower. What though the floor of a ruined barn saw his first crude efforts, might not the walls of a patent theatre resound by-and-by with delighted applause, tribute to his genius? It was a free, frank, open vocation he had adopted; it was unprotected and unrestricted by legislative provisions in the way of certificates, passes, examinations, and diplomas. There was no need of ticket, or voucher, or preparation of any kind to obtain admission to the ranks of the players. “Can you shout?” a manager once inquired of a novice. “Then only shout in the right places, and you’ll do.” No doubt this implied that even in the matter of shouting some science is involved. And there may be men who cannot shout at all, let the places be right or wrong. Still the stage can find room and subsistence of a sort for all, even for mutes. But carry a banner, walk in a procession, or form one of a crowd, and you may still call yourself actor, though not an actor of a high class, certainly. The histrionic calling is a ladder of many rungs. Remain on the lowest or mount to the highest—it is only a question of degree—you are a player all the same.

The Thespian army had no need of a recruiting-sergeant or a press-gang to reinforce its ranks. There have always been amateurs lured by the mere spectacle of the foot-lights, as moths by a candle. Crabbe’s description of the strollers in his “Borough” was a favourite passage with Sir Walter Scott, and was often read to him in his last fatal illness:

> Of various men these marching troops are made,
> Pen-spurning clerks and lads contemning trade;
> Waiters and servants by confinement teased,
> And youths of wealth by dissipation eased;

With feeling nymphs who, such resource at hand,
Scorn to obey the rigour of command, &c. &c.

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And even to the skilled and experienced actors a wandering life offered potent attractions. Apart from its liberty and adventure, its defiance of social convention and restraint, ambition had space to stir, and vanity could be abundantly indulged in the itinerant theatre. Dekker speaks of the bad presumptuous players, who out of a desire to “wear the best jerkin,” and to “act great parts, forsake the stately and more than Roman city stages,” and join a strolling company. By many it was held better to reign in a vagrant than to serve in an established troop—preferable to appear as Hamlet in the provinces than to play Horatio or Guildenstern in town. And then, in the summer months, when the larger London houses were closed, strolling became a matter of necessity with a large number of actors; they could gain a subsistence in no other way. “The little theatre in the Haymarket,” as it was wont to be called, which opened its doors in summer, when its more important neighbours had concluded their operations, could only offer engagements to a select few of their companies. The rest must needs wander. Whatever their predilections, they were strollers upon compulsion.

Indeed, strolling was only feasible during summer weather. Audiences could hardly be moved from their firesides in winter, barns were too full of grain to be available for theatrical purposes, and the players were then glad to secure such regular employment as they could, however slender might be the scale of their remuneration. There is a story told of a veteran and a tyro actor walking in the fields early in the year, when, suddenly, the elder ran from the path, stopped abruptly, and planting his foot firmly upon the green-sward, exclaimed with ecstasy: “Three, by heaven! *That* for managers!” and snapped his fingers. His companion asked an explanation of this strange conduct. “You’ll know before you have strutted in three more barns,” said the “old hand.” “In winter, managers are the most impudent fellows living, because they know we don’t like to travel, don’t like to leave our nests, fear the cold, and all that. But when I can put my foot upon three daisies—summer’s near, and managers may whistle for me!”

The life was not dignified, perhaps, but it had certain picturesque qualities. The stroller toiling on his own account, “padding the hoof,” as he called journeying on foot—a small bundle under his arm, containing a few clothes and professional appliances—wandered from place to place, stopping now at a fair, now at a tavern, now at a country-house, to deliver recitations and speeches, and to gain such reward for his labours as he might. Generally he found it advisable, however, to join a company of his brethren and share profits with them, parting from them again upon a difference of opinion or upon the receipts diminishing too seriously, when he would again rely upon his independent exertions. Sometimes the actor was able to hire or purchase scenes

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and dresses, the latter being procured generally from certain shops in Monmouth Street dealing in cast clothes and tarnished frippery that did well enough for histrionic purposes; then, engaging a company, he would start from London as a manager, to visit certain districts where it was thought that a harvest might be reaped. The receipts were divided among the troop upon a prearranged method. The impresario took shares in his different characters of manager, proprietor, and actor. Even the fragments of the candles that had lighted the representations were divided amongst the company. Permission had always to be sought of the local magnates before a performance could be given; and the best-dressed and most cleanly-looking actor was deputed to make this application, as well as to conciliate the farmer or innkeeper, whose barn, stable, or great room was to be hired for the occasion. Churchill writes:

> The strolling tribe, a despicable race,
> Like wandering Arabs, shift from place to place.
> Vagrants by law, to justice open laid,
> They tremble, of the beadle's lash afraid;
> And fawning, cringe for wretched means of life
> To Madame Mayoress or his worship's wife.

"I'm a justice of the peace and know how to deal with strollers," says Sir Tunbelly, with an air of menace, in "The Relapse." The magistrates, indeed, were much inclined to deal severely with the wandering actor, eyeing his calling with suspicion, and prompt to enforce the laws against him. Thus we find in "Humphrey Clinker," the mayor of Gloucester eager to condemn as a vagrant, and to commit to prison with hard labour, young Mr. George Dennison, who, in the guise of Wilson, a strolling player, had presumed to make love to Miss Lydia Melford, the heroine of the story.

In truth, the stroller's life, with all its seeming license and independence, must always have been attended with hardship and privation. If the player had ever deemed his art the "idle calling" many declared it to be, he was soon undeceived on that head. There was but a thin partition between him and absolute want; meanwhile his labour was incessant. The stage is a conservative institution, adhering closely to old customs, manners, and traditions, and what strolling had once been it continued to be almost for centuries. "A company of strolling comedians," writes the author of "The Road to Ruin," who had himself strolled in early life, "is a small kingdom, of which the manager is the monarch. Their code of laws seems to have existed, with little variation, since the days of Shakespeare." Who can doubt that Hogarth's famous picture told the truth, not only of the painter's own time, but of the past and of the future? The poor player followed a sordid and wearisome routine. He was constrained to devote long hours to rehearsal and to the study of various parts, provided always he could obtain a sight of the book of the play, for the itinerant theatre afforded no copyist then to write

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neatly out each actor's share in the dialogues and speeches. Night brought the performance, and, for the player engaged as "utility," infinite change of dress and "making-up" of his face to personate a variety of characters. The company would, probably, be outnumbered by the *dramatis personae*, in which case it would devolve upon the actor to assume many parts in one play. Thus, supposing Hamlet to be announced for representation, the stroller of inferior degree might be called upon to appear as Francisco, afterwards as a lord-in-waiting in the court scenes, then as Lucianus, "nephew to the king," then as one of the grave-diggers, then as a lord again, or, it might be, Osric, the fop, in the last act. Other duties, hardly less arduous, would fall to him in the after-pieces. "I remember," said King, the actor famous as being the original Sir Peter Teazle and Lord Ogleby, "that when I had been but a short time on the stage, I performed one night King Richard, sang two comic songs, played in an interlude, danced a hornpipe, spoke a prologue, and was afterwards harlequin, in a sharing company; and after all this fatigue my share came to threepence and three pieces of candle!" A strolling manager of a later period was wont to boast that he had performed the complete melodrama of "Rob Roy" with a limited company of five men and three women. Hard-worked, ill-paid, and, consequently, ill-fed, the stroller must have often led a dreary and miserable life enough. The late Mr. Drinkwater Meadows used to tell of his experiences with a company that travelled through Warwickshire, and their treasury being empty, depended for their subsistence upon their piscatorial skill. They lived for some time, indeed, upon the trout streams of the county. They plied rod and line, and learned their parts at the same time. "We could fish and study, study and fish," said the actor. "I made myself perfect in Bob Acres while fishing in the Avon, and committed the words to my memory quite as fast as I committed the fish to my basket."

The straits and necessities of the strollers have long been a source of entertainment to the public. In an early number of the "Spectator," Steele describes a company of poor players then performing at Epping. "They are far from offending in the impertinent splendour of the drama. Alexander the Great was acted by a fellow in a paper cravat. The next day the Earl of Essex seemed to have no distress but his poverty; and my Lord Foppington wanted any better means to show himself a fop than by wearing stockings of different colours. In a word, though they have had a full barn for many days together, our itinerants are so wretchedly poor that the heroes appear only like sturdy beggars, and the heroines gipsies." It is added that the stage of these performers "is here in its original situation of a cart." In the "Memoirs of Munden" a still stranger stage is mentioned. A strolling company performing in Wales had for theatre a bedroom, and for stage

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a large four-post bed! The spaces on either side were concealed from the audience by curtains, and formed the tiring-rooms of the ladies and gentlemen of the troop. On this very curious stage the comedian afterwards famous as Little Knight, but then new to his profession, appeared as Acres in "The Rivals," and won great applause. Goldsmith's Strolling Player is made to reveal many of the smaller needs and shifts of his calling, especially in the matter of costume. "We had figures enough, but the difficulty was to dress them. The same coat that served Romeo, turned with the blue lining outwards, served for his friend Mercutio: a large piece of crape sufficed at once for Juliet's petticoat and pall; a pestle and mortar from a neighbouring apothecary answered all the purposes of a bell; and our landlord's own family, wrapped in white sheets, served to fill up the procession. In short, there were but three figures among us that might be said to be dressed with any propriety; I mean the nurse, the starved apothecary, and myself." Of his own share in the representation the stroller speaks candidly enough: "I snuffed the candles, and, let me tell you, that without a candle-snuffer the piece would lose half its embellishments." But there has always been forthcoming a very abundant supply of stories of this kind, not always to be understood literally, however, concerning the drama under difficulties, and the comical side of the player's indigence, distresses, and quaint artifices to conceal his poverty.

A word should be said as to the courage and enterprise of our early strollers. Travelling is nowadays so easy a matter that we are apt to forget how solemnly it was viewed by our ancestors. In the last century a man thought about making his will as a becoming preliminary to his journeying merely from London to Edinburgh. But the strollers were true to themselves and their calling, though sometimes the results of their adventures were luckless enough. "Our plantations in America have been voluntarily visited by some itinerants, Jamaica in particular," writes Chetwood, in his "History of the Stage" (1749). "I had an account from a gentleman who was possessed of a large estate in the island that a company in the year 1733 came there and cleared a large sum of money, where they might have made moderate fortunes if they had not been too busy with the growth of the country. They received three hundred and seventy pistoles the first night of the 'Beggar's Opera,' but within the space of two months they buried their third Polly and two of their men. The gentlemen of the island for some time took their turns upon the stage to keep up the diversion; but this did not hold long; for in two months more there were but one old man, a boy, and a woman of the company left. The rest died either with the country distemper or the common beverage of the place, the noble spirit of rum-punch, which is generally fatal to new-comers. The shattered remains, with upwards of two thousand pistoles in bank, embarked for Carolina, to join another company at Charlestown, but were cast away in the voyage. Had the company been more blessed with the virtue of sobriety, &c., they might perhaps have lived to carry home the liberality of those generous islanders."

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It is to be observed that the strolling profession had its divisions and grades. The "boothers," as they are termed, have to be viewed as almost a distinct class. These carry their theatre, a booth, about with them, and only pretend to furnish very abridged presentments of the drama. With them "Richard III.," for instance, is but an entertainment of some twenty minutes' duration. They are only anxious to give as many performances as possible before fresh assemblies of spectators in as short a time as may be. "Boothers" have been known to give even six distinct exhibitions on Saturday nights. And they certainly resort to undignified expedients to lure their audiences. They parade in their theatrical attire, dance quadrilles and hornpipes, fight with broadswords, and make speeches on the external platform of their booth. Histrionic art is seen to little advantage under these conditions, although it should be said that many notable players have commenced the study of their profession among the "boothers." The travelling circus is again a distinct institution, its tumblers and riders only in a very distant and illegitimate way connected with even the humblest branches of the great Thespian family.

But strolling, in its old sense, is fast expiring. Barns have ceased to be temples of the drama. The railways carry the public to the established theatres; London stars and companies travelling in first-class carriages, with their secretary and manager, visit in turn the provincial towns, and attract all the playgoers of the neighbourhood. The country manager, retaining but a few "utility people," is well content to lend his stage to these dignified players, who stroll only nominally, without "padding the hoof," or the least chance of hardship or privation attending their rustical wanderings. Their travels are indeed more in the nature of royal progresses. Even for the "boothers" times have changed. Waste lands on which to "pitch" their playhouses are now hard to find; the "pleasure fairs," once their chief source of profit, become more and more rare; indeed, there is a prevalent disposition nowadays to abolish altogether those old-fashioned celebrations. And worse than all, perhaps, the audiences have become sophisticated and critical, and have not so much simple faith and hearty goodwill to place at the disposal of the itinerants. Centralisation has now affected the stage. The country is no longer the nursery and training-school of the player. He commences his career in London, and then regales the provinces with an exhibition of his proficiency. The strollers are now merged in the "stars." The apprentice has become the master, which may possibly account for the fact, that the work accomplished is not invariably of first-rate quality.

CHAPTER VII.

"PAY HERE."

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Acting, as a distinct profession, seems to have been known in England at least as far back as the reign of Henry VI. There had been theatrical exhibitions in abundance, however, at a much earlier period. Stow, in his “Survey of London,” in 1599, translates from the “Life of Thomas a Becket,” by Fitzstephen, who wrote about 1182, mention of “the shews upon theatres and comical pastimes” of London, “its holy playes, representations of miracles which holy confessors have wrought, or representations of tormentes wherein the constancie of martirs appeared.” As Mr. Payne Collier observes, “no country in Europe, since the revival of letters, has been able to produce any notice of theatrical performances of so early a date as England.” But our primitive stage was a chapel-of-ease, as it were, to the Church. The plays were founded upon the lives of the saints, or upon the events of the Old and New Testaments, and were contrived and performed by the clergy, who borrowed horses, harness, properties, and hallowed vestments from the monasteries, and did not hesitate even to paint and disguise their faces, in order to give due effect to their exhibitions, which were presented not only in the cathedrals, churches, and cemeteries, but also “on highways or greens,” as might be most convenient. In 1511, for instance, the miracle-play of “St. George of Cappadocia” was acted in a croft, or field, at Basingborne, one shilling being paid for the hire of the land. The clergy, however, were by no means unanimous as to the propriety and policy of these dramatic representations. They were bitterly attacked in an Anglo-French poem, the “Manuel de Peche,” written about the middle of the thirteenth century, and ascribed to Robert Grossetete, who became Bishop of Lincoln in 1235. Gradually the kind of histrionic monopoly which the Church had long enjoyed was invaded. Education spread, and many probably found themselves as competent to act as the clergy. Still, the ecclesiastical performers for some time resisted all attempts to interfere with what they viewed as their especial privileges and vested interests. In 1378 the scholars or choristers of St. Paul’s petitioned Richard II. to prohibit certain ignorant and inexperienced persons from acting the history of the Old Testament, to the prejudice of the clergy of the Church, who had expended large sums in preparing plays founded upon the same subject. But some few years later the parish clerks of London, who had been incorporated by Henry III., performed at Skinner’s Well, near Smithfield, in the presence of the king, queen, and nobles of the realm, a play which occupied three days in representation. As Warton remarks, however, in his “History of English Poetry,” the parish clerks of that time might fairly be regarded as a “literary society,” if they did not precisely come under the denomination of a religious fraternity.

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The religious or miracle plays soon extended their boundaries, became blended with "mummings," or "disguisings," and entertainments of pageantry. Morals, interludes, and masques were gradually brought upon the scene. Dancers, singers, jugglers, and minstrels became indispensable to the performances. The Church and the Theatre drifted apart; were viewed in time as wholly independent establishments. The actor asserted his individuality; his profession was recognised as distinct and complete in itself; companies of players began to stroll through the provinces. The early moral-play of the "Castle of Perseverance," which is certainly as old as the reign of Henry VI., was represented by itinerant actors, who travelled round the country for that purpose, preceded by their standard-bearers and trumpeters, to announce on what day, and at what hour, the performance would take place. It would seem that the exhibition concluded at nine o'clock in the morning, so that the playgoers of the period must probably have assembled so early as six. In the reign of Edward IV. the actors first obtained parliamentary recognition. The Act passed in 1464, regulating the apparel to be worn by the different classes of society, contains special exception in favour of henchmen, pursuivants, sword-bearers to mayors, messengers, minstrels, and "players in their interludes." The first royal personage who entertained a company of players as his servants was probably Richard III. when Duke of Gloucester, who seems, moreover, to have given great encouragement to music and musicians. In the reign of Henry VII. dramatic representations were frequent in all parts of England. The king himself had two companies of players, the "gentlemen of the chapel," and his "players of interludes."

The early actors, whose performances took place in the open air or in public places, doubtless obtained recompense for their labours much after the manner of our modern street exhibitors: by that system of "sending round the hat," which too many lookers-on nowadays consider as an intimation to depart about their business, leaving their entertainment unpaid for. The companies of players in the service of any great personage were in the receipt of regular salaries, were viewed as members of his household, and wore his livery. They probably obtained, moreover, largess from the more liberally disposed spectators of their exertions. But as the theatre became more and more a source of public recreation, it was deemed necessary to establish permanent stages, and a tariff of charges for admission to witness the entertainments. For a long time the actors had been restricted to the mansions of the nobility, and to the larger inn-yards of the city. In 1574, however, the Earl of Leicester, through his influence with Queen Elizabeth, obtained for his company of players, among whom was included James Burbadge, the father of the famous Shakespearean actor, Richard Burbadge, a patent, under the Great Seal, empowering

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the actors, “during the queen’s pleasure, to use, exercise, and occupy the art and faculty of playing tragedies, comedies, interludes, and stage plays, as well for the recreation of the queen’s subjects as for her own solace and pleasure, within the city of London and its liberties, and within any cities, towns, and boroughs throughout England.” This most important concession to the players was strenuously opposed by the Lord Mayor and Corporation, who maintained that “the playing of interludes and the resort to the same” were likely to provoke “the infection of the plague,” were “hurtfull in corruption of youth,” were “great wasting both of the time and thrift of many poor people,” and “great withdrawing of the people from publique prayer and from the service of God.” At last they proposed, as a compromise, that the players of the queen, or of Lord Leicester—for these titles seem to have been bestowed upon the actors indifferently—should be permitted to perform within the city boundaries upon certain special conditions, to the effect that their names and number should be notified to the Lord Mayor and the Justices of Middlesex and Surrey, and that they should not divide themselves into several companies; that they should be content with playing in private houses, at weddings, &c., without public assemblies, or “if more be thought good to be tolerated,” that they should not play openly till the whole deaths in London had been for twenty days under fifty a week; that they should not play on the Sabbath or on holy days until after evening prayer; and that no playing should be in the dark, “nor continue any such time but as any of the auditoire may returne to their dwellings in London before sonne-set, or at least before it be dark.” These severe restrictions so far defeated the objects of the civic powers, that they led in truth to the construction of three theatres beyond the Lord Mayor’s jurisdiction, but sufficiently near to its boundaries to occasion him grave disquietude. About 1576 Burbadge built his theatre in the Liberty of the Blackfriars—a precinct in which civic authority was at any rate disputed. Within a year or so The Curtain and The Theatre, both in Shoreditch, were also opened to the public. The Mayor and Corporation persistently endeavoured to assert authority over these establishments, but without much practical result. It may be added that the Blackfriars Theatre was permanently closed in 1647, part of the ground on which it stood, adjoining Apothecaries’ Hall, still bearing the name of Playhouse Yard; that The Theatre in Shoreditch was abandoned about 1598 (it was probably a wooden erection, and in twenty years might have become untenantable); and that The Curtain fell into disuse at the beginning of the reign of Charles I.

The prices of admission to the theatres varied according to the estimation in which they were held, and were raised on special occasions. “Twopenny rooms,” or galleries, were to be found at the larger and more popular theatres. In Goffe’s “Careless Shepherdess,” 1656, acted at the Salisbury Court Theatre, appear the lines:

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I will hasten to the money-box
And take my shilling out again;
I'll go to the Bull or Fortune, and there see
A play for twopence and a jig to boot.

The money received was placed in a box, and there seems to have been one person specially charged with this duty. Dekker, dedicating one of his plays to his "friends and fellows," the queen's servants, wishes them "a full audience and one honest doorkeeper." Even thus early the absolute integrity of the attendants of the theatre would appear to have been a subject of suspicion. "Penny galleries" are referred to by some early writers, and from a passage in the "Gull's Horn Book," 1609—"Your groundling and gallery commoner buys his sport for a penny"—it is apparent that the charges for admission to the yard, where the spectators stood, and to the galleries, where they sat on benches, were the same. In Dekker's "Satiromastix," one of the characters speaks scornfully of "penny bench theatres," where a gentleman or an honest citizen "might sit with his squirrel by his side cracking nuts." But according to the Induction to Ben Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair," first acted in 1614, at the Hope, a small dirty theatre on the Bankside, which had formerly been used for bear-baiting, the prices there ranged from sixpence to half-a-crown. "It shall be lawful for any man to judge his six pen'worth, his twelve pen'worth, so to his eighteen pence, two shillings, half-a-crown, to the value of his place; provided always his place get not above his wit ... Marry, if he drop but sixpence at the door, and will censure a crown's worth, it is thought there is no conscience or justice in that." It is probable, however, that the dramatist was referring to the prices charged at the first representation of his play. Sixpence might then be the lowest admission; on other occasions, twopence, or even one penny. The prologue to "Henry VIII." states:

Those that come to see
Only a show or two, and so agree,
The play may pass; if they be still and willing,
I'll undertake, may see away their shilling
Richly in two short hours.

And there is evidence that in Shakespeare's time one shilling was the price of admission to the best rooms or boxes. Sir Thomas Overbury writes in his "Characters," published in 1614: "If he have but twelve pence in his purse he will give it for the best room in a playhouse." And the "Gull's Horn Book," 1609, counsels, "At a new play you take up the twelvepenny room next the stage, because the lords and you may seem to be hail-fellow well met!"

But it is plain that the tariff of admission was subject to frequent alterations, and that as money became more abundant, the managers gradually increased their charges. In the "Scornful Lady" "eighteen pence" is referred to as though it were the highest price of

admission to the Blackfriars Theatre. Sir John Suckling writes, about the middle of the seventeenth century:

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The sweat of learned Jonson's brain,
And gentle Shakespeare's easier strain,
A hackney-coach conveys you to,
In spite of all that rain can do,
And for your eighteenpence you sit,
The lord and judge of all fresh wit.

It must always be doubtful, however, as to the precise portion of the theatre these writers intended to designate. As Mr. Collier suggests, the discordances between the authorities on this question arise, probably, from the fact that "different prices were charged at different theatres at different periods."

In our early theatres, the arrangements for receiving the money of the playgoers were rather of a confused kind. There would seem to have been several doors, one within the other, at any of which visitors might tender their admission money. It was understood that he who, disapproving the performance, withdrew after the termination of the first act of the play, was entitled to receive back the amount he had paid for his entrance. This system led to much brawling and fraud. The matter was deemed important enough to justify royal intervention. An order was issued in 1665, reciting that complaints had been made by "our servants, the actors in the Royal Theatre," of divers persons refusing to pay at the first door of the said theatre, thereby obliging the doorkeepers to send after, solicit, and importune them for their entrance-money, and stating it to be the royal will and pleasure, for the prevention of these disorders, and so that such as are employed by the said actors might have no opportunity of deceiving them, that all persons thenceforward coming to the said theatre should at the first door pay their entrance-money, which was to be restored to them again in case they returned the same way before the end of the act. The guards attending the theatre, and all others whom it might concern, were charged to see that this order was obeyed, and to return to the Lord Chamberlain the names of such persons as offered "any violence contrary to this our pleasure."

Apparently the royal decree was not very implicitly obeyed by the playgoers. At any rate we find, under date January 7th, 1668, the following entry in Mr. Pepys's "Diary" bearing upon the matter: "To the Nursery, but the house did not act to-day; and so I to the other two playhouses, into the pit to gaze up and down, and there did by this means for nothing see an act in the 'School of Compliments,' at the Duke of York's house, and 'Henry IV.' at the King's House; but not liking either of the plays, I took my coach again and home." At the trial of Lord Mohun, in 1692, for the murder of Mountford, the actor, John Rogers, one of the doorkeepers of the theatre, deposes that he applied to his lordship and to Captain Hill, his companion, "for the overplus of money for coming in, because they came out of the pit upon the stage. They would not give it. Lord Mohun said if I brought any of our masters he would slit their noses."

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It was the fashion for patrons of the stage at this time to treat its professors with great scorn, and often to view them with a kind of vindictive jealousy, “I see the gallants do begin to be tired with the vanity and pride of the theatre actors, who are indeed grown very proud and rich,” noted Pepys, in 1661. In the second year of her reign, Queen Anne issued a decree “for the better regulation of the theatres,” the drama being at this period the frequent subject of royal interference, and strictly commanded that “no person of what quality soever should presume to go behind the scenes, or come upon the stage, either before or during the acting of any play; that no woman should be allowed, or presume to wear, a vizard mask in either of the theatres; and that no person should come into either house without paying the price established for their respective places.”

As the stage advanced more and more in public favour, the actors ceased to depend for existence upon private patronage and found it unnecessary to be included among the retinue and servants of the great. After the Restoration patents were granted to Killigrew and Davenant, and their companions were described as the servants of the king and of the Duke of York respectively; but individual noblemen no longer maintained and protected “players of interludes” for their own private amusement. And now the court began to come to the drama instead of requiring that the drama should be carried to the court. Charles II. was probably the first English monarch who habitually joined with the general audience and occupied a box at a public theatre. In addition, he followed the example of preceding sovereigns, and had plays frequently represented before him at Whitehall and other royal residences. These performances took place at night, and were brilliantly lighted with wax candles. With the fall of the Stuart dynasty the court theatricals ceased almost altogether. Indeed, in Charles’s time there had been much decline in the dignity and exclusiveness of these entertainments; admission seems to have been obtainable upon payment at the doors, as though at a public theatre. Evelyn writes in 1675: “I saw the Italian Scaramuccio act before the king at Whitehall, people giving money to come in, which was very scandalous, and never so before at court diversions. Having seen him act in Italy many years past, I was not averse from seeing the most excellent of that kind of folly.”

It is to be observed that in Pepys’s time, and long afterwards, the prices of admission to the theatres were: Boxes, four shillings; pit, two shillings and sixpence; first gallery, one shilling and sixpence; and upper gallery, one shilling. It became customary to raise the prices whenever great expenses had been incurred by the manager in the production of a new play or of a pantomime. As the patent theatres were enlarged or rebuilt, however, the higher rate of charges became permanently established. After

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the famous O.P. riots the scale agreed upon was: Boxes, seven shillings; pit, three shillings; galleries, two shillings and one shilling; with half-price at nine o'clock. In later times these charges have been considerably reduced. Half price has been generally abolished, however, and many rows of the pit have been converted into stalls at seven or ten shillings each. Altogether, it may perhaps be held that in Western London, although theatrical entertainments have been considerably cheapened, they still tax the pockets of playgoers more severely than need be.

Country managers would seen to have ruled their scale of charges in strict accordance with the means of their patrons; to have been content, indeed, with anything they could get from the provincial playgoers. Mr. Bernard, the actor, in his "Retrospections," makes mention of a strolling manager, once famous in the north of England and in Ireland, and known popularly as Jemmy Whitely, who, in impoverished districts, was indifferent as to whether he received the public support in money or "in kind." It is related of him that he would take meat, fowl, vegetables, &c., and pass in the owner and friends for as many admissions as the food was worth. Thus very often on a Saturday his treasury resembled a butcher's warehouse, rather than a banker's. At a village on the coast the inhabitants brought him nothing but fish; but as the company could not subsist without its concomitants of bread, potatoes, and spirits, a general appeal was made to his stomach and sympathies, and some alteration in the terms of admission required. Jemmy, accordingly, after admitting nineteen persons one evening for a shad apiece, stopped the twentieth, and said, "I beg your pardon, my darling, I am extremely sorry to refuse you; but if we eat any more fish, by the powers, we shall all be turned into mermaids!"

A famous provincial manager, or "manageress," was one Mrs. Baker, concerning whom curious particulars are related in the "Memoirs of Thomas Dibdin," and in the "Life of Grimaldi, the Clown." The lady owned theatres at Canterbury, Rochester, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Faversham, Deal, and other places, but was understood to have commenced her professional career in connection with a puppet-show, or even the homely entertainment of Punch and Judy. But her industry, energy, and enterprise were of an indomitable kind. She generally lived in her theatres, and rising early to accomplish her marketing and other household duties, she proceeded to take up her position in the box-office, with the box-book open before her, and resting upon it "a massy silver inkstand, which, with a superb pair of silver trumpets, several cups, tankards, and candlesticks of the same pure metal, it was her honest pride to say she had paid for with her own hard earnings." While awaiting the visits of those desirous to book their places for the evening, she arranged the programme of the entertainments. Her education was far

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from complete, however, for although she could read she was but an indifferent scribe. By the help of the scissors, needle, thread, and a bundle of old playbills, she achieved her purpose. She cut a play from one bill, an interlude from another, a farce from a third, and sewing the slips neatly together avoided the use of pen and ink. When the name of a new performer had to be introduced she left a blank to be filled up by the first of her actors she happened to encounter, presuming him to be equal to the use of a pen. She sometimes beat the drum, or tolled the bell behind the scenes, when the representation needed such embellishments, and occasionally fulfilled the duties of prompter. In this respect it was unavoidable that she should be now and then rather overtasked. On one special evening she held the book during the performance of the old farce of "Who's the Dupe?" The part of Gradus was undertaken by her leading actor, one Gardner, and in the scene of Gradus's attempt to impose upon the gentleman of the story, by affecting to speak Greek, the performer's memory unfortunately failed him. He glanced appealingly towards the prompt-side of the stage. Mrs. Baker was mute, examining the play-book with a puzzled air. "Give me the word, madam," whispered the actor. "It's a hard word, Jem," the lady replied. "Then give me the next." "That's harder." The performer was at a stand-still; the situation was becoming desperate. "The next!" cried Gardner, furiously. "Harder still!" answered the prompter, and then, perplexed beyond bearing, she flung the book on the stage, and exclaimed aloud: "There, now you have them all; take your choice."

The lady's usual station was in front of the house, however She was her own money-taker, and to this fact has been ascribed the great good fortune she enjoyed as a manager. "Now then, pit or box, pit or gallery, box or pit!" she cried incessantly. "Pit! Pit!" half-a-dozen voices might cry. "Then pay two shillings. Pass on, Tom Fool!" for so on busy nights she invariably addressed her patrons of all classes. To a woman who had to quit the theatre, owing to the cries of the child she bore in her arms disturbing the audience, Mrs. Baker observed, as she returned the entrance-money, "Foolish woman! Foolish woman! Don't come another night till half-price, and then give your baby some Dalby's Carminative." "I remember," writes Dibdin, "one very crowded night patronised by a royal duke at Tunbridge Wells, when Mrs. Baker was taking money for three doors at once, her anxiety and very proper tact led her, while receiving cash from one customer, to keep an eye in perspective on the next, to save time, as thus: 'Little girl! get your money ready, while this gentleman pays. My lord! I'm sure your lordship has silver. Let that little boy go in while I give his lordship change. Shan't count after your ladyship. Here comes the duke! Make haste! His royal highness will please to get his ticket ready while my lady—now,

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sir! Now your royal highness!' 'Oh dear, Mrs. Baker, I've left my ticket in another coat-pocket!' 'To be sure you have! Take your royal highness's word! Let his royal highness pass! His royal highness has left his ticket in his *other* coat-pocket.' Great laughter followed, and I believe the rank and fashion of the evening found more entertainment in the lobby than on the stage."

On the occasion of Grimaldi's engagement, "for one night only," it was found necessary to open the doors of the Maidstone Theatre at a very early hour, to relieve the thoroughfare of the dense crowd which had assembled. The house being quite full, Mrs. Baker locked up the box in which the receipts of the evening had been deposited, and, going round to the stage, directed the performances to be commenced forthwith, remarking, reasonably enough, "that the house could but be full, and being full to the ceiling now, they might just as well begin at once, and have business over so much the sooner." Greatly to the satisfaction of the audience, the representation accordingly began without delay, and terminated shortly after nine o'clock.

It should be added that Mrs. Baker had been a dancer in early life, and was long famed for the grace of her carriage and the elegance of her curtsey. Occasionally she ventured upon the stage dressed in the bonnet and shawl she had worn while receiving money and issuing tickets at the door, and in audible tones announced the performances arranged for future evenings, the audience enthusiastically welcoming her appearance. A measure of her manifold talents was shared by other members of her family. Her sister, Miss Wakelin, was principal comic dancer to the theatre, occasional actress, wardrobe keeper, and professed cook, being, rewarded for her various services by board and lodging, a salary of L1 11s. 6d. per week, and a benefit in every town Mrs. Baker visited, with other emoluments by way of perquisites. Two of Mrs. Baker's daughters were also members of her company, and divided between them the heroines of tragedy and comedy. One Miss Baker subsequently became the wife of Mr. Dowton, the actor.

A settled distrust of the Bank of England was one of Mrs. Baker's most marked peculiarities. At the close of the performance she resigned the position she had occupied for some five hours as money-taker for pit, boxes, and gallery, and retired to her chamber, carrying the receipts of the evening in a large front pocket. This money she added to a store contained in half-a-dozen large china punch-bowls, ranged upon the top shelf of an old bureau. For many years she carried her savings about with her from town to town, sometimes retaining upon her person gold in rouleaux to a large amount. She is even said to have kept in her pocket for seven years a note for L200. At length her wealth became a positive embarrassment to her. She deposited sums in country banks and in the hands of respectable tradesmen, at

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three per cent., sometimes without receiving any interest whatever, but merely with a view to the safer custody of her resources. It was with exceeding difficulty that she was eventually persuaded to become a fundholder. She handed over her store of gold to her stockbroker with extraordinary trepidation. It is satisfactory to be assured that at last she accorded perfect confidence to the Old Lady in Threadneedle Street, increased her investments from time to time, and learned to find pleasure in visiting London half-yearly to receive her dividends.

Altogether Mrs. Baker appears to have been a thoroughly estimable woman, cordially regarded by the considerate members of the theatrical profession with whom she had dealings. While recording her eccentricities, and conceding that occasionally her language was more forcible and idiomatic than tasteful or refined, Dibdin hastens to add that "she owned an excellent heart, with much of the appearance and manners of a gentlewoman." Grimaldi was not less prompt in expressing his complete satisfaction in regard to his engagements with "the manageress." Dibdin wrote the epitaph inscribed above her grave in the cathedral yard of Rochester. A few lines may be extracted, but it must be said that the composition is of inferior quality:

Alone, untaught,
And self-assisted (save by Heaven), she sought
To render each his own, and fairly save
What might help others when she found a grave;
By prudence taught life's troubled waves to stem,
In death her memory shines, a rich, unpolished gem.

It is conceivable—so much may perhaps be added by way of concluding note—that Mrs. Baker unconsciously posed as a model, and lent a feature or two, when the portrait came to be painted of even a more distinguished "manageress," whose theatre was a caravan, however, whose company consisted of waxen effigies, and who bore the name of—Jarley.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE PIT.

There is something to be written about the rise and fall of the pit: its original humility, its possession for a while of great authority, and its forfeiture, of late years, of power in the theatre. We all know Shakespeare's opinion of "the groundlings," and how he held them to be, "for the most part, capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise." The great dramatist's contemporaries entertained similar views on this head. They are

to be found speaking with supreme contempt of the audience occupying the *yard*; describing them as “fools,” and “scarecrows,” and “understanding, grounded men.”

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Our old theatres were of two classes, public and private. The companies of the private theatres were more especially under the protection of some royal or noble personage. The audiences they attracted were usually of a superior class, and certain of these were entitled to sit upon the stage during the representation. The buildings, although of smaller dimensions than the public theatres boasted, were arranged with more regard for the comfort of the spectators. The boxes were enclosed and locked. There were *pits* furnished with seats, in place of the *yards*, as they were called, of the public theatres, in which the "groundlings" were compelled to stand throughout the performance. And the whole house was roofed in from the weather; whereas the public theatres were open to the sky, excepting over the stage and boxes. Moreover, the performances at the private theatres were presented by candle or torch light. Probably it was held that the effects of the stage were enhanced by their being artificially illuminated, for in these times, at both public and private theatres, the entertainments commenced early in the afternoon, and generally concluded before sunset, or, at any rate, before dark.

As patience and endurance are more easy to the man who sits than to the standing spectator, it came to be understood that a livelier kind of entertainment must be provided for the "groundlings" of the public theatres than there was need to present to the seated pit of the private playhouses. The "fools of the yard" were charged with requiring "the horrid noise of target-fight," "cutler's work," and vulgar and boisterous exhibitions generally. These early patrons of the more practical parts of the drama are entitled to be forbearingly judged, however. Their comfort was little studied, and it is not surprising, under the circumstances, that they should have favoured a brisk and vivacious class of representations. The tedious playwright did not merely oppress their minds; he made them remember how weary were their legs.

But it is probable that the tastes thus generated were maintained long after the necessity for their existence had departed, and that, even when seats were permitted them, the "groundlings" still held by their old forms of amusement, demanding dramas of liveliness, incident, and action, and greatly preferring spectacle to speeches. From the philosophical point of view the pit had acquired a bad name, and couldn't or wouldn't get quit of it. Still it is by no means clear that the sentiments ascribed to the pit were not those of the audience generally.

Nevertheless the pit was improving in character. Gradually it boasted a strong critical leaven; it became the recognised resort of the more enlightened playgoers. Dryden in his prologues and epilogues often addresses the pit, as containing notably the judges of plays and the more learned of the audience. "The pit," says Swift, in the introduction to his "Tale of a Tub," "is sunk below the stage, that whatever of weighty matter shall be delivered thence, whether it be lead or gold, may fall plump into the jaws of certain critics, as I think they are called, which stand ready open to devour them." "Your bucks of the pit," says an old occasional address of later date, ascribed to Garrick, but on insufficient evidence:

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Your bucks of the pit are miracles of learning,
Who point out faults to show their own discerning;
And critic-like bestriding martyred sense,
Proclaim their genius and vast consequence.

There were now critics by profession, who duly printed and published their criticisms. The awful Churchill's favourite seat was in the front row of the pit, next the orchestra. "In this place he thought he could best discern the real workings of the passions in the actors, or what they substituted instead of them," says poor Tom Davies, whose dread of the critic was extreme. "During the run of 'Cymbeline,'" he wrote apologetically to Garrick, his manager, "I had the misfortune to disconcert you in one scene, for which I did immediately beg your pardon; and did attribute it to my accidentally seeing Mr. Churchill in the pit; with great truth, it rendered me confused and unmindful of my business." Garrick had himself felt oppressed by the gloomy presence of Churchill, and learnt to read discontent in the critic's lowering brows. "My love to Churchill," he writes to Colman; "his being sick of Richard was perceived about the house."

That Churchill was a critic of formidable aspect, the portrait he limned of himself in his "Independence" amply demonstrates:

Vast were his bones, his muscles twisted strong,
His face was short, but broader than 'twas long;
His features though by nature they were large,
Contentment had contrived to overcharge
And bury meaning, save that we might spy
Sense low'ring on the pent-house of his eye;
His arms were two twin oaks, his legs so stout
That they might bear a mansion-house about;
Nor were they—look but at his body there—
Designed by fate a much less weight to bear.
O'er a brown cassock which had once been black,
Which hung in tatters on his brawny back,
A sight most strange and awkward to behold,
He threw a covering of blue and gold. &c. &c.

This was not the kind of man to be contemptuously regarded or indiscreetly attacked. Foote ventured to designate him "the clumsy curate of Clapham," but prudently suppressed a more elaborate lampoon he had prepared. Murphy launched an ode more vehement than decent in its terms. Churchill good-humouredly acknowledged the justice of the satire; he had said, perhaps, all he cared to say to the detriment of Murphy, and was content with this proof that his shafts had reached their mark. Murphy confirms Davies's account of Churchill's seat in the theatre:

No more your bard shall sit
In foremost row before the astonished pit,
And grin dislike, and kiss the spike,
And twist his mouth and roll his head awry,
The arch-absurd quick glancing from his eye.

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Charles Lamb was a faithful patron of the pit. In his early days there had been such things as “pit orders.” “Beshrew the uncomfortable manager who abolished them!” he exclaims. Hazlitt greatly preferred the pit to the boxes. Not simply because the fierceness of his democratic sentiments induced in him a scorn of the visitors to the boxes, as wrapped up in themselves, fortified against impressions, weaned from all superstitious belief in dramatic illusions, taking so little interest in all that was interesting, disinclined to discompose their cravats or their muscles, “except when some gesticulation of Mr. Kean, or some expression of an author two hundred years old, violated the decorum of fashionable indifference.” These were good reasons for his objection to the boxes. But he preferred the pit, in truth, because he could there see and hear so very much better. “We saw Mr. Kean’s Sir Giles Overreach on Friday night from the boxes,” he writes in 1816, “and are not surprised at the incredulity as to this great actor’s powers entertained by those persons who have only seen him from that elevated sphere. We do not hesitate to say that those who have only seen him at that distance have not seen him at all. The expression of his face is quite lost, and only the harsh and grating tones of his voice produce their full effect on the ear. The same recurring sounds, by dint of repetition, fasten on the attention, while the varieties and finer modulations are lost in their passage over the pit. All you discover is an abstraction of his defects, both of person, voice, and manner. He appears to be a little man in a great passion,” &c.

But the pit was not famous merely as the resort of critics. The “groundlings” had given place to people of fashion and social distinction. Mr. Leigh Hunt notes that the pit even of Charles II.’s time, although now and then the scene of violent scuffles and brawls, due in great part to the general wearing of swords, was wont to contain as good company as the pit of the Opera House five-and-twenty years ago. A reference to Pepys’s “Diary” justifies this opinion. “Among the rest here the Duke of Buckingham to-day openly sat in the pit,” records Pepys, “and there I found him with my Lord Buckhurst, and Sedley, and Etheridge the poet.” Yet it would seem that already the visitors to the pit had declined somewhat in quality. Pepys, like John Gilpin’s spouse, had a frugal mind, however bent on pleasure. He relates, in 1667, with some sense of injury, how once, there being no room in the pit, he was forced to pay four shillings and go into one of the upper boxes, “which is the first time I ever sat in a box in my life.”

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One does not now look to find members of the administration or cabinet ministers occupying seats in the pit. Yet the "Journals of the Right Honourable William Windham," some time Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and afterwards Colonial Secretary, tell of his frequent visits to the pit of Covent Garden. Nor does he "drop into" the theatre, after dining at his club, as even a bachelor of fashion might do without exciting surprise. Playgoing is not an idle matter to him. And he is accompanied by ladies of distinction, his relatives and others. "Went about half-past five to the pit," he records; "sat by Miss Kemble, Steevens, Mrs. Burke, and Miss Palmer," the lady last named being the niece of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who afterwards married Lord Inchiquin. "Went in the evening to the pit with Mrs. Lukin" (the wife of his half-brother). "After the play, went with Miss Kemble to Mrs. Siddons's dressing-room: met Sheridan there, with whom I sat in the waiting room, and who pressed me to sup at his house with Fox and G. North." Assuredly "the play," not less than the pit, was more highly regarded in Windham's time than nowadays.

Though apart from our present topic, it is worth noting that Windham may claim to have anticipated Monsieur Gambetta as a statesman voyaging in a balloon. Ballooning was a hobby of Windham's. He was a regular attendant of ascents, and inspected curiously the early aerial machines of Blanchard and Lunardi. Something surprised at his own temerity, he travelled the air himself, rose in a balloon—probably from Vauxhall—-crossed the river at Tilbury, and descended in safety after losing his hat. He regretted that the wind had not been favourable for his crossing the Channel. "Certainly," he writes, "the experiences I have had on this occasion will warrant a degree of confidence more than I have ever hitherto indulged. I would not wish a degree of confidence more than I enjoyed at every moment of the time."

To return to the pit for a concluding note or two. Audiences had come to agree with Hazlitt, that "it was unpleasant to see a play from the boxes," that the pit was far preferable. Gradually the managers—sound sleepers as a rule—awakened to this view of the situation, and proceeded accordingly. They seized upon the best seats in the pit, and converted them into stalls, charging for admission to these a higher price than they had ever levied in regard to the boxes. Stalls were first introduced at the Opera House in the Haymarket in the year 1829. Dissatisfaction was openly expressed, but although the overture was hissed—the opera being Rossini's "La Donna del Lago"—no serious disturbance arose. There had been a decline in the public spirit of playgoers. The generation that delighted in the great O.P. riot had pretty well passed away. Such another excitement was not possible; energy and enthusiasm on such a subject seemed to have been exhausted for ever by that supreme effort.

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So the audience paid the increased price or stayed away from the theatre—for staying away from the theatre could now be calmly viewed as a reasonable alternative. "The play" was no more what once it had been, a sort of necessary of life. The example of the Opera manager was presently followed by all other theatrical establishments, and high-priced stalls became the rule everywhere. The pit lost its old influence—was, so to say, disfranchised. It was as one of the old Cinque Ports which the departing sea and the ever indrifting sand have left high and dry, unapproachable by water, a port only in name. It was divided and conquered. The most applauded toast at the public banquet of the O.P. rioters—"The ancient and indisputable rights of the pit"—will never more be proposed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FOOTMEN'S GALLERY.

Of old the proprietors of theatres acted towards their patrons upon the principle of "first come, first served." If you desired a good place at the playhouse it was indispensably necessary to go early and to be in time: to secure your seat by bodily occupation of it. Box-offices, at which places might be engaged a fortnight in advance of the performance, were as yet unknown. The only way, therefore, by which people of quality and fashion could obtain seats without the trouble of attending at the opening of the doors for that purpose, was by sending on their servants beforehand to occupy places until such time as it should be convenient for the masters and mistresses to present themselves at the theatre. When Garrick took his benefit at Drury Lane in 1744, the play—"Hamlet"—was to begin at six o'clock, and in the bills of the day ladies were requested *to send their servants by three o'clock.* It was further announced that by particular desire five rows of the pit would be railed into boxes, and that servants would be permitted to keep places on the stage, which, for the better accommodation of the ladies, would be railed into boxes.

The custom of sending servants early to the theatre to secure seats in this way was, no doubt, a very old one; and, of course, at the conclusion of the entertainment they were compelled to be again in attendance with the carriages and chairs of their employers. Meanwhile, they assembled in the lobbies and precincts of the playhouse in great numbers, and considerable noise and confusion thus ensued. In the prologue to Carlell's tragi-comedy of "Arviragus," 1672, Dryden writes, begging the public to support rather the English than the French performers who were visiting London:

> And therefore, Messieurs, if you'll do us grace.
> Send lacqueys early to preserve your place;

and in one of his epilogues he makes mention of the nuisance occasioned by the noisy crowd of servants disturbing the performance:

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Then for your lacqueys and your train beside,
By whate'er name or title dignified,
They roar so loud, you'd think behind the stairs,
Tom Dove and all the brotherhood of bears;
They've grown a nuisance beyond all disasters,
We've none so great but their unpaying masters.
We beg you, sirs, to beg your men that they
Would please to give us leave to hear the play.

"Tom Dove," it may be noted, was a "bear-ward," or proprietor of bears, of some fame; his name is frequently mentioned in the light literature of the period.

At this time the servants were admitted gratis to the upper gallery of the theatre on the conclusion of the fourth act of the play of the evening. In 1697, however, Rich, the manager of the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, placed his gallery at their disposal, without charge, during the whole of the evening. Cibber speaks of this proceeding on the part of Rich as the lowest expedient to ingratiate his company in public favour. Alarmed by the preference evinced by the town for the rival theatre in Drury Lane, Rich conceived that this new privilege would incline the servants to give his house "a good word in the respective families they belonged to," and, further, that it would greatly increase the applause awarded to his performances. In this respect his plan seems to have succeeded very well.

Cibber relates that "it often thundered from the full gallery above, while the thin pit and boxes below were in the utmost serenity." He proceeds to add, however, that the privilege, which from custom ripened into right, became the most disgraceful nuisance that ever depreciated the theatre. "How often," he exclaims, "have the most polite audiences in the most affecting scenes of the best plays been disturbed and insulted by the noise and clamour of these savage spectators!"

The example set by Rich seems to have been soon followed by other managers. For many years the right of the footmen to occupy the upper gallery without payment was unchallenged. In 1737, however, Mr. Fleetwood, manager of Drury Lane Theatre, announced his determination to put an end to a privilege which it was generally felt had grown into a serious nuisance. A threatening letter was sent to him, which he answered by offering a reward of fifty guineas for the discovery of its author or authors. The letter is given in full in Malcolm's "Anecdotes of London," 1810:

"SIR,—We are willing to admonish you before we attempt our design; and, provided you will use us civil and admit us into your gallery, which is our property according to Formalities; and if you think proper to come to a composition this way, you'll hear no further; and if not, our intention is to join a body *incognito*, and reduce the playhouse to the ground.—We are, INDEMNIFIED."

A riot of an alarming nature followed. The footmen, denied admission to their own gallery, as they regarded

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it, assembled in a body of three hundred, and, armed with offensive weapons, broke into the theatre, and, taking forcible possession of the stage, wounded some twenty-five persons who had opposed their entrance. Great confusion prevailed. The Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family were in the theatre at the time. Colonel Deveil, justice of the peace, who was also present, after attempting in vain to read the Riot Act ("he might as well have read Caesar's 'Commentaries,'" observed a facetious critic), caused some of the ringleaders to be arrested, and thirty of them were sent to Newgate. While in prison, they were supported by the subscriptions of their sympathising brethren. Meanwhile, anonymous letters were thrown down the areas of people of fashion, denouncing vengeance against all who attempted to deprive the footmen of their liberty and property. A further attack upon the theatre was expected. For several nights a detachment of fifty soldiers protected the building and its approaches; but the public peace was not further disturbed. The footmen were compelled to acknowledge themselves defeated. They were admitted *gratis* to the upper gallery no more.

Arnot's "History of Edinburgh," 1789, contains an account of a servants' riot in the theatre of that city on the occasion of the second performance of the Rev. Mr. Townley's farce of "High Life Below Stairs," originally played at Drury Lane in 1759. The footmen, highly offended at the representation of a farce reflecting on their fraternity, resolved to prevent its repetition. In Edinburgh the footmen's gallery still existed. "That servants might not be kept waiting in the cold, nor induced to tipple in the adjacent ale-houses while they waited for their masters, the humanity of the gentry had provided that the upper gallery should afford gratis admission to the servants of such persons as were attending the theatre." On the second night of the performance of the farce, Mr. Love, one of the managers of the theatre, came upon the stage, and read a letter he had received, containing the most violent threatenings both against the actors and the house, in case "High Life Below Stairs" should be represented, and declaring "that above seventy people had agreed to sacrifice fame, honour, and profit to prevent it." In spite of this menace, however, the managers ordered that the performance should proceed. Immediately a storm of disapprobation arose in the footmen's gallery. The noise continued, notwithstanding the urgent orders addressed to the servants to be quiet. Many of the gentlemen recognised among this unruly crew their individual servants. When these would not submit to authority, their masters, assisted by others in the house, went up to the gallery; but it was not until after a battle, in which the servants were fairly overpowered and thrust out of the house, that quietness was restored.

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After this disturbance, the servants were not only deprived of the freedom of the playhouse, but the custom of giving them “vails,” which had theretofore universally prevailed in Scotland, was abolished. “Nothing,” writes Mr. Arnot, “can tend more to make servants rapacious, insolent, and ungrateful, than allowing them to display their address in extracting money from the visitors of their lord.” After the riot in the footmen’s gallery, the gentlemen of the county of Aberdeen resolved neither to give, nor to allow their servants to receive, any money from their visitors under the name of drink-money, card-money, &c., and instead, augmented their wages. This example was “followed by the gentlemen of the county of Edinburgh, by the Faculty of Advocates, and other respectable public bodies; and the practice was utterly exploded over all Scotland.”

It was not only while they occupied the gallery, however, that the footmen contrived to give offence to the audience. Their conduct while they kept places for their employers in the better portions of the house, appears to have been equally objectionable. In the *Weekly Register* for March 25th, 1732, it is remarked: “The theatre should be esteemed the centre of politeness and good manners, yet numbers of them [the footmen] every evening are lolling over the boxes, while they keep places for their masters, with their hats on; play over their airs, take snuff, laugh aloud, adjust their cocks’-combs, or hold dialogues with their brethren from one side of the house to the other.” The fault was not wholly with the footmen, however: their masters and mistresses were in duty bound to come earlier to the theatre and take possession of the places retained for them. But it was the fashion to be late: to enter the theatre noisily, when the play was half over, and even then to pay little attention to the players. In Fielding’s farce of “Miss Lucy in Town,” produced in 1742, when the country-bred wife inquires of Mrs. Tawdry concerning the behaviour of the London fine ladies at the playhouses, she is answered: “Why, if they can they take a stage-box, where they let the footman sit the two first acts to show his livery; then they come in to show themselves—spread their fans upon the spikes, make curtsies to their acquaintance, and then talk and laugh as loud as they are able.”

CHAPTER X.

FOOT-LIGHTS.

As the performances of the Elizabethan theatres commenced at three o’clock in the afternoon, and the public theatres of the period were open to the sky (except over the stage and galleries), much artificial lighting could not, as a rule, have been requisite. Malone, in his account of the English stage prefixed to his edition of “Shakespeare,” describes the stage as formerly lighted by means of two large branches “of a form similar to those now hung in churches.” The pattern of these branches may be seen in the frontispiece

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to “Kirkman’s Collection of Drolls,” printed in 1672, representing a view of a theatrical booth. In time, however, it was discovered that the branches obstructed the view of the spectators, and were otherwise incommodious; they then gave place to small circular wooden frames furnished with candles, eight of which were hung on the stage, four on either side. The frontispiece to the Dublin edition of Chetwood’s “History of the Stage,” 1749, exhibits the stage lighted by hoops of candles in this way, suspended from the proscenium, and with no foot-lights between the actors and the musicians in the orchestra. It is probable that these candles were of wax or tallow, accordingly as the funds of the theatrical manager permitted. Mr. Pepys, in his “Diary,” February 12th, 1667, chronicles a conversation with Killigrew, the manager of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. “He tells me that the stage is now, by his pains, a thousand times better and more glorious than ever heretofore. *Now, wax candles and many of them; then, not above 3 lb. of tallow.* Now, all things civil: no rudeness anywhere; then, as in a bear-garden,” &c. The body of the house, according to Malone, was formerly lighted “by cressets or large open lanthorns of nearly the same size with those which are fixed in the poop of a ship.”

The use of candles involved the employment of candle-snuffers, who came on at certain pauses in the performance to tend and rectify the lighting of the stage. Goldsmith’s Strolling Player narrates how he commenced his theatrical career in this humble capacity: “I snuffed the candles; and let me tell you, that without a candle-snuffer the piece would lose half its embellishment.” The illness of one of the actors necessitated the pressing of the candle-snuffer into the company of players. “I learnt my part,” he continues, “with astonishing rapidity, and bade adieu to snuffing candles ever after. I found that nature had designed me for more noble employment, and I was resolved to take her when in the humour.” But the duties of a candle-snuffer, if not very honourable, were somewhat arduous. It was the custom of the audience, especially among those frequenting the galleries, to regard him as a butt, with whom to amuse themselves during the pauses between the acts. Something of this habit is yet extant. Even nowadays the appearance of a servant on the stage for the necessary purposes of the performance—to carry chairs on or off, to spread or remove a carpet, &c.—is frequently the signal for cries of derision from the gallery. Of old the audience proceeded to greater extremities—even to hurling missiles of various kinds at the unfortunate candle-snuffer. In Foote’s comedy of “The Minor,” Shift, one of the characters, describes the changing scenes of his life. From a linkboy outside a travelling theatre he was promoted to employment within. “I did the honours of the barn,” he says, “by sweeping the stage and clipping the candles. Here my skill and address were so conspicuous that

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it procured me the same office the ensuing winter, at Drury Lane, where I acquired intrepidity, the crown of all my virtues.... For I think, sir, he that dares stand the shot of the gallery, in lighting, snuffing, and sweeping, the first night of a new play, may bid defiance to the pillory with all its customary compliments.... But an unlucky crab-apple applied to my right eye by a patriot gingerbread baker from the Borough, who would not suffer three dancers from Switzerland because he hated the French, forced me to a precipitate retreat."

Mr. Richard Jenkins, in his "Memoirs of the Bristol Stage," published in 1826, relates how one Winstone, a comic actor, who sometimes essayed tragical characters, appeared upon a special occasion as Richard III. He played his part so energetically, and flourished his sword to such good purpose while demanding "A horse! a horse!" in the fifth act that "the weapon coming in contact with a rope by which one of the hoops of tallow candles was suspended, the blazing circle (not the golden one he had looked for) fell round his neck and lodged there, greatly to his own discomfiture and to the amusement of the audience." The amazed Catesby of the evening, instead of helping his sovereign to a steed, is said to have been sufficiently occupied with extricating him from his embarrassing situation. Winstone, indeed, seems to have enjoyed some fame on the score of eccentricity. He took leave of the stage in 1784, being then about eighty years of age. But he was at this time so afflicted with deafness that it was impossible for him to "catch the word" from the prompter at the side of the stage. To assist him, therefore, in the delivery of his farewell address, one of the performers, provided with a copy of the speech, was stationed behind the speaker and instructed to keep moving forward and backward as he did, like his shadow. The effect must certainly have been whimsical. Winstone had been a pupil of Quin's, and had played Downright to Garrick's Kitely in "Every Man in his Humour," at Drury Lane, in 1751. He was a constant attendant at the Exchange Coffee House, the established resort of the Bristol merchants. "He had the good fortune at one time to win a considerable prize in the lottery, and often looked in at the insurance offices, where he sometimes received premiums as an underwriter of ships and cargoes." In consequence, he obtained much patronage, and always inserted at the head of the playbills of his benefit, "By desire of several eminent merchants."

Garrick, in 1765, after his return from Italy (according to Jackson's "History of the Scottish Stage"), introduced various improvements in the theatre, and amongst them, the employment of a row of foot-lights in lieu of the old circular chandeliers over head. The labours of the candle-snuffers in front of the curtain were probably brought to a conclusion soon afterwards, when oil-lamps took the place of candles. The snuffer then found his occupation gone. Probably the trimming of the lamps became his next duty; and then, as time went on, he developed into a "gasman," that most indispensable attendant of the modern theatre.

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Thackeray, in his novel of “The Virginians,” has some very apposite remarks upon the limited state of illumination in which our ancestors were content to dwell. “In speaking of the past,” he writes, “I think the night-life of society a hundred years since was rather a *dark* life. There was not one wax-candle for ten which we now see in a ladies’ drawing-room: let alone gas and the wondrous new illuminations of clubs. Horrible guttering tallow smoked and stunk in passages. The candle-snuffer was a notorious officer in the theatre. See Hogarth’s pictures: how dark they are, and how his feasts are, as it were, begrimed with tallow! In ‘Mariage a la Mode,’ in Lord Viscount Squanderfield’s grand saloons, where he and his wife are sitting yawning before the horror-stricken steward when their party is over, there are but eight candles—one on each table and half-a-dozen in a brass chandelier. If Jack Briefless convoked his friends to oysters and beer in his chambers, Pump Court, he would have twice as many. Let us comfort ourselves by thinking that Louis Quatorze in all his glory held his revels in the dark, and bless Mr. Price and other Luciferous benefactors of mankind for abolishing the abominable mutton of our youth.”

The first gas-lamp appeared in London in the year 1809, Pall Mall being the first and for some years the only street so illuminated. Gradually, however, the new mode of lighting made way, and stole from the streets into manufactories and public buildings, and, finally, into private houses. The progress was not very rapid however; for we find that gas was not introduced into the Mall of St. James’s Park until the year 1822. It is difficult to fix the exact date when gas foot-lights appeared upon the stage. But in the year 1828 an explosion took place in Covent Garden Theatre by which two men lost their lives. Great alarm was excited. The public were afraid to re-enter the theatre. The management published an address in which it was stated that the gas-fittings would be entirely removed from the interior of the house, and safer methods of illumination resorted to. In order to effect the necessary alterations the theatre was closed for a fortnight, during which the Covent Garden company appeared at the English Opera House, or Lyceum Theatre, and an address was issued on behalf of the widows of the men who had been killed by the explosion. In due time, however, the world grew bolder on the subject, and gas reappeared upon the scene. Some theatres, however (being probably restricted by the conditions of their leases), were very tardy in adopting the new system of lighting. Mr. Benjamin Webster, in his speech in the year 1853, upon his resigning the management of the Haymarket Theatre after a tenancy of fifteen years, mentions, among the improvements he had originated during that period, that he had “introduced gas for the fee of L500 a-year, and the presentation of the centre chandelier to the proprietors.”

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The employment of gas-lights in theatres was strenuously objected to by many people. In the year 1829 a medical gentleman, writing from Bolton Row, and signing himself "Chiro-Medicus," addressed to a public journal a remonstrance on the subject. He had met with several fatal cases of apoplexy which had occurred in the theatres, or a few hours after leaving them, and he had been led, with some success, as he alleged, to investigate the cause. It appeared to him "that the strong vivid light evolved from the numerous gas-lamps on the stage so powerfully stimulated the brain through the medium of the optic nerves, as to occasion a preternatural determination of blood to the head, capable of producing headache or giddiness: and if the subject should at the time laugh heartily, the additional influx of blood which takes place, may rupture a vessel, the consequence of which will be, from the effusion of blood within the substance of the brain, or on its surface, fatal apoplexy." From inquiries he had made among his professional brethren who had been many years in practice in the Metropolis, it appeared to him that the votaries of the drama were by no means so subject to apoplexy or nervous headache *before* the adoption of gas-lights. Some of his medical friends were of opinion that the air of the theatre was very considerably deteriorated by the combustion of gas, and that the consumption of oxygen, and the new products, and the escape of hydrogen, occasioned congestion of the vessels of the head. He thought it probable that this deterioration of the air might act in conjunction with the vivid light in producing either apoplexy or nervous headache. He found, moreover, that the actors were subject not only to headache, but also to weakness of sight and attacks of giddiness, from the action of the powerfully vivid light evolved from the combustion of gas; and he noted that the pupils of the eyes of all actors or actresses, who had been two or three years on the stage, were much dilated; though this, he thought, might be attributable to the injurious pigments they employed to heighten their complexions; common rouge containing either red oxide of lead or the sulphuret of mercury, and white paint being often composed of carbonate of lead, all of which were capable of acting detrimentally upon the optic nerve.

The statements of "Chiro-Medicus" may seem somewhat overcharged; yet, after allowance has been made for that exaggerated way of putting the case which seems habitual to "the faculty" when it takes up with a new theory, a sufficient residuum of fact remains to justify many of the doctor's remarks. That a headache too often follows hard upon a dramatic entertainment must be tolerably plain to anyone who has ever sat in a theatre. Surely a better state of things must have existed a century ago, when the grandsires and great-grandsires of us Londoners were in the habit of frequenting the theatres night after night, almost as punctually as they ate their dinner or sipped their claret or their punch. To look in at Drury Lane or Covent Garden, if only to witness an act or two of the tragedy or comedy of the evening, was a sort of duty with the town gentlemen, wits, and Templars, a hundred years back, when George III. was king. But gas had not then superseded wax, and tallow, and oil.

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Beyond increasing the *quantity* of light, stage management has done little since Garrick's introduction of foot-lights, or "floats," as they are technically termed, in the way of satisfactorily adjusting the illumination of the stage. The light still comes from the wrong place: from below instead of, naturally, from above. In 1863, Mr. Fechter, at the Lyceum, sank the *floats* below the surface of the stage, so that they should not intercept the view of the spectator; and his example has been followed by other managers; and of late years, owing to accidents having occurred to the dresses of the dancers when they approached too near to the foot-lights, these have been carefully fenced and guarded with wire screens and metal bars. Moreover, the dresses of the performers have been much shortened. But the obvious improvement required still remains to be effected.

George Colman the younger, in his "Random Records," describes an amateur dramatic performance in the year 1780, at Wynnstay, in North Wales, the seat of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn. The theatre had formerly been the kitchen of the mansion—a large, long, rather low-pitched room. One advantage of these characteristics, according to Mr. Colman, was the fact that the foot-lights, or *floats*, could be dispensed with: the stage was lighted by a row of lamps affixed to a large beam or arch above the heads of the performers—"on that side of the arch nearest to the stage, so that the audience did not see the lamps, which cast a strong vertical light upon the actors. This," he writes, "is as we receive light from nature; whereas the operation of the *float* is exactly upon a reversed principle, and throws all the shades of the actor's countenance the wrong way." This defect, however, appeared to our author to be irremediable; for, as he argues, "if a beam to hold lamps as at Wynnstay were placed over the proscenium at Drury Lane or Covent Garden Theatre, the goddesses in the upper tiers of boxes, and the two and one shilling gods in the galleries, would be completely intercepted from a view of the stage." Still, Mr. Colman was not without hope that "in this age of improvement, while theatres are springing up like mushrooms, some ingenious architect may hit upon a remedy. At all events," he concludes, "it is a grand desideratum."

Colman was writing in the year 1830. It is rather curious to find him describing theatres as "springing up like mushrooms," when it is considered that, notwithstanding the enormous extension of London, and the vast increase of its population, but one or two theatres were added to it for some thirty years. Meanwhile, the "ingenious architect," to whom he looked hopefully to amend the lighting of the stage, has not yet appeared. But then, one does not meet ingenious architects every day.

A concluding note may be added touching the difficulties that may ensue from the system of lighting the theatres by means of gas.

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On December 3rd, 1872, there occurred the strike of some 2400 stokers; and, as a consequence, the West-end of London was involved in complete darkness, while in the City the supply of gas was limited to a very few streets. Upon the theatres this deprivation fell heavily. The performances were given up in despair at some houses, and carried on at others in a very restricted manner, by suddenly calling into requisition the twilight of tallow-candles and oil-lamps. The following advertisements, among many others of like tenor, appearing in *The Times* of the 4th December, are illustrative of the situation of affairs:

> SPECIAL NOTICE.—COURT THEATRE.—This theatre, from its situation, is in no way affected by the Gas Strike, and will be open every evening, and brilliantly illuminated.

ST. JAMES'S THEATRE.—The management having received no notice that, in consequence of the strike, the supply of gas would be discontinued, found at the last moment no light could be obtained, and were compelled to inform the crowds at the door that there would be no performance. *All Tickets* issued last night will be available this evening.

> GAS.—GAIETY.—SPECIAL NOTICE.—Arrangements (if necessary) have been made to light this Theatre with lime-lights and oil.

CHAPTER XI.

"COME, THE RECORDERS!"

Among the earlier emotions of the youthful playgoer, whose enthusiasm for dramatic representations is generally of a very fervid and uncompromising kind, must be recognised his pity for the money-taker, forbidden by the cares of office to witness a performance, and his envy of the musicians, so advantageously stationed for the incessant enjoyment of the delights of the theatre. But he perceives, with regretful wonder, that these gentlemen are habitually negligent of their opportunities, and fail to appreciate the peculiar happiness of their position; that they are apt, indeed, their services not being immediately required, to abandon their instruments, and quietly to steal away through the cramped doorway that admits to the mysterious regions beneath the stage. He is grieved to note that for them, at any rate, the play is *not* "the thing." One or two may remain—the performer on the drum, I have observed, is often very faithful in this respect, though I have failed to discover any special reason why a love of histrionic efforts should be generated by his professional occupation—but the majority of the orchestra clearly manifest an almost indecent alacrity in avoiding all contemplation of the displays on the other side of the foot-lights. They are but playgoers on compulsion. They even seem sometimes, when they retain their seats, to prefer gazing at the audience, rather than at the actors, and thus to advertise their

apathy in the matter. And I have not heard that the parsimonious manager, who proposed to reduce the salaries of his musicians on the ground that they every night enjoyed admission to the best seats, for which they paid nothing, “even when stars were performing,” ever succeeded in convincing his band of the justice of his arguments.

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The juvenile patron of the drama will, of course, in due time become less absorbed in his own view of the situation, and learn that just as one man's meat is another man's poison, so the pleasures of some are the pains of others. He will cease to search the faces of the orchestra for any evidence of "pride of place," or enjoyment of performances they witness, not as volunteers, but as pressed men. He will understand that they are at work, and are influenced by a natural anxiety to escape from work as soon as may be. So, the overture ended, they vanish, and leave the actors to do their best or their worst, as the case may be. But our young friend's sentiments are not peculiar to himself—have been often shared, indeed, by very experienced persons. We have heard of comic singers and travelling entertainment givers who have greatly resented the air of indifference of their musical accompanist. They have required of him that he should feel amused, or affect to feel amused, by their efforts. He has had to supplement his skill as a musician by his readiness as an actor. It has been thought desirable that the audience should be enabled to exclaim: "The great So-and-So *must* be funny! Why, see, the man at the piano, who plays for him every night, who has, of course, seen his performances scores and scores of times, even *he* can't help laughing, the great So-and-So is so funny." The audience, thus convinced, find themselves, no doubt, very highly amused. Garrick himself appears, on one occasion at any rate, to have been much enraged at the indifference of a member of his band. Cervetto, the violoncello player, once ventured to yawn noisily and portentously while the great actor was delivering an address to the audience. The house gave way to laughter. The indignation of the actor could only be appeased by Cervetto's absurd excuse, that he invariably yawned when he felt "the greatest rapture," and to this emotion the address to the house, so admirably delivered by his manager, had justified him in yielding. Garrick accepted the explanation, perhaps rather on account of its humour than of its completeness.

Music and the drama have been inseparably connected from the most remote date. Even in the cart of Thespis some corner must have been found for the musician. The custom of chanting in churches has been traced to the practice of the ancient and pagan stage. Music pervaded the whole of the classical drama, was the adjunct of the poetry: the play being a kind of recitation, the declamation composed and written in notes, and the gesticulations even being accompanied. The old miracle plays were assisted by performers on the horn, the pipe, the tabret, and the flute—a full orchestra in fact. Mr. Payne Collier, in his "Annals of the Stage," points out that at the end of the prologue to "Childermas Day," 1512, the minstrels are required to "do their diligence," the same expression being employed at the close of the performance, when they are besought either themselves to dance, or to play a dance for the entertainment of the company:

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Also ye menstrelles doth your diligence
Afore our depertying geve us a daunce.

The Elizabethan stage relied greatly upon the aid of trumpets, cornets, &c., for the "soundings" which announced the commencement of the prologue, and for the "alarums" and "flourishes" which occurred in the course of the representation. Malone was of opinion that the band consisted of some eight or ten musicians stationed in "an upper balcony over what is now called the stage-box." Collier, however, shows that the musicians were often divided into two bands, and quotes a stage direction in Marston's "Antonio's Revenge," 1602: "While the measure is dancing, Andrugio's ghost is placed betwixt the music houses." In a play of later date, Middleton's "Chaste Maid in Cheapside," 1630, appears the direction: "While the company seem to weep and mourn, there is a sad song in the music-room." Boxes were then often called rooms, and one was evidently set apart for the use of the musicians. In certain of Shakespeare's plays the musicians are clearly required to quit their room for awhile, and appear upon the stage among the *dramatis personae.*

The practice of playing music between the acts is of long standing, the frequent inappropriateness of these interludes having been repeatedly commented on, however. A writer in the last century expressly complains that at the end of every act, the audience, "carried away by a jig of Vivaldi's, or a concerto of Giardini's, lose every warm impression relative to the piece, and begin again cool and unconcerned as at the commencement of the representation." He advocates the introduction of music adapted to the subject: "The music after an act should commence in the tone of the preceding passion, and be gradually varied till it accords with the tone of the passion that is to succeed in the next act," so that "cheerful, tender, melancholy, or animated impressions" may be inspired, as the occasion may need. At the conclusion of the second act of "Gammer Gurton's Needle," 1566, Diccon, addressing himself to the musicians, says simply: "In the meantime, fellows, pipe up your fiddles." But in a later play, the "Two Italian Gentlemen," by Anthony Munday, printed about 1584, the different kinds of music to be played after each act are stated, whether a "pleasant galliard," a "solemn dump," or a "pleasant allemaigne." So Marston in his "Sophonisba," 1606, indicates particularly the instruments he would have played during the pauses between the acts. After act one, "the cornets and organs playing loud full of music;" after act two, "organs mixed with recorders;" after act three, "organs, viols, and voices;" with "a base lute and a treble viol" after act four. In the course of this play, moreover, musical accompaniments of a descriptive kind were introduced, the stage direction on two occasions informing us that "infernal music plays softly." Nabbes, in the prologue to his "Hannibal and Scipio," 1637, alludes at once to the change of the place of action of the drama, and to the performance of music between the acts:

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The place is sometimes changed, too, with the scene,
Which is transacted as the music plays
Betwixt the acts.

The closing of the theatres by the Puritans, in 1642, plainly distressed the musicians almost as much as the players. Their occupation was practically gone, although not declared illegal by Act of Parliament. "Our music," writes the author of "The Actor's Remonstrance," 1643, "that was held so delectable and precious that they scorned to come to a tavern under twenty shillings for two hours, now wander with their instruments under their cloaks—I mean such as have any—into all houses of good fellowship, saluting every room where there is company with: 'Will you have any music, gentlemen?'"

At the Restoration, however, king, actors, and orchestra all enjoyed their own again. Presently, for the first time it would seem in an English theatre, the musicians were assigned that intrenched position between the pit and the stage they have so long maintained. "The front of the stage is opened, and the band of twenty-four violins with the harpsicals and theorbos which accompany the voices are placed between the pit and the stage. While the overture is playing the curtain rises and discovers a new frontispiece joined to the great pilasters on each side of the stage," &c. So runs one of the preliminary stage directions in the version of Shakespeare's "Tempest," arranged by Dryden and Davenant for performance at the Duke's Theatre, Lincoln's Inn Fields, in 1667. The change was, no doubt, introduced by Davenant in pursuance of French example. The authors of the "Histoire Universelle des Theatres" state, regarding the French stage, that after the disuse of the old chorus in 1630, "a la place du chant qui distinguoit les actes et qui marquoit les repos necessaires, on introduisit des joueurs d'instrumens, qui d'abord furent places sur les ailes du theatre, ou ils executoient differens airs avant la commencement de la piece et entre les actes. Ensuite ils furent mis au fond des troisieme loges, puis aux secondes, enfin entre le theatre et la parterre, ou ils sont restes."

Theatres differ little save in regard to their dimensions. The minor house is governed by the same laws, is conducted upon the same system, as the major one. It is as a humbler and cheaper edition, but it repeats down to minute particulars the example of its costly original. The orchestra, or some form of orchestra, is always indispensable. Even that street-corner tragedy which sets forth the story of Punch and Judy, could not be presented without its pandean-pipe accompaniment. The lowest vagrant theatre must, like the lady in the nursery ballad, have music wherever it goes. No doubt this is often of most inferior quality, suggestive of a return to very early musical methods. But poverty constrains to primitiveness. Mr. Pepys, comparing the state of the stage under Killigrew to what it had been in earlier years, notes: "Then,

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two or three fiddlers; now, nine or ten of the best," &c. The orchestra of a strolling theatre has been known to consist of one fiddler only, and he has been required to combine with his musical exertions the discharge of secretarial duties, enlivened by occasional appearances on the stage to strengthen casts, or help fill up the scene. The strollers' band is often of uncertain strength. For when the travelling company meets with misadventure, the orchestra are usually the first to prove unfaithful. They are the Swiss of the troop. The receipts fail, and the musicians desert. They carry their gifts elsewhere, and seek independent markets. The fairs, the racecourses, the country inn-doors, attract the fiddler, and he strolls on his own account, when the payment of salaries is suspended. A veteran actor was wont to relate his experiences of fifty years ago as a member of the Stratford-upon-Avon company, when the orchestra consisted only of a fife and a tambourine, the instrumentalists performing, as they avowed, "not from notes but entirely by ear." Presently the company removed to Warwick for the race week. But here the managerial difficulties increased—no band whatever could be obtained! This was the more distressing in that the performances were to be of an illegitimate character: a "famous tight-rope dancer" had been engaged. The dancer at once declared that his exhibition without music was not for a moment to be thought of. One of the company thereupon obligingly offered his services. He could play upon the violin: four tunes only. Now, provided an instrument could be borrowed for the occasion, and provided, moreover, the tight-rope artist could dance to the tune of "There's Nae Luck," or "Drink to Me Only," or "Away with Melancholy," or the "National Anthem," here was a way out of the dilemma, and all might yet be well. Unfortunately a violin was not forthcoming at any price, and the dancer declared himself quite unable to dance to the airs stated! How was faith to be kept with the public? At the last moment a barrel-organ was secured. The organist was a man of resources. In addition to turning the handle of his instrument, he contrived to play the triangle and the pan-pipes. Here, then, was a full band. The dancer still demurred. He must be assisted by a "clown to the rope," to chalk his soles, amuse the audience while he rested, and perform other useful duties. Another obliging actor volunteered his help. He would "by special desire and on this occasion only," appear as clown. So having played Pangloss in the "Heir at Law," the first piece, he exchanged his doctorial costume for a suit of motley, and the performance "drew forth," as subsequent playbills stated, "universal and reiterated bursts of applause from a crowded and elegant audience." The experiment of the barrel-organ orchestra was not often repeated. The band of the Leamington Theatre was lent to the Warwick house, the distance between the establishments being only two miles. The Leamington audience were provided with music at the commencement of the evening only; the Warwick playgoers dispensed with orchestral accompaniments until a later period in the performances.

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CHAPTER XII.

PROLOGUES.

“It is singular,” Miss Mitford wrote to Mr. Fields, her American publisher, “that epilogues were just dismissed at the first representation of one of my plays—’Foscari,’ and prologues at another—’Rienzi.’” “Foscari” was originally produced in 1826; “Rienzi” in 1828. According to Mr. Planche, however, the first play of importance presented without a prologue was his adaptation of Rowley’s old comedy, “A Woman never Vext,” produced at Covent Garden on November 9th, 1824, with a grand pageant of the Lord Mayor’s Show as it appeared in the time of Henry VI. At one of the last rehearsals, Fawcett, the stage manager, inquired of the adapter if he had written a prologue? “No.” “A five-act play and no prologue! Why, the audience will tear up the benches!” But they did nothing of the kind. They took not the slightest notice of the omission. After that, little more was heard of the time-honoured custom which had ruled that prologues should, according to Garrick’s description of them—

Precede the play in mournful verse,
As undertakers stalk before the hearse;
Whose doleful march may strike the harden’d mind,
And wake its feeling for the dead behind.

People, indeed, began rather to wonder why they had ever required or been provided with a thing that was now found to be, in truth, so entirely unnecessary.

The prologues of our stage date from the earliest period of the British drama. They were not so much designed, as were the prologues of the classical theatre, to enlighten the spectators touching the subject of the forthcoming play; but were rather intended to bespeak favour for the dramatist, and to deprecate adverse opinion. Originally, indeed, the prologue-speaker was either the author himself in person, or his representative. In his prologue to his farce of “The Deuce is in Him,” George Colman, after a lively fashion, points out the distinction between the classical and the British forms of prefatory address:

What does it mean? What can it be?
A little patience—and you’ll see.
Behold, to keep your minds uncertain,
Between the scene and you this curtain!
So writers hide their plots, no doubt,
To please the more when all comes out!
Of old the Prologue told the story,
And laid the whole affair before ye;
Came forth in simple phrase to say:

"'Fore the beginning of the play
I, hapless Polydore, was found
By fishermen, or others, drowned!
Or—I, a gentleman, did wed
The lady I would never bed,
Great Agamemnon's royal daughter,
Who's coming hither to draw water."
Thus gave at once the bards of Greece
The cream and marrow of the piece;
Asking no trouble of your own
To skim the milk or crack the bone.
The poets now take different ways,
"E'en let them find it out for Bayes!"

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The prologue-speaker of the Elizabethan stage entered after the trumpets had sounded thrice, attired in a long cloak of black cloth or velvet, occasionally assuming a wreath or garland of bays, emblematic of authorship. In the "Accounts of the Revels in 1573-74," a charge is made for "bays for the prologgs." Long after the cloak had been discarded it was still usual for the prologue-speaker to appear dressed in black. Robert Lloyd, in his "Familiar Epistle to George Colman," 1761, writes:

> With decent sables on his back
> (Your 'prologuisers' all wear black)
> The prologue comes; and, if it's mine
> It's very good and very fine.
> If not—I take a pinch of snuff,
> And wonder where you got such stuff.

Upon this subject, Mr. Payne Collier notes a stage direction in the Induction to Heywood's "Four 'Prentices of London," 1615: "Enter three, in black cloaks, at the doors." Each of them advancing to speak the prologue, the first exclaims—"What mean you, my masters, to appear thus before your times? Do you not know that I am the prologue? Do you not see this long black velvet cloak upon my back? Have you not sounded thrice?" So also, in the Induction to Ben Jonson's "Cynthia's Revels," two of the children of the chapel contend for the privilege of speaking the prologue, one of them maintaining his claim by pleading "possession of the cloak."

The custom of regarding the "prologuiser" as the author or his representative, seems gradually to have been departed from, and prologues came to be delivered by one of the chief actors in the play, in the character he was about to undertake, or in some other assumed for the occasion. A certain solemnity of tone, however, was usually preserved in the prologue to tragedy—the goodwill and merciful consideration of the audience being still entreated for the author and his work, although considerable licence was permitted to the comedy prologue. And the prologues acquired more and more of a dramatic nature, being divided sometimes between two and three speakers, and less resembling formal prologues than those Inductions of which the early dramatists, and especially Ben Jonson, seem to have been so unreasonably fond. The prologue to "The Poetaster" is spoken, in part, by Envy "rising in the midst of the stage," and, in part, by an official representative of the dramatist. So, the prologue to Shakespeare's Second Part of "King Henry IV." is delivered by Rumour, "painted full of tongues;" a like office being accomplished by Gower and Chorus, in regard to the plays of "Pericles" and "King Henry V." It is to be noted that but few of Shakespeare's prologues and epilogues have been preserved. Malone conjectures that they were not held to be indispensable appendages to a play in Shakespeare's time. But Mr. Collier is probably more correct in assuming that they were often retrenched by the printer, because they could not be brought within the compass of a page,

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and because he was unwilling to add another leaf. In addition to those mentioned above, the prologues to “King Henry VIII.,” “Troilus and Cressida,” and “Romeo and Juliet” are extant, and have the peculiarity of informing the audience, after the old classical fashion, something as to the nature of the entertainment to be set before them. To the tragedy of “The Murder of Gonzago,” contained in “Hamlet,” Shakespeare, no doubt, recognising established usage, provided the prologue:

> For us and for our tragedy
> Here stooping to your clemency,
> We beg your hearing patiently.

Steele, writing in *The Guardian,* in 1713, expresses much concern for the death of Mr. Peer, of the Theatre Royal, “who was an actor at the Restoration, and took his theatrical degree with Betterton, Kynaston, and Harris.” Mr. Peer, it seems, especially distinguished himself in two characters, “which no man ever could touch but himself.” One of these was the Apothecary in “Caius Marius,” Otway’s wretched adaptation of “Romeo and Juliet;” the other was the speaker of the prologue to the play in “Hamlet.” It is plain that Mr. Peer’s professional rank was not high; for these characters are not usually undertaken by performers of note. Steele admits that Peer’s eminence lay in a narrow compass, and to that attributes “the enlargement of his sphere of action” by his employment as property-man in addition to his histrionic duties. Peer, however, is described as delivering the three lines of prologue “better than any man else in the world,” and with “universal applause.” He spoke “with such an air as represented that he was an actor and with such an inferior manner as only acting an actor, as made the others on the stage appear real great persons and not representatives. This was a nicety in acting that none but the most subtle player could so much as conceive.” It is conceivable, however, that some of this subtlety existed rather in the fancy of the critic than in the method of the player. This story of Mr. Peer is hardly to be equalled; yet Davies relates of Boheme, the actor, that when, upon his first appearance upon the stage, he played with some “itinerants” at Stratford-le-Bow, his feeling but simple manner of delivering Francisco’s short speech in “Hamlet”—

> For this relief much thanks: ’tis bitter cold,
> And I am sick at heart—

at once roused the audience to a sense of his merits. “His salary was immediately increased by the manager; and he proved afterwards a great ornament of the stage.”

The delivery of a prologue by an actress—that is to say, of course, by a boy in female dress, personating the character of a woman—appears to have been an unusual proceeding upon the Elizabethan stage. Mr. Collier has noted instances, however. In the case of the prologue to “Every Woman in her Humour,” 1609, spoken by the heroine

Flavia, “Enter Flavia as a Prologue,” runs the stage direction; and she begins—“Gentles of both sexes and of all sorts, I am sent to bid ye welcome. I am but instead of a prologue, for a she prologue is as rare as a usurer’s alms.” And the prologue to Shirley’s “Coronation,” 1640, was also delivered by one of the representatives of female character. A passage is worth quoting, for its description of ordinary prologue-speaking at this time:

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Since 'tis become the title of our play,
A woman once in a Coronation may
With pardon speak the prologue, give as free
A welcome to the theatre, as he
That with a little beard, a long black cloak,
With a starched face and supple leg hath spoke
Before the plays this twelvemonth. Let me then
Present a welcome to these gentlemen.
If you be kind and noble you will not
Think the worse of me for my petticoat.

It would seem that impatience was sometimes expressed at the poetic prologues and lengthy Inductions of the dramatists. The prologue to Beaumont and Fletcher's "Woman Hater," 1607, begins: "Gentlemen, Inductions are out of date, and a prologue in verse is as stale as a black velvet cloak and a bay garland; therefore you have it in plain prose, thus——." But the alteration did not please, apparently; at any rate, upon a subsequent production of the play, the authors furnished it with a prologue in verse of the old-established pattern.

The Elizabethan dramatists often took occasion in their prologues to lecture the audience upon their conduct in the theatre, exhorting them to more seemly manners, and especially informing them that nothing of an indecorous nature would be presented upon the scene. The prologue to "The Woman Hater," above mentioned, pronounces "to the utter discomfort of all twopenny gallery men," that there is no impropriety contained in the play, and bids them depart, if they have been looking for anything of the kind. "Or if there be any lurking amongst you in corners," it proceeds, "with table books who have some hope to find fit matter to feed his malice on, let them clasp them up and slink away, or stay and be converted." Of the play, it states: "Some things in it you may meet with which are out of the common road: a duke there is, and the scene lies in Italy, as those two things lightly we never miss." The audience, however, are warned not to expect claptraps, or personal satire. "You shall not find in it the ordinary and overworn way of jesting at lords and courtiers and citizens, without taxation of any particular or new vice by them found out, but at the persons of them; such, he that made this, thinks vile, and for his own part vows that he never did think but that a lord, lord-born, might be a wise man, and a courtier an honest man." In the same way Shakespeare's prologue to "Henry VIII." welcomes those "that can pity," and "such as give their money out of hope, they may believe." But they are plainly told they will be deceived who have come to hear a merry graceless play—

A noise of targets, or to see a fellow
In a long motley coat guarded with yellow.

The prologue to Ben Jonson's "Staple of News" entreats the audience to abstain from idle conversation, and to attend to his play, so that they may hear as well as see it.

He'd have you wise,

Much rather by your ears than by your eyes;
And prays you'll not prejudge his play for ill,
Because you mark it not and sit not still,
But have a longing to salute or talk.

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* * * * *

Alas! what is it to his scene to know
How many coaches in Hyde Park did show
Last spring? what fun to-day at Medley's was?
If Dunstan or the Phoenix best wine has? &c. &c.

In the Induction the prologue is interrupted by the entrance of four gentlewomen, "lady-like attired," representative of Mirth, Tattle, Expectation, and Censure or Curiosity. The last-named is charged with coming to the theatre "to see who wears the new suit to-day; whose clothes are best formed, whatever the part be; which actor has the best leg and foot; what king plays without cuffs, and his queen without gloves; who rides post in stockings and dances in boots." It is to be noted, too, that at this time the audience occupying the humbler places in the theatre are very harshly spoken of in the prologues. They are referred to as—

The vulgar sort
Of nutcrackers that only come for sport—

and as "grounds of your people that sit in the oblique caves and wedges of your house, your sinful sixpenny mechanicks," &c.

It is plain, however, that the rudeness of Ben Jonson's prologues had given offence, for, indeed, he employed them not merely to lecture his audience, but also to lash and laugh to scorn rival playwrights. So to "The Magnetic Lady" no prologue was provided, but an Induction, in the course of which "a boy of the house" discourses with two gentlemen concerning the play, and explains that the author will "not be entreated to give it a prologue. He has lost too much that way already, he says. He will not woo the Gentile ignoramus so much. But careless of all vulgar censure, as not depending on common approbation, he is confident it shall super-please judicious spectators, and to them he leaves it to work with the rest by example or otherwise." Further, the boy gives valuable advice upon the subject of criticism, bidding the gentlemen take seats and "fly everything you see to the mark, and censure it freely, so you interrupt not the series or thread of the argument, to break or pucker it with unnecessary questions. For I must tell you that a good play is like a skein of silk, which, if you take by the right end you may wind off at pleasure on the bottom or card of your discourse in a tale or so—how you will; but if you light on the wrong end you will pull all into a knot or elf-lock, which nothing but the shears or a candle will undo or separate."

After the Restoration prologues appear to have been held more than ever necessary to theatrical exhibitions. The writing of prologues even became a kind of special and profitable vocation. Dryden's customary fee for a prologue was five guineas, which contented him, until in 1682 he demanded of Southerne ten guineas for a prologue to

“The Loyal Brothers,” alleging that the players had hitherto had his goods too cheaply, and from that time forward ten guineas

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would be his charge. Dryden is to be accounted the most famous and successful of prologue writers, but it must be said that his productions of this class are deplorably disfigured by the profligacy of his time, and that all their brilliancy of wit does not compensate for their uncleanness. Dryden's prologues are also remarkable, for their frequent recognition of the critics as a class apart from the ordinary audience; not critics as we understand them exactly, attached to journals and reviewing plays for the instruction of the public, but men of fashion affecting judicial airs, and expressing their opinions in clubs and coffee-houses, and authors charged with attending the theatres in the hope of witnessing the demolition of a rival bard. The prologue to "All for Love" opens with the lines—

What flocks of critics hover here to-day,
As vultures wait on armies for their prey,
All gaping for the carcase of a play!

And presently occurs the familiar passage—

Let those find fault whose wit's so very small,
They've had to show that they can think at all.
Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow;
He who would search for pearls must dive below.
Fops may have leave to level all they can,
As pigmies would be glad to lop a man.
Half wits are fleas, so little and so light,
We scarce could know they live, but that they bite.

Another prologue begins—

They who write ill, and they who ne'er durst write,
Turn critics out of mere revenge and spite;
A playhouse gives them fame; and up then starts
From a mean fifth-rate wit, a man of parts.

The more important critics are described as—

A jury of the wits who still stay late,
And in their club decree the poor play's fate;
Their verdict back is to the boxes brought,
Thence all the town pronounces it their thought.

"The little Hectors of the pit" are also spoken of, and there is mention of "Fop-corner," the prototype of "Fop's-alley" of later years. Now, "a kind, hearty pit" is prayed for, and

now, in a prologue delivered before the University of Oxford, stress is laid upon the advantages of “a learned pit.” It may be noted, too, that the prologues of Dryden, apart from their wit, and overlooking, if that can possibly be managed, their distressing grossness, are invaluable for the accurate and minute pictures they present of English life, manners, costumes, and character in the reign of Charles II.

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In right of the many quotations it has supplied to literature and conversation, Dr. Johnson's prologue spoken by Garrick upon the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, in 1747, may claim to be considered the most famous production of its class. It is not, in truth, however, a prologue as prologues are ordinarily understood, but rather an address, written to suit special circumstances, and having no connection with any particular play. Boswell describes it as "unrivalled for just and manly criticism on the whole range of the English stage, as well as for poetic excellence," and records that it was during the season often called for by the audience. Johnson's prologue to his friend Goldsmith's comedy of "The Good-natured Man" was certainly open to the charge brought against it of undue solemnity. The first lines—

> Press'd with the load of life the weary mind
> Surveys the general toil of human kind—

when enunciated in the sepulchral tones of Bensley, the tragedian, were judged to have a depressing effect upon the audience—a conclusion which seems reasonable and probable enough, although Boswell suggested that "the dark ground might make Goldsmith's humour shine the more." Goldsmith himself was chiefly disturbed at the line describing him as "our little bard," which he thought likely to diminish his dignity, by calling attention to the lowness of his stature. "Little bard" was therefore altered to "anxious bard." Johnson also supplied a prologue to Kelly's posthumous comedy of "A Word to the Wise" (represented in 1770, for the benefit of the author's widow and children), although he spoke contemptuously of the departed dramatist as "a dead staymaker," and confessed that he hated to give away literary performances, or even to sell them too cheaply. "The next generation," he said, "shall not accuse me of beating down the price of literature; one hates, besides, to give what one is accustomed to sell. Would not you, now"—and here he turned to his brewer friend, Mr. Thrale—"rather give away money than porter?" To his own tragedy of "Irene," Johnson supplied a spirited prologue, which "awed" the house, as Boswell believed. In the concluding lines he deprecated all effort to win applause by other than legitimate means:

> Be this at least his praise, be this his pride:
> To force applause no modern arts are tried;
> Should partial catcalls all his hopes confound,
> He bids no trumpet quell the fatal sound;
> Should welcome sleep relieve the weary wit,
> He rolls no thunders o'er the drowsy pit;
> No snares to captivate the judgment spreads,
> Nor bribes your eyes to prejudice your heads.
> Unmoved, though witlings sneer and rivals rail,
> Studious to please, yet not ashamed to fail.
> He scorns the meek address, the suppliant strain;
> With merit needless, and without it vain.

In Reason, Nature, Truth he dares to trust:
Ye fops be silent, and ye wits be just!

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Of prologues generally, Johnson pronounced that Dryden's were superior to any that David Garrick had written, but that Garrick had written more good prologues than Dryden. "It is wonderful that he has been able to write such a variety of them." Garrick's prologues and epilogues are, indeed, quite innumerable, and are, almost invariably, sparkling, witty, and vivacious. They could scarcely fail to win the favour of an audience; and then oftentimes they had the additional advantage of being delivered by himself.

Prologues seem to have been a recognised vehicle of literary courtesy. Authors favoured each other with these addresses as a kind of advertisement of the good understanding that prevailed between them—an evidence of respect, friendliness, and encouragement. Thus Addison's tragedy of "Cato" was provided with a prologue by Pope—the original line, "Britons, arise! be worth like this approved," being "liquidated" to "Britons attend!"—for the timid dramatist was alarmed lest he should be judged a promoter of insurrection. Addison in his turn furnished the prologue to Steele's "Tender Husband," while Steele favoured Vanbrugh with a prologue to his comedy of "The Mistake." Johnson, as we have seen, now and then provided his friends with prologues. The prologue to Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" was written by Garrick, to be spoken by Woodward, the actor, "dressed in black, and holding a handkerchief to his eyes;" the prologue to "The School for Scandal" was also the work of Garrick. Sheridan, it may be noted, supplied a prologue to Savage's tragedy of "Sir Thomas Overbury," on the occasion of its revival at Covent Garden, thirty-four years after the death of its author. Among the last of the prologues was one written by Mr. Charles Dickens to Dr. Westland Marston's poetic drama, "The Patrician's Daughter."

Prologues have now vanished, however, and are not likely to be reintroduced. It must be added that they showed symptoms of decline in worth long before they departed. Originally apologies for players and dramatists—at a time when the histrionic profession was very lightly esteemed—they were retained by the conservatism of the stage as matters of form, long after they had forfeited all genuine excuse for their existence. The name is still retained, however, and applied to the introductory, or, to use Mr. Boucicault's word, "proloquial" acts of certain long and complicated plays, which seem to require for their due comprehension the exhibition to the audience of events antecedent to the real subject of the drama. But these "proloquial acts" are things quite apart from the old-fashioned prologue.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ART OF "MAKING-UP."

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When, to heighten the effect of their theatrical exhibitions, Thespis and his playfellows first daubed their faces with the lees of wine, they may be said to have initiated that art of “making-up” which has been of such important service to the stage. Paint is to the actor’s face what costume is to his body—a means of decoration or disguise, as the case may require; an aid to his assuming this or that character, and concealing the while his own personal identity from the spectator. The mask of the classical theatre is only to be associated with a “make-up,” in that it substituted a fictitious facial expression for the actor’s own. Roscius is said to have always played in a vizard, on account of a disfiguring obliquity of vision with which he was afflicted. It was an especial tribute to his histrionic merits that the Romans, disregarding this defect, required him to relinquish his mask, that they might the better appreciate his exquisite oratory and delight in the music of his voice. In much later years, however, “obliquity of vision” has been found to be no obstacle to success upon the stage. Talma squinted, and a dramatic critic, writing in 1825, noted it as a strange fact that “our three light comedians, Elliston, Jones, and Browne,” each suffered from “what is called a cast in the eye.”

To young and inexperienced players a make-up is precious, in that it has a fortifying effect upon their courage, and relieves them in some degree of consciousness of their own personality. They are the better enabled to forget themselves, seeing their identity can hardly be present to the minds of others. Garrick made his first histrionic essay as Aboan, in the play of “Oroonoko,” “a part in which his features could not easily be discerned: under the disguise of a black countenance he hoped to escape being known, should it be his misfortune not to please.” When Bottom the Weaver is allotted the part of Pyramus, intense anxiety touching his make-up is an early sentiment with him. “What beard were I best to play it in?” he inquires. “I will discharge it in either your straw-coloured beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow.” Clearly the beard was an important part of the make-up at this time. Farther on, Bottom counsels his brother clowns: “Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps;” and there are especial injunctions to the effect that Thisbe shall be provided with clean linen, that the lion shall pare his nails, and that there shall be abstinence from onions and garlic on the part of the company generally.

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Old John Downes, who was prompter at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields from 1662 to 1706, and whose "Roscius Anglicanus" is a most valuable history of the stage of the Restoration, describes an actor named Johnson as being especially "skilful in the art of painting, which is a great adjument very promovent to the art of elocution." Mr. Waldron, who, in 1789, produced a new edition of the "Roscius Anglicanus," with notes by Tom Davies, the biographer of Garrick, decides that Downes's mention of the "art of painting" has reference to the art of "painting the face and marking it with dark lines to imitate the wrinkles of old age." This, Waldron continues, "was formerly carried to excess on the stage, though now a good deal disused. I have seen actors, who were really older than the characters they were to represent, mark their faces with black lines of Indian ink to such a degree that they appeared as if looking through a mask of wire." And Mr. Waldron finds occasion to add that "Mr. Garrick's skill in the necessary preparation of his face for the aged and venerable Lear, and for Lusignan, was as remarkable as his performance of those characters was admirable."

In 1741 was published "An Historical and Critical Account of the Theatres in Europe," a translation of a work by "the famous Lewis Riccoboni, of the Italian Theatre at Paris." The author had visited England in 1727, apparently, when he had conversed with the great Mr. Congreve, finding in him "taste joined with great learning," and studied with some particularity the condition of the English stage. "As to the actors," he writes, "if, after forty-five years' experience I may be entitled to give my opinion, I dare advance that the best actors in Italy and France come far short of those in England." And he devotes some space to a description of a performance he witnessed at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, dwelling especially upon the skill of an actor who personated an old man. "He who acted the old man executed it to the nicest perfection which one could expect in no player who had not forty years' experience.... I made no manner of doubt of his being an old comedian, who, instructed by long experience, and, at the same time, assisted by the weight of years, had performed it so naturally. But how great was my surprise when I learned that he was a young man of about twenty-six! I could not believe it; but I owned that it might be possible had he only used a trembling and broken voice, and had only an extreme weakness possessed his body, because I conceived it possible for a young actor, by the help of art, to imitate that debility of nature to such a pitch of exactness; but the wrinkles of his face, his sunken eyes, and his loose and yellow cheeks, the most certain marks of a great old age, were incontestable proofs against what they said to me. Notwithstanding all this I was forced to submit to truth, because I know for certain that the actor, to fit himself for

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the part of the old man, spent an hour in dressing himself, and that, with the assistance of several pencils, he disguised his face so nicely and painted so artificially a part of his eyebrows and eyelids, that, at the distance of six paces, it was impossible not to be deceived. I was desirous to be a witness of this myself, but pride hindered me; so, knowing I must be ashamed, I was satisfied with a confirmation of it from other actors. Mademoiselle Salle, among others, who then shone upon that stage, confessed to me that the first time she saw him perform she durst not go into a passage where he was, fearing lest she should throw him down should she happen to touch him in passing by." Assuredly a more successful make-up than this could not be desired. In conclusion, Signor Riccoboni flatters himself that his reference to this matter may not be thought altogether useless; "it may let us know to what an exactness the English comedians carry the imitation of nature, and may serve for a proof of all that I have advanced of the actors of the English theatre."

Dogget, the old comedian of Queen Anne's time—to whom we owe an annual boat-race upon the Thames for a "coat and badge," and, inferentially, the popular burletta of "The Waterman"—was remarkably skilful, according to Colley Cibber, "in dressing a character to the greatest exactness ... the least article of whatever habit he wore seemed to speak and mark the different humour he represented; a necessary care in a comedian, in which many have been too remiss or ignorant." This is confirmed by another critic, who states that Dogget "could with the greatest exactness paint his face so as to represent the ages of seventy, eighty, and ninety, distinctly, which occasioned Sir Godfrey Kneller to tell him one day at Button's Coffee House, that 'he excelled him in painting, for that he could only paint from the originals before him, but that he (Dogget) could vary them at pleasure, and yet keep a close likeness.'" In the character of Moneytrap, the miser, in Vanbrugh's comedy of "The Confederacy," Dogget is described as wearing "an old threadbare black coat, to which he had put new cuffs, pocket-lids, and buttons, on purpose to make its rusticness more conspicuous. The neck was stuffed so as to make him appear round-shouldered, and give his head the greater prominency; his square-toed shoes were large enough to buckle over those he wore in common, which made his legs appear much smaller than usual." Altogether, Mr. Dogget's make-up appears to have been of a very thorough and artistic kind.

Garrick's skill "in preparing his face" has been already referred to, upon the authority of Mr. Waldron. From the numerous pictures of the great actor, and the accounts of his histrionic method furnished by his contemporaries, it would seem, however, as though he relied less upon the application of paint than upon his extraordinary command of facial expression. At a moment's notice he completely varied his

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aspect, “conveying into his face every possible kind of passion, blending one into another, and as it were shadowing them with an infinite number of gradations.... In short,” says Dibdin, “his face was what he obliged you to fancy it: age, youth, plenty, poverty, everything it assumed.” Certainly an engraved portrait of Garrick as Lear, published in 1761, does not suggest his deriving much help from the arts of making-up or of costume. He wears a short robe of velvet, trimmed with ermine, his white wig is disordered and his shirt-front is much crumpled; but otherwise his white silk hose, lace ruffles, high-heeled shoes and diamond buckles, are more appropriate to Sir Peter Teazle than to King Lear. And as much may be said of his closely-shaven face, the smooth surface of which is not disturbed by the least vestige of a beard. Yet the King Lears of later times have been all beard, or very nearly so. With regard to Garrick’s appearance in the part of Lusignan, Davies relates how, two days before his death, the suffering actor, very wan and sallow of countenance, slow and solemn of movement, was seen to wear a rich night-gown, like that which he always wore in Lusignan, the venerable old king of Jerusalem; he presented himself to the imagination of his friend as if he was just ready to act that character.

Charles Mathews, the elder, no doubt possessed much of Garrick’s power of changing at will his facial aspect. At the theatre of course he resorted to the usual methods of making-up for the part he played; but the sudden transformations of which his “At Homes” largely consisted were accomplished too rapidly to be much assisted by pencilling the face, as were indeed the feats he sometimes accomplished in private circles, for the entertainment of his friends. In the biography of her husband, Mrs. Mathews relates how his advice was once sought by Godwin the novelist, just before the publication of his story of “Cloudesly,” on a matter—the art of making-up—the actor was held to have made peculiarly his own. Godwin wrote to him: “My dear Sir,—I am at this moment engaged in writing a work of fiction, a part of the incidents of which will consist in escapes in disguises. It has forcibly struck me that if I could be indulged in the pleasure of half-an-hour’s conversation with you on the subject, it would furnish me with some hints, which, beaten on the anvil of my brain, would be of eminent service to me on the occasion,” &c. A meeting was appointed, and, at an early date the author dined at the actor’s cottage. Godwin, anxious not to outrage probability in his story, sought information as to “the power of destroying personal identity.” Mathews assumed several disguises, and fully satisfied his visitor upon the point in question. “Soon after,” writes Mrs. Mathews, “a gentleman, an eccentric neighbour of ours, broke in upon us as Mr. Godwin was expressing his wonder at the variety of expression, character, and voice of which Mr. Mathews

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was capable. We were embarrassed, and Mr. Godwin evidently vexed at the intruder. However, there was no help for it; the servant had admitted him, and he was introduced in form to Mr. Godwin. The moment Mr. Jenkins (for such was his name) discovered the distinguished person he had so luckily for him dropped in upon, he was enthusiastically pleased at the event, talked to Mr. Godwin about all his works, inquired about the forthcoming book—in fact, bored him through and through. At last the author turned to my husband for refuge against this assault of admiration, and discovered that his host had left the room. He therefore rose from his seat and approached the window leading to the lawn, Mr. Jenkins officiously following, and insisting upon opening it for him; and while he was urging a provokingly obstinate lock, the object of his devoted attention waited behind him for release. The casement at length flew open, and Mr. Godwin passing the gentleman with a courteous look of thanks, found to his astonishment that Mr. Jenkins had disappeared, and that Mr. Mathews stood in his place!" Students of "Cloudesly" may discover therein the result of Godwin's interview with Mathews, and their discussion concerning the art of making-up and disguise.

Some fifty years ago Mr. Leman Thomas Rede published "The Road to the Stage, a Player's Vade-Mecum." setting forth, among other matters, various details of the dressing-rooms behind the curtain. Complaint was made at the time that the work destroyed "the romance of the profession," and laid bare the mysteries of the actor's life, such as the world in general had small concern with. But Mr. Rede's revelations do not tell very much; at any rate, the secrets he deals with have come to be things of common knowledge. Nor are his instructions upon the art of making-up to be accounted highly in these times. "Light-comedy calves," he tells us, "are made of ragged silken hose;" and what may be called "Othello's blacking," is to be composed of "burnt cork, pulverised and mixed with porter." Legs coming before the foot-lights must of course be improved by mechanical means, when nature has been unkind, or time has destroyed symmetry; but art has probably discovered a better method of concealing deficiencies than consists in the employment of "ragged silken hose." The veteran light comedian, Lewis, who at a very advanced age appeared in juvenile characters, to the complete satisfaction of his audience, was famed for his skill in costume and making-up. But one night, a roguish actress, while posted near him in the side-wings, employed herself in converting one of his calves into a pincushion. As soon as he discovered the trick, he affected to feel great pain, and drew up his leg as though in an agony; but he had remained too long unconscious of the proceeding to persuade lookers-on of the genuineness of his limb's symmetry. With regard to Othello's complexion, there is what the Cookery Books call "another way." Chetwood,

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in his “History of the Stage,” 1749, writes: “The composition for blackening the face are (*sic*) ivory-black and pomatum; which is with some pains cleaned with fresh butter.” The information is given in reference to a performance of Othello by the great actor Barton Booth. It was hot weather, and his complexion in the later scenes of the play had been so disturbed, that he had assumed “the appearance of a chimney-sweeper.” The audience, however, were so impressed by the art of his acting, that they disregarded this mischance, or applauded him the more on account of it. On the repetition of the play he wore a crape mask, “with an opening proper for the mouth, and shaped in form for the nose.” But in the first scene one part of the mask slipped so that he looked “like a magpie.” Thereupon he was compelled to resort again to lamp-black. The early Othellos, it may be noted, were of a jet-black hue, such as we now find on the faces of Christy Minstrels; the Moors of later times have been content to paint themselves a dark olive or light mahogany colour. But a liability to soil all they touch has always been the misfortune of Othellos. There was great laughter in the theatre one night when Stephen Kemble, playing Othello for the first time with Miss Satchell as Desdemona, kissed her before smothering her, and left an ugly patch of soot upon her cheek. However, as Miss Satchell subsequently became Mrs. Stephen Kemble, it was held that sufficient amends had been made to her for the soiling she had undergone.

Another misadventure, in regard to the complexion of Shakespeare’s Moor, has been related of an esteemed actor, for many years past attached to the Haymarket Theatre. While but a tyro in his profession, he had undertaken to appear as Othello, for one night only, at the Gravesend Theatre. But, not being acquainted with the accustomed method of blackening his skin, and being too nervous and timid to make inquiry on the subject, he applied to his face a burnt cork, simply. At the conclusion of the performance, on seeking to resume his natural hue, by the ordinary process of washing in soap and water, he found, to his great dismay, that the skin of his face was peeling off rather than the colour disappearing! The cork had been too hot by a great deal, and had injured his cuticle considerably. With the utmost haste, although announced to play Hamlet on the following evening, the actor—who then styled himself Mr. Hulsingham, a name he forthwith abandoned—hired a post-chaise and eloped from Gravesend.

Making-up is in requisition when the performer desires to look either younger or older than he or she really is. It is, of course, with the first-named portion of the art that actresses are chiefly concerned, although the beautiful Mrs. Woffington, accepting the character of Veturia in Thomson’s “Coriolanus,” did not hesitate to assume the aspect of age, and to paint lines and wrinkles upon her fair face. But she was a great artist, and her loveliness was

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a thing so beyond all question that she could afford to disguise it or to seem to slight it for a few nights; possibly it shone the brighter afterwards for its brief eclipse. Otherwise, making-up pertains to an actor's "line of business," and is not separable from it. Once young or once old he so remains, as a rule, until the close of his professional career. There is indeed a story told of a veteran actor who still flourished in juvenile characters, while his son, as a matter of choice, or of necessity, invariably impersonated the old gentlemen of the stage. But when the two players met in a representation of "The Rivals," and Sir Anthony the son, had to address Captain Absolute the father, in the words of the dramatist: "I'll disown you; I'll unget you; I'll never call you Jack again!" the humour of the situation appealed too strongly to the audience, and more laughter than Sheridan had ever contemplated was stirred by the scene.

The veterans who have been accused of superfluously lagging upon the stage, find an excuse for their presence in the skill of their make-up. For the age of the players is not to be counted, by the almanack, but appraised in accordance with their looks. On the stage to seem young is to be young, though occasionally it must happen that actors and audience are not quite in agreement upon this question of aspect. There have been many youthful dramatic heroines very well stricken in years; ingenues of advanced age, and columbines who might almost be crones; to say nothing of "young dogs" of light comedians, who in private life are well qualified to appear as grandsires, or even as great-grandfathers. But ingenuity in painting the face and padding the figure will probably long secure toleration for patriarchal Romeos, and even for matriarchal Juliets.

Recent discoveries have no doubt benefited the toilets of the players, which, indeed, stood in need of assistance, the fierce illumination of the modern stage being considered. In those palmy but dark days of the drama, when gas and lime-lights were not, the disguising of the mischief wrought by time must have been a comparatively easy task.

However, supply, as usual, has followed demand, and there are now traders dealing specially in the materials for making-up, in theatrical cosmetics of the best possible kind at the lowest possible prices: "Superfine rouge, rose for lips, blanc (liquid and in powder), pencils for eyebrows, creme de l'imperatrice and fleur-de-riz for softening the skin," &c. Further, there are the hairdressers, who provide theatrical wigs of all kinds, and advertise the merits of their "old men's bald pates," which must seem a strange article of sale to those unversed in the mysteries of stage dressing-rooms. One inventive person, it may be noted, loudly proclaims the merits of a certain "spirit gum" he has concocted, using which, as he alleges, "no actor need fear swallowing his moustache"—so runs the form of his advertisement.

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Of Mademoiselle Guirnard, the famous French opera-dancer, it is related that her portrait, painted in early youth, always rested upon her dressing-table. Every morning, during many years, she carefully made up her face to bring her looks in as close accord as possible with the loveliness of her picture. For an incredible time her success is reported to have been something marvellous. But at last the conviction was forced upon her that her facial glories had departed. Yet her figure was still perfectly symmetrical, her grace and agility were as supreme as they had ever been. She was sixty-four, when, yielding to the urgent entreaties of her friends, she consented to give a "very last" exhibition of her art. The performance was of a most special kind. The curtain was so far lowered as to conceal completely the head and shoulders of the dancer. "Il fut impossible aux spectateurs," writes a biographer of the lady, "de voir autre que le travail de ses jambes dont le temps avait respecte l'agilite et les formes pures et delicates!"

By way of final word on the subject, it may be stated that making-up is but a small portion of the histrionic art; and not, as some would have it, the very be-all and end-all of acting. It is impossible not to admire the ingenuity of modern face-painting upon the stage, and the skill with which, in some cases, well-known personages have been represented by actors of, in truth, totally different physical aspect; but still there seems a likelihood of efforts of this kind being urged beyond reasonable bounds. So, too, there appears to be an excessive use of cosmetics and colouring by youthful performers, who really need little aid of this kind, beyond that application of the hare's-foot which can never be altogether dispensed with. Moreover, it has become necessary for players, who have resolved that their faces shall be pictures, to decide from what part of the theatre such works of art are to be viewed. At present many of these over-painted countenances may "fall into shape," as artists say, when seen from the back benches of the gallery, for instance; but judged from a nearer standpoint they are really but pictorial efforts of a crude, uncomfortable, and mistaken kind.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAINT AND CANVAS.

Vasari, the historian of painters, has much to say in praise of the "perspective views" or scenes executed by Baldassare Peruzzi, an artist and architect of great fame in his day, who was born in 1480 at Florence, or Volterra, or Siena, it is not known which, each of these noble cities of Tuscany having claimed to be his birthplace. When the Roman people held high festival in honour of Giuliano de Medici, they obtained various works of art from Baldassare, including a scene painted for a theatre, so admirably ingenious and beautiful, that very great amazement is said to have been awakened in every beholder. At a later period, when the "Calandra,"

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written by the Cardinal di Bibiena—“one of the first comedies seen or recited in the vulgar tongue”—was performed before Pope Leo, the aid of Baldassare was sought again, to prepare the scenic adornments of the representation. His labours were successful beyond measure; two of his scenes, painted upon this or upon some other occasion, Vasari pronounced to be “surprisingly beautiful, opening the way to those of a similar kind which have been made in our own day.” The artist was a fine colourist, well skilled in perspective, and in the management of light, insomuch that his drawings did not look “like things feigned, but rather as the living reality.” Vasari relates that he conducted Titian to see certain works of Peruzzi, of which the illusion was most complete. The greater artist “could by no means be persuaded that they were simply painted, and remained in astonishment, when, on changing his point of view, he perceived that they were so.” Dying in 1536, Baldassare was buried in the Rotondo, near the tomb of Raffaelo da Urbino, all the painters, sculptors, and architects of Rome attending the interment. That he was an artist of the first rank was agreed on all hands. And he is further entitled to be remembered as one of the very earliest of great scene-painters.

In England, some six-and-thirty years later, there was born an artist and architect of even greater fame than Peruzzi: Inigo Jones, who, like Peruzzi, rendered important aid to the adornment of the stage. In his youth Inigo had studied landscape-painting in Italy. At Rome he became an architect; as Walpole expresses it, “he dropped the pencil and conceived Whitehall.”

Meanwhile a taste, even a sort of passion, had arisen at the English court for masques and pageants of extraordinary magnificence. Poetry, painting, music, and architecture were combined in their production. Ben Jonson was the laureate; Inigo Jones the inventor and designer of the scenic decorations; Laniere, Lawes, and Ferabosco contributed the musical embellishments; the king, the queen, and the young nobility danced in the interludes. On these entertainments L3000 to L5000 were often expended, and on more public occasions L10,000 and even L20,000. “It seems,” says Isaac Disraeli, “that as no masque writer equalled Jonson, so no ‘machinist’ rivalled Inigo Jones.” For the great architect was wont to busy himself in devising mechanical changes of scenery, such as distinguishes modern pantomime. Jonson, describing his “Masque of Blackness,” performed before the court at Whitehall, on Twelfth Night, 1605, says: “For the scene was drawn a landscape, consisting of small woods, and here and there a void place, filled with hangings; which falling, an artificial sea was seen to shoot forth, as if it flowed to the land, raised with waves, which seemed to move, and in some places the billows to break, as imitating that orderly disorder which is common in nature.” Then follows a long account

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of the appearance, attire, and “sprightly movements of the masquers:” Oceanus, Oceaniae, Niger and his daughters, with Tritons, mermaids, mermen, and sea-horses, “as big as the life.” “These thus presented,” he continues, “the scene behind seemed a vast sea, and united with this that flowed forth, from the termination or horizon of which (being the head of the stage, which was placed in the upper end of the hall) was drawn by the lines of perspective, the whole work shooting downwards from the eye, which decorum made it more conspicuous, and caught the eye afar off with a wondering beauty, to which was added an obscure and cloudy night piece, that made the whole set off. So much for the bodily part, which was of Master Inigo Jones’s design and art.” Indeed, Inigo was not simply the scene-painter; he also devised the costumes, and contrived the necessary machinery. In regard to many of these entertainments, he was responsible for “the invention, ornaments, scenes, and apparitions, with their descriptions;” for everything, in fact, but the music or the words to be spoken or sung.

These masques and court pageants gradually brought movable scenery upon the stage, in place of the tapestries, “arras cloths,” “traverses,” or curtains drawn upon rods, which had previously furnished the theatre. Still the masques were to be distinguished from the ordinary entertainments of the public playhouses. The court performances knew little of regular plot or story; ordinarily avoided all reference to nature and real life; and were remarkable for the luxurious fancifulness and costly eccentricity they displayed. They were provided by the best writers of the time, and in many cases were rich in poetic merit. Still they were expressly designed to afford valuable opportunities to the musical composer, to the ballet-dancers, mummers, posture-makers, and costumiers. The regular dramas, such as the Elizabethan public supported, could boast few attractions of this kind. It was altogether without movable scenery, although possessed of a balcony or upper stage, used to represent, now the walls of a city, as in “King John,” now the top of a tower, as in “Henry VI.”, or “Antony and Cleopatra,” and now the window to an upper chamber. Mr. Payne Collier notes that in one of the oldest historical plays extant, “Selimus, Emperor of the Turks,” published in 1594, there is a remarkable stage direction demonstrating the complete absence of scenery, by the appeal made to the simple good faith of the audience. The hero is represented conveying the body of his father in a solemn funeral procession to the Temple of Mahomet. The stage direction runs: “Suppose the Temple of Mahomet”—a needless injunction, as Mr. Collier remarks, if there had existed the means of exhibiting the edifice in question to the eyes of the spectators. But the demands upon the audience to abet the work of theatrical illusion, and with their thoughts to piece out the imperfections of the dramatists,

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are frequently to be met with in the old plays. Of the poverty of the early stage, in the matter of scenic decorations, there is abundant evidence. Fleckno, in his "Short Discourse of the Stage," 1664, by which time movable scenery had been introduced, writes: "Now for the difference between our theatres and those of former times; they were but plain and simple, with no other scenes nor decorations of the stages but only old tapestry, and the stage strewed with rushes."

The simple expedient of writing up the names of the different places, where the scene was laid in the progress of a play, or affixing a placard to that effect upon the tapestry at the back of the stage, sufficed to convey to the spectators the intentions of the author. "What child is there," asks Sir Philip Sidney, "that, coming to a play and seeing Thebes written in great letters on an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes?" Oftentimes, too, opportunity was found in the play itself, or in its prologue, to inform the audience of the place in which the action of the story is supposed to be laid. "Our scene is Rhodes," says old Hieronymo in Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy," 1588. And the title of the play was also exhibited in the same way, so that the audience did not lack instruction as to the purport of the entertainment set before them.

The introduction of movable scenes upon the stage has been usually attributed to Sir William Davenant, who, in 1658, evading the ordinance of 1647, by which the theatres were peremptorily closed, produced, at the Cockpit in Drury Lane, an entertainment rather than a play, entitled "The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru, expressed by vocal and instrumental music, and by art of perspective in scenes:" an exhibition which Cromwell is generally supposed to have permitted, more from his hatred of the Spaniards than by reason of his tolerance of dramatic performances. The author of "Historia Histrionica," a tract written in 1699, also expressly states that "after the Restoration, the king's players acted publicly at the Red Bull for some time, and then removed to a new-built playhouse in Vere Street, by Clare Market; there they continued for a year or two, and then removed to the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, where they first made use of scenes, which had been a little before introduced upon the public stage by Sir William Davenant." It is to be observed, however, that inasmuch as the masques, such as the court of Charles I. had so favoured, were sometimes produced at the public theatres, and could hardly have been presented there, shorn of the mechanical appliances and changes which constituted a main portion of their attractiveness, movable scenery, or stage artifices that might fairly be so described, could not be entirely new to a large portion of the public. Thus the masque of "Love's Mistress, or the Queen's Masque," by Thomas Heywood, 1640, was "three times presented before their Majesties at the Phoenix in Drury Lane;" Heywood expressly acknowledging his obligation to Inigo Jones, who "changed the stage to every act, and almost to every scene."

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It must not be supposed, however, that the introduction of scenery was hailed unanimously as a vast improvement upon the former condition of the stage. There was, no doubt, abundance of applause; a sufficient number of spectators were well pleased to find that now their eyes were to be addressed not less than their ears and their minds, and were satisfied that exhibitions of the theatre would be presently much more intelligible to them than had hitherto been the case. Still the sages shook their heads, distrusting the change, and prophesying evil of it. Even Mr. Payne Collier has been moved by his conservative regard for the Elizabethan stage and the early drama to date from the introduction of scenery the beginning of the decline of our dramatic poetry. He holds it a fortunate circumstance for the poetry of our old plays, that "painted movable scenery" had not then been introduced. "The imagination only of the auditor was appealed to, and we owe to the absence of painted canvas many of the finest descriptive passages in Shakespeare, his contemporaries, and immediate followers." Further, he states his opinion that our old dramatists "luxuriated in passages descriptive of natural or artificial scenery, because they knew their auditors would have nothing before their eyes to contradict the poetry; the hangings of the stage made little pretensions to anything but coverings for the walls, and the notion of the place represented was taken from what was said by the poet, and not from what was attempted by the painter."

It need hardly be stated that the absence of scenes and scene-shifting had by no means confined the British drama to a classical form, although regard for "unity of place," at any rate, might seem to be almost logically involved in the immovable condition of the stage-fittings. Some two or three plays, affecting to follow the construction adopted by the Greek and Roman stage, are certainly to be found in the Elizabethan repertory, but they had been little favoured by the playgoers of the time, and may fairly be viewed as exceptions proving the rule that our drama is essentially romantic. Indeed, our old dramatists were induced by the absence of scenery to rely more and more upon the imagination of their audience. As Mr. Collier observes: "If the old poets had been obliged to confine themselves merely to the changes that could at that early date have been exhibited by the removal of painted canvas or boarding, we should have lost much of that boundless diversity of situation and character allowed by this happy absence of restraint." At the same time, the liberty these writers permitted themselves did not escape criticism from the devout adherents of the classical theatre. Sir Philip Sidney, in his "Apology for Poetry," 1595, is severe upon the "defectious" nature of the English drama, especially as to its disregard of the unities of time and place. "Now," he says, three ladies "walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden;

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by-and-by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock; upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave; while in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then, what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?" Dryden, it may be noted, in his "Essay of Dramatic Poesie," has a kindred passage as to the matters to be acted on the stage, and the things "supposed to be done behind the scenes."

Of the scenery of his time, Mr. Pepys makes frequent mention, without, however, entering much into particulars on the subject. In August, 1661, he notes the reproduction of Davenant's comedy of "The Wits," "never acted yet with scenes;" adding, "and, indeed, it is a most excellent play and admirable scenes." A little later he records a performance of "'Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,' done with scenes very well, but, above all, Betterton did the prince's part beyond imagination." It is satisfactory to find that in this case, at any rate, the actor held his ground against the scene-painter. Under another date, he refers to a representation of "The Faithful Shepherdess" of Fletcher, "a most simple thing, and yet much thronged after and often shown; but it is only for the scene's sake, which is very fine." A few years later he describes a visit "to the King's Playhouse all in dirt, they being altering of the stage, to make it wider. But my business," he proceeds, "was to see the inside of the stage, and all the 'tiring-rooms and machines; and, indeed, it was a sight worth seeing. But to see their clothes, and the various sorts, and what a mixture of things there was—here a wooden leg, there a ruff, here a hobby-horse, there a crown, would make a man split himself to see with laughing; and particularly Lacy's wardrobe and Shotrell's. But then, again, to think how fine they show on the stage by candlelight, and how poor things they are to look at too near at hand, is not pleasant at all. The machines are fine, and," he concludes, "the paintings very pretty." In October, 1667, he records that he sat in the boxes for the first time in his life, and discovered that from that point of view "the scenes do appear very fine indeed, and much better than in the pit."

The names of the artists whose works won Mr. Pepys's applause have not come down to us. Of Robert Streeter, sergeant-painter to King Charles II., there is frequent mention made in the "Diary" of Evelyn, who highly lauds the artist's "very glorious scenes and perspectives," which adorned Dryden's play of "The Conquest of Granada," on its representation at Whitehall. Evelyn, not caring much for such entertainments, seems, nevertheless, to have frequently attended the plays and masques of the Court. In February, 1664, he saw acted "The Indian Queen" of Sir Robert Howard and Dryden—-"a tragedy well written, so beautiful with rich scenes as the like had never

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been seen here, or haply (except rarely) elsewhere on a mercenary theatre." At a later date, one Robert Aggas, a painter of some fame, is known to have executed scenes for the theatre in Dorset Garden. Among other scene-painters of distinction, pertaining to a comparatively early period of the art, may be noted Nicholas Thomas Dall, a Danish landscape-painter, who established himself in London in 1760, was long occupied as scene-painter at Covent Garden Theatre, and became an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1771; Hogarth, who is reported to have painted a camp scene for the private theatre of Dr. Hoadley, Dean of Winchester; John Richards, a member of the Royal Academy, who, during many years, painted scenes for Covent Garden; Michael Angelo Rooker, pupil of Paul Sandby, and one of the first Associates of the Academy, who was scene-painter at the Haymarket; Novosielsky, the architect of the Opera House, Haymarket, who also supplied that establishment with many notable scenes, and, to pass over many minor names, De Loutherbourg, Garrick's scene-painter, and one of the most renowned artists of his period.

It will be remembered that Mr. Puff, in "The Critic," giving a specimen of "the puff direct" in regard to a new play, says: "As to the scenery, the miraculous powers of Mr. De Loutherbourg are universally acknowledged. In short, we are at a loss which to admire most, the unrivalled genius of the author, the great attention and liberality of the managers, the wonderful abilities of the painter, or the incredible exertions of all the performers." Shortly after his arrival in England, about 1770, De Loutherbourg became a contributor to the exhibition of the Royal Academy. In 1780 he was elected an Associate; in the following year he obtained the full honours of academicianship. His easel-pictures were for the most part landscapes, effective and forcible after an unconventional fashion, and wholly at variance with the "classically-composed" landscapes then in vogue. Turner, when, in 1808, he was appointed Professor of Perspective to the Royal Academy, is said to have taken up his abode at Hammersmith, in order that he might be near De Loutherbourg, for whose works he professed cordial admiration. The old scene-painter's bold and strong effects, his daring treatment of light and shade, his system of colour, bright even to gaudiness, probably arrested the attention of the younger artist, and were to him exciting influences. Upon De Loutherbourg's landscapes, however, little store is now placed; but as a scene-painter he deserves to be remembered for the ingenious reforms he introduced. He found the scene a mere "flat" of strained canvas extending over the whole stage. He was the first to use "set scenes" and "raking pieces." He also invented transparent scenes with representations of moonlight, sunshine, firelight, volcanoes, &c., and obtained new effects of colour by means of silken screens of various hues placed before the foot and side lights. He discovered,

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too, that ingenious effects might be obtained by suspending gauzes between the scene and the spectators. These are now, of course, but commonplace contrivances; they were, however, distinctly the inventions of De Loutherbourg, and were calculated to impress the playgoers of his time very signally. To Garrick De Loutherbourg rendered very important assistance, for Garrick was much inclined for scenic decorations of a showy character, although as a rule he restricted these embellishments to the after-pieces, and for the more legitimate entertainments of his stage was content to employ old and stock scenery that had been of service in innumerable plays. Tate Wilkinson, writing in 1790, refers to a scene then in use which he remembered so far back as the year 1747. "It has wings and a flat of Spanish figures at full length, and two folding-doors in the middle. I never see those wings slide on, but I feel as if seeing my old acquaintance unexpectedly."

Of later scene-painters, such as Roberts and Stanfield, Grieve and Telbin, and to come down to the present time, Beverley and Calcott, Hawes Craven and O'Connor, there seems little occasion to speak; the achievements of these artists are matters of almost universal knowledge. It is sufficient to say that in their hands the art they practise has been greatly advanced, even to the eclipse now and then of the efforts of both actors and dramatists.

Some few notes, however, may be worth making in relation to the technical methods adopted by the scene-painter. In the first place, he relies upon the help of the carpenter to stretch a canvas tightly over a frame, or to nail a wing into shape; and subsequently it is the carpenter's duty, with a small sharp saw, to cut the edge of irregular wings, such as representations of foliage or rocks, an operation known behind the curtain as "marking the profile." The painter's studio is usually high up above the rear of the stage—a spacious room, well lighted by means of skylights or a lantern in the roof. The canvas, which is of course of vast dimensions, can be raised to the ceiling, or lowered through the floor, to suit the convenience of the artist, by means of machinery of ingenious construction. The painter has invariably made a preliminary water-colour sketch of his scene, on paper or cardboard. Oftentimes, with the help of a miniature stage, such as schoolboys delight in, he is enabled to form a fair estimate of the effect that may be expected of his design. The expansive canvas has been sized over, and an outline of the picture to be painted—a landscape, or an interior, as the case may be—has been boldly marked out by the artist. Then the assistants and pupils ply their brushes, and wash in the broad masses of colour, floods of light, and clouds of darkness. The dimensions of the canvas permit of many hands being employed upon it, and the work proceeds therefore with great rapidity. But the scene-painter is constant in his supervision of his subordinates, and when their

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labours are terminated, he completes the design with numberless improving touches and masterly strokes. Of necessity, much of the work is of a mechanical kind; scroll-work, patterned walls, or cornices are accomplished by “stencilling” or “pouncing”—that is to say, the design is pricked upon a paper, which, being pressed upon the canvas, and smeared or dabbed with charcoal, leaves a faint trace of the desired outline. The straight lines in an architectural scene are traced by means of a cord, which is rubbed with colour in powder, and, having been drawn tight, is allowed to strike smartly against the canvas, and deposit a distinct mark upon its surface. Duty of this kind is readily accomplished by a boy, or a labourer of little skill. Scenes of a pantomime order, in which glitter is required, are dabbed here and there by the artist with thin glue; upon these moist places, Dutch metal—gold or silver leaf—is then fixed, with a result that large audiences have never failed to find resplendent and beautiful. These are some, but, of course, a few only, of the methods and mysteries of the scene-painter’s art.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TIRING-ROOM.

The information that has come down to us in relation to the wardrobe department of the Elizabethan theatre, and the kind of costumes worn by our early actors, is mainly derived from the diaries of Philip Henslowe and his partner, Edward Alleyn, the founder of Dulwich College. Henslowe became a theatrical manager some time before 1592, trading also as a pawnbroker, and dealing rather usuriously with the players and playwrights about him. Alleyn married the step-daughter of Henslowe, and thereupon entered into partnership with him. Malone has made liberal extracts from Henslowe’s inventories, which bear date 1598-99, and were once safely possessed by Dulwich College, but have now, for the most part, disappeared. Among the articles of dress enumerated appear “Longshanks’ suit;” “Tamberlane’s breeches of crimson velvet,” and the same hero’s “coat with coper lace;” “Harye the Fifth’s velvet gown and satin doublet, laid with gold lace;” Dido’s robe and Juno’s frock; Robin Hood’s hat and green coat; and Merlin’s gown and cape. Then there are gowns and caps for senators, suits for torchbearers and janissaries, shepherds’ coats, yellow leather doublets for clowns, robes of rich taffety and damask, suits of russet and of frieze, fools’ caps and bells, cloth of gold, French hose, surplices, shirts, farthingales, jerkins, and white cotton stockings. From another document, the cost of theatrical apparel may be fairly estimated. A list headed: “Note of all such goods as I have bought for the company of my Lord Admiral’s men, since the 3rd April, 1598,” has the sum paid for each article plainly stated, and contains such items as: “Bought a damask cassock, garded with velvet, eighteen shillings;” “bought a payer of paned rownd hose of cloth, whiped with

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silk, drawn out with taffety, and one payer of long black woollen stockens, eight shillings;" "bought a robe for to go invisibell and a gown for Nembia, three pounds ten shillings" (Malone conjecturing that the mysterious "robe for to go invisibell" pertained to some drama in which the wearer of the garment specified was supposed to be unseen by the rest of the performers); "bought a doublet of white satten layd thick with gold lace, and a pair of rowne paned hose of cloth of silver, the panes layd with gold lace, seven pounds ten shillings," and so on.

Alleyn's inventory still exists, or did exist very recently, in his own handwriting, at Dulwich College; it is without heading or date, and relates almost exclusively to the dresses worn by himself in his personation of various characters upon the stage. It is of interest, seeing that it demonstrates the assumption by Alleyn of various parts, if not in Shakespeare's plays, at any rate in the earlier dramas upon which the poet founded certain of his noblest works. Thus the actor's list makes mention of "a scarlet cloke with two brode gould laces with gould down the same, for Leir"—meaning, doubtless, "King Lear;" "a purple satin cloke, welted with velvett and silver twist, Romeo's;" "Hary the VIII. gowne;" "blew damask cote for the Moor in Venis;" and "spangled hoes in Pericles." Such entries as "Faustus jerkin and cloke," "Priams hoes in Dido," and "French hose for the Guises," evidence that the actor took part in Marlowe's "Faustus" and "Massacre of Paris," and the tragedy of "Dido," by Marlowe and Nash. Then there are cloaks and gowns, striped and trimmed with gold lace and ermine, suits of crimson, and orange-tawny velvet, cloth of gold and silver, jerkins and doublets of satin taffety and velvet, richly embroidered, and hose of various hues and patterns. The actor's wardrobe was clearly most costly and complete, and affords sufficient proof that theatrical costumes generally, even at that early date, were of a luxurious nature. In considering the prices mentioned in Henslowe's list, the high value of money in his time should of course be borne in mind.

It is plain, however, that splendour was much more considered than appropriateness of dress. Some care might be taken to provide Robin Hood with a suit of Lincoln green; to furnish hoods and frocks for friars and royal robes for kings; but otherwise actors, dramatists, and audience demanded only that costly and handsome apparel should appear upon the scene. Indeed, the desire for correctness of dress upon the stage is of modern origin. Still, now and then may be found, even in very early days, some inclination towards carefulness in this respect; as when, in 1595, Thomas Nevile, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, applied to Lord Treasurer Burghley for the loan of the royal robes in the Tower, in order to perform, "for the exercise of young gentlemen and scholars in our college," certain comedies and one tragedy,

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in which “sondry personages of greatest estate were to be represented in ancient princely attire, which is nowhere to be had but within the office of the roabes of the Tower.” This request, it seems, had been granted before, and probably was again complied with on this occasion. Indeed, at a much later date there was borrowing from the stores of the Tower for the decoration of the stage; as Pope writes:

> Back fly the scenes and enter foot and horse:
> Pageant on pageants in long order drawn,
> Peers, heralds, bishops, ermine, gold, and lawn;
> The champion, too! And to complete the jest,
> Old Edward’s armour beams on Cibber’s breast.

By way of reflecting the glories of the coronation of George II., “Henry VIII.,” with a grand spectacle of a coronation, had been presented at the theatres, the armour of one of the kings of England having been brought from the Tower for the due accoutrement of the champion. And here we may note a curious gravitation of royal finery towards the theatre. Downes, in his “Roscius Anglicanus,” describes Sir William Davenant’s play of “Love and Honour,” produced in 1662, as “richly cloathed, the king giving Mr. Betterton his coronation suit, in which he acted the part of Prince Alvaro; the Duke of York giving Mr. Harris his, who did Prince Prospero; and my lord of Oxford gave Mr. Joseph Price his, who did Lionel, the Duke of Parma’s son.” Presently we find the famous Mrs. Barry acting Queen Elizabeth in the coronation robes of James II.’s queen, who had before presented the actress with her wedding suit. Mrs. Barry is said to have given her audience a strong idea of Queen Elizabeth. Mrs. Bellamy played Cleopatra in a silver tissue “birthday” dress that had belonged to the Princess of Wales; and a suit of straw-coloured satin, from the wardrobe of the same illustrious lady, was worn by the famous Mrs. Woffington, in her performance of Roxana. The robes worn by Elliston, when he personated George IV., and represented the coronation of that monarch upon the stage of Drury Lane, were probably not the originals. These became subsequently the property of Madame Tussaud, and long remained among the treasures of her waxwork exhibition in Baker Street. A tradition prevails that Elliston’s robes were carried to America by Lucius Junius Booth, the actor, who long continued to assume them in his personation of Richard III., much to the astonishment of the more simple-minded of his audience, who naively inquired of each other whether the sovereigns of Great Britain were really wont to parade the streets of London in such attire? Among other royal robes that have likewise descended to the stage, mention may also be made of the coronation dress of the late Queen Adelaide, of which Mrs. Mowatt, the American actress, became the ultimate possessor.

Many noblemen and fine gentlemen also favoured the actors with gifts of their cast clothes, and especially of those “birthday suits”—Court dresses of great splendour, worn

for the first time at the birthday levees, or drawing-rooms of the sovereign. As Pope writes:

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Or when from Court a birthday suit bestowed,
Sinks the lost actor in the tawdry load.

Indeed, to some of the clothes worn by actors a complete history is attached. The wardrobe of Munden, the comedian, contained a black Genoa velvet coat, which had once belonged to King George II.; while another coat boasted also a distinguished pedigree, and could be traced to Francis, Duke of Bedford, who had worn it on the occasion of the Prince of Wales's marriage. It had originally cost L1000! But then it had been fringed with precious stones, of which the sockets only remained when it fell into the hands of the dealers in second-hand garments; but, even in its dilapidated state, Munden had given L40 for it. Usually, however, fine clothes, such as "birthday suits," became the property rather of the tragedians than the comedians. Cibber describes the division on the subject of dress, existing in the "Commonwealth" company, of which he formed a member, in 1696. "The tragedians," he writes, "seemed to think their rank as much above the comedians as the characters they severally acted; when the first were in their finery, the latter were impatient at the expense, and looked upon it as rather laid out upon the real than the fictitious person of the actor. Nay, I have known in our company this ridiculous sort of regret carried so far that the tragedian has thought himself injured when the comedian pretended to wear a fine coat." Powel, the tragedian, surveying the dress worn by Cibber as Lord Foppington, fairly lost his temper, and complained, in rude terms, that he had not so good a suit in which to play Caesar Borgia. Then, again, when Betterton proposed to "mount" a tragedy, the comic actors were sure to murmur at the cost of it. Dogget especially regarded with impatience "the costly trains and plumes of tragedy, in which, knowing himself to be useless, he thought they were all a vain extravagance." Tragedy, however, was certainly an expensive entertainment at this time. Dryden's "All for Love" had been revived at a cost of nearly L600 for dresses—"a sum unheard of for many years before on a like occasion." It was, by-the-way, the production of this tragedy, in preference to his "adaptation" of Shakespeare's "Coriolanus," that so bitterly angered Dennis, the critic, and brought about his fierce enmity to Cibber.

To the hero of tragedy a feathered headdress was indispensable; the heroine demanded a long train borne by one or two pages. Pope writes:

Loud as the wolves on Orca's stormy steep
Howl to the roarings of the northern deep,
Such is the shout, the long-applauded note,
At Quin's high plume, or Oldfield's petticoat.

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Hamlet speaks of a “forest of feathers” as part of an actor’s professional qualification. Addison, writing in “The Spectator” on the methods of aggrandising the persons in tragedy, denounces as ridiculous the endeavour to raise terror and pity in the audience by the dresses and decorations of the stage, and takes particular exception to the plumes of feathers worn by the conventional hero of tragedy, rising “so very high, that there is often a greater length from his chin to the top of his head than to the sole of his foot. One would believe that we thought a great man and a tall man the same thing.” Then he describes the embarrassment of the actor, forced to hold his neck extremely stiff and steady all the time he speaks, when, “notwithstanding any anxieties which he pretends for his mistress, his country, or his friends, one may see by his action that his greatest care and concern is to keep the plume of feathers from falling off his head.” The hero’s “superfluous ornaments” having been discussed, the means by which the heroine is invested with grandeur are next considered: “The broad sweeping train that follows her in all her motions, finds constant employment for a boy who stands behind her, to open and spread it to advantage. I do not know how others are affected at this sight, but I must confess my eyes are wholly taken up with the page’s part; and as for the queen, I am not so attentive to anything she speaks, as to the right adjusting of her train, lest it should chance to trip up her heels, or incommode her as she walks to and fro upon the stage. It is, in my opinion, a very odd spectacle to see a queen venting her passion in a disordered motion, and a little boy taking care all the while that they do not ruffle the tail of her gown. The parts that the two persons act on the stage at the same time are very different; the princess is afraid that she should incur the displeasure of the king, her father, or lose the hero, her lover, whilst her attendant is only concerned lest she should entangle her feet in her petticoat.” In the same way Tate Wilkinson, writing in 1790 of the customs of the stage, as he had known it forty years before, describes the ladies as wearing large hoops and velvet petticoats, heavily embossed and extremely inconvenient and troublesome, with “always a page behind to hear the lovers’ secrets, and keep the train in graceful decorum. If two princesses,” he continues, “meet on the stage, with the frequent stage-crossings then practised, it would now seem truly entertaining to behold a page dangling at the tail of each heroine.” The same writer, referring to the wardrobe he possessed as manager of the York and Hull theatres, describes the dresses as broadly seamed with gold and silver lace, after a bygone fashion that earned for them the contempt of London performers. “Yet,” he proceeds, “those despicable clothes had, at different periods of time, bedecked real lords and dukes,” and were of considerable value, if only to strip of their decorations and take to pieces. He laments the general decline in splendour of dress, and declares that thirty years before not a Templar, or decently-dressed young man, but wore a rich gold-laced hat and scarlet waistcoat, with a broad gold lace, also laced frocks for morning dress.

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Monmouth Street, St. Giles's, is now known by another name; but for many years its dealers in cast clothes rendered important aid to the actors and managers. It was to Monmouth Street, as he confesses, that Tate Wilkinson hastened, when permitted to undertake the part of the Fine Gentleman in Garrick's farce of "Lethe," at Covent Garden. For two guineas he obtained the loan, for one night only, of a heavy embroidered velvet spangled suit of clothes, "fit," he says, "for the king in 'Hamlet.'" Repeating the character, he was constrained to depend upon the wardrobe of the theatre, and appeared in "a very short old suit of clothes, with a black velvet ground and broad gold flowers, as dingy as the twenty-four letters on a piece of gilded gingerbread"—the dress, indeed, which Garrick had worn when playing Lothario, in "The Fair Penitent," ten years before. And it was to Monmouth Street that Austin repaired, when cast for a very inferior part—a mere attendant—in the same tragedy, in order to equip himself as like to Garrick as he could—for Garrick was to reappear as Lothario in a new suit of clothes. "Where did you get that coat from, Austin?" asked the great actor, surveying his subordinate. "Sir!" replied Austin boldly, "it is part of my country wardrobe." The manager paused, frowned, reflected. Soon he was satisfied that the effect of Austin's dress would be injurious to his own, especially as Austin was of superior physical proportions. "Austin," he said at length, "why, perhaps you have some other engagement—besides, the part is really beneath you. Altogether, I will not trouble you to go on with me." And not to go on as an attendant upon Lothario was precisely what Austin desired.

O'Keeffe, in his "Memoirs," has related a curious instance of the prompt bestowal of an article of apparel upon an actor attached to the Crow Street Theatre, Dublin. Macklin's farce of "The True-born Irishman" was in course of performance for the first time. During what was known as "the Drum Scene" ("a 'rout' in London is called a 'drum' in Dublin," O'Keeffe explains),—when an actor, named Massink, had entered as the representative of Pat FitzMongrel—a gentleman, who with a large party occupied the stage-box, was seen to rise from his chair, with the view, as it seemed, of interrupting the performance. It should be stated that the gentleman was known to have recently inherited a large fortune, and had evinced a certain eccentricity of disposition. He was now of opinion that an attempt was being made to personate him on the stage. "Why, that's me!" he cried aloud, pointing to the figure of Pat FitzMongrel. "But what sort of a rascally coat is that they've dressed me in! Here, I'll dress you, my man!" So saying he stood up, divested himself of the rich gold-laced coat he wore, and flung it on to the stage. "Massink took it up smiling, stepped to the wing, threw off his own, and returned upon the stage in the gentleman's fine coat, which produced the greatest amount of applause and pleasure among the audience."

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To suit the dress demands the actor's art,
Yet there are some who overdress the part.
To some prescriptive right gives settled things—
Black wigs to murderers, feathered hats to kings.
But Michael Cassio might be drunk enough,
Though all his features were not grimed with snuff.
Why should Poll Peachum shine in satin clothes?
Why every devil dance in scarlet hose?

Thus, in regard to the conventionalism of stage costumes, wrote Churchill's friend, Robert Lloyd, in his poem of "The Actor," 1762. And something he might have added touching the absurd old fashion of robing the queens of tragedy invariably in black, for it seemed agreed generally that "the sceptred pall of gorgeous tragedy" should be taken very literally, and should "sweep by" in the funereal fashion of sable velvet. "Empresses and queens," writes Mrs. Bellamy, the actress, in 1785, "always appeared in black velvet, with, upon extraordinary occasions, the additional finery of an embroidered or tissue petticoat; the younger actresses in cast gowns of persons of quality, or altered habits rather soiled; whilst the male portion of the *dramatis personae* strutted in tarnished laced coats and waistcoats, full bottom or tie wigs, and black worsted stockings." Yet the lady once ventured to appear as Lady Macbeth, and to wear the while a dress of white satin. This took place at Edinburgh, and the startling innovation was only to be accounted for by the fact that the wardrobes of the actresses and of the company she had joined had been accidentally consumed by fire. Some portion of the theatre had been also destroyed, but boards were hastily nailed down and covered with carpets, so as to form a temporary stage until the damage could be repaired. Meantime appeal was made to the ladies of Edinburgh to lend clothes to the "burnt out" actress, who estimated the loss of her theatrical finery at L900, there being among the ashes of her property "a complete set of garnets and pearls, from cap to stomacher." Dresses of various kinds poured in, however. "Before six o'clock I found myself in possession of above forty, and some of these almost new, as well as very rich. Nor did the ladies confine themselves to outward garments only. I received presents of all kinds and from every part of the adjacent country." But inasmuch as "no black vestment of any kind had been sent among the numerous ones of different colours which had been showered upon me by the ladies," the necessity arose for dressing Lady Macbeth for the very first time in white satin.

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Mrs. Bellamy, according to her own account, had been wont to take great pains and to exercise much good taste in regard to the costume she assumed upon the stage. She claimed to have discarded hooped skirts, while those unwieldy draperies were still greatly favoured by other actresses, and to have adopted a style of dress remarkable for an elegant simplicity then very new to the stage. Still, the lady has freely admitted that she could be very gorgeous upon occasions; and concerning one of two grand tragedy dresses she had obtained from Paris, she has something of a history to narrate. The play was to be the "Alexander" of Nat Lee; the rival actresses were to appear—Mrs. Bellamy as Statira, and the famous Mrs. Woffington as Roxana. The ladies did not love each other—rival actresses oftentimes do not love each other—and each possessed a temper. Moreover, each was a beauty: Mrs. Woffington, a grand brunette, dark browed, with flashing eyes and stately mien: Mrs. Bellamy, a blonde, blue-eyed and golden-haired—an accomplished actress, if an affected one. Now, Mrs. Bellamy's grand dress of deep yellow satin, with a robe of rich purple velvet, was found to have a most injurious effect upon the delicate straw-coloured skirts of Mrs. Woffington; they seemed to be reduced to a dirty white hue. The ladies fairly quarrelled over their dresses. At length, if we may adopt Mrs. Bellamy's account of the proceeding, Mrs. Woffington's rage was so kindled "that it nearly bordered on madness. When, oh! dire to tell! she drove me off the carpet and gave me the *coup de grace* almost behind the scenes. The audience, who, I believe, preferred hearing my last dying speech to seeing her beauty and fine attitude, could not avoid perceiving her violence, and testified their displeasure at it." Possibly the scene excited mirth in an equal degree. Foote forthwith prepared a burlesque, "The Green-room Squabble; or, A Battle Royal between the Queen of Babylon and the Daughter of Darius." The same tragedy, it may be noted, had at an earlier date been productive of discord in the theatre. Mrs. Barry, as Roxana, had indeed stabbed her Statira, Mrs. Boutell, with such violence that the dagger, although the point was blunted, "made its way through Mrs. Boutell's stays and entered about a quarter of an inch into the flesh." It is not clear, however, that this contest, like the other, is to be attributed to antagonism in the matter of dress.

The characteristics of the "tiring-room" have always presented themselves in a ludicrous light to the ordinary observer. There is always a jumble of incongruous articles, and a striking contrast between the ambitious pretensions of things and their real meanness—between the facts and fictions of theatrical life. Mr. Collier quotes from Brome's comedy, "The Antipodes," 1640, a curious account of the contents of the "tiring-house" of that time. Byeplay, an actor, one of the characters, is speaking of the hero Peregrine, who is in some sort a reflection of Don Quixote:

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He has got into our tiring-house amongst us,
And ta'en a strict survey of all our properties.

* * * * *

Whether he thought 'twas some enchanted castle,
Or temple hung and piled with monuments
Of uncouth and of varied aspects,
I dive not to his thoughts....
But on a sudden, with thrice knightly force,
And thrice thrice puissant arm, he snatched down
The sword and shield that I played Bevis with;
Rusheth among the foresaid properties,
Kills monster after monster, takes the puppets
Prisoners, knocks down the Cyclops, tumbles all
Our jigambobs and trinkets to the wall.
Spying at last the crown and royal robes
I' the upper wardrobe, next to which by chance,
The devils vizors hung and their flame-painted
Skin-coats, these he removed with greater fury,
And (having cut the infernal ugly faces
All into mammocks), with a reverend hand
He takes the imperial diadem, and crowns
Himself King of the Antipodes and believes
He has justly gained the kingdom by his conquest.

A later dealing with the same subject may be quoted from Dr. Reynardson's poem of "The Stage," dedicated to Addison, and first published in 1713:

High o'er the stage there lies a rambling frame,
Which men a garret vile, but players the tire-room name:
Here all their stores (a merry medley) sleep
Without distinction, huddled in a heap.
Hung on the self-same peg, in union rest
Young Tarquin's trousers and Lucretia's vest,
Whilst, without pulling coifs, Roxana lays,
Close by Statira's petticoat, her stays....
Near these sets up a dragon-drawn calash;
There's a ghost's doublet, delicately slashed,
Bleeds from the mangled breast and gapes a frightful gash....
Here Iris bends her various-painted arch,
There artificial clouds in sullen order march;
Here stands a crown upon a rack, and there
A witch's broomstick, by great Hector's spear:

Here stands a throne, and there the cynic's tub,
Here Bullock's cudgel, and there Alcides' club.
Beards, plumes, and spangles in confusion rise,
Whilst rocks of Cornish diamonds reach the skies;
Crests, corslets, all the pomp of battle join
In one effulgence, one promiscuous shine.
Hence all the drama's decorations rise,
Hence gods descend majestic from the skies.
Hence playhouse chiefs, to grace some antique tale,
Buckle their coward limbs in warlike mail, &c. &c.

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Of the theatrical wardrobe department of to-day it is unnecessary to say much. Something of the bewildering incongruity of the old “tiring-room” distinguishes it—yet with a difference. The system of the modern theatre has undergone changes. Wardrobes are now often hired complete from the costume and masquerade shops. The theatrical costumier has become an independent functionary, boasting an establishment of his own, detached from the theatre. Costume plays are not much in vogue now, and in dramas dealing with life and society at the present date, the actors are understood to provide their own attire. Moreover, there is now little varying of the programme, and, in consequence, little demand upon the stock wardrobe of the playhouse. Still, when in theatres of any pretension, entertainments in the nature of spectacles or pantomimes are in course of preparation, there is much stir in the wardrobe department. There are bales of cloth to be converted into apparel for the supernumeraries, yards and yards of gauze and muslin for the ballet; spangles, and beads, and copper lace in great profusion; with high piles of white satin shoes. Numerous stitchers of both sexes are at work early and late, while from time to time an artist supervises their labours. His aid has been sought in the designing of the costumes, so that they may be of graceful and novel devices in fanciful or eccentric plays, or duly correct when an exhibition, depending at all upon the history of the past, is about to be presented by the manager.

CHAPTER XVI.

“HER FIRST APPEARANCE.”

From the south-western corner of Lincoln’s Inn Fields a winding and confined court leads to Vere Street, Clare Market. Midway or so in the passage there formerly existed Gibbon’s Tennis Court—an establishment which after the Restoration, and for some three years, served as a playhouse; altogether distinct, be it remembered, from the far more famous Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre, situate close by in Portugal Street, at the back of the College of Surgeons. Nevertheless, the Vere Street Theatre, as it was called, can boast something of a history; at any rate, one event of singular dramatic importance renders it memorable. For on Saturday, the 8th of December, 1660, as historians of the drama relate, it was the scene of the first appearance upon the English stage of the first English actress. The lady played Desdemona; and a certain Mr. Thomas Jordan, an actor and the author of various poetical pieces, provided for delivery upon the occasion a “Prologue to introduce the first woman that came to act on the stage in the tragedy called ‘The Moor of Venice.’”

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So far the story is clear enough. But was this Desdemona really the first English actress? Had there not been earlier change in the old custom prescribing that the heroines of the British drama should be personated by boys? It is certain that French actresses had appeared here so far back as 1629. Prynne, in his "Histriomastix," published in 1633, writes: "They have now their female players in Italy and other foreign parts, and Michaelmas, 1629, they had French women-actors in a play personated at Blackfriars, to which there was great resort." These ladies, however, it may be noted, met with a very unfavourable reception. Prynne's denunciation of them was a matter of course. He had undertaken to show that stage-plays of whatever kind were most "pernicious corruptions," and that the profession of "play-poets" and stage-players, together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of stage-plays, was unlawful, infamous, and misbecoming Christians. He speaks of the "women-actors" as "monsters," and applies most severe epithets to their histrionic efforts: "impudent," "shameful," "unwomanish," and such like. Another critic, one Thomas Brande, in a private letter discovered by Mr. Payne Collier in the library of Lambeth Palace, and probably addressed to Laud while Bishop of London, writes of the just offence to all virtuous and well-disposed persons in this town "given by the vagrant French players who had been expelled from their own country," and adds: "Glad am I to say they were hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted" (pippin-pelted is a good phrase) "from the stage, so as I do not think they will soon be ready to try the same again." Mr. Brande was further of opinion that the Master of the Revels should have been called to account for permitting such performances. Failing at Blackfriars, the French company subsequently appeared at the Fortune and Red Bull Theatres, but with a similar result, insomuch that the Master of the Revels, Sir Henry Herbert, who had duly sanctioned their performance, records in his accounts that, "in respect of their ill luck," he had returned some portion of the fees they had paid him for permission to play.

Whether these French "women-actors" failed because of their sex or because of their nationality, cannot now be shown. They were the first actresses that had ever been seen in this country. But then they were not of English origin, and they appeared, of course, in a foreign drama. Still, of English actresses antecedent to the Desdemona of the Vere Street Theatre, certain traces have been discovered. In Brome's comedy of "The Court Beggar," acted at the Cockpit Theatre, in 1632, one of the characters observed: "If you have a short speech or two, the boy's a pretty actor, and his mother can play her part; women-actors now grow in request." Was this an allusion merely to the French actresses that had been seen in London some few years before, or were English actresses referred to? Had these really appeared, if not at the

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public theatres, why, then, at more private dramatic entertainments? Upon such points doubt must still prevail. It seems certain, however, that a Mrs. Coleman had presented herself upon the stage in 1656, playing a part in Sir William Davenant's tragedy of "The Siege of Rhodes"—a work produced somehow in evasion of the Puritanical ordinance of 1647, which closed the theatres and forbade dramatic exhibitions of every kind; for "The Siege of Rhodes," although it consisted in a great measure of songs with recitative, explained or illustrated by painted scenery, did not differ much from an ordinary play. Ianthe, the heroine, was personated by Mrs. Coleman, whose share in the performance was confined to the delivery of recitative. Ten years later the lady was entertained at his house by Mr. Pepys, who speaks in high terms both of her musical abilities and of herself, pronouncing her voice "decayed as to strength, but mighty sweet, though soft, and a pleasant jolly woman, and in mighty good humour."

If this Mrs. Coleman may be classed rather as a singer than an actress, and if we may view Davenant's "Siege of Rhodes" more as a musical entertainment than as a regular play, then no doubt the claim of the Desdemona of Clare Market to be, as Mr. Thomas Jordan described her, "the first woman that came to act on the stage," is much improved. And here we may say something more relative to the Vere Street Theatre. It was first opened in the month of November, 1660; Thomas Killigrew, its manager, and one of the grooms of the king's bedchamber, having received his patent in the previous August, when a similar favour was accorded to Sir William Davenant, who, during Charles I.'s reign, had been possessed of letters patent. King Charles II., taking it into his "princely consideration" that it was not necessary to suppress the use of theatres, but that if the evil and scandal in the plays then acted were taken away, they might serve "as innocent and harmless divertisement" for many of his subjects, and having experience of the art and skill of his trusty and well-beloved Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant, granted them full power to elect two companies of players, and to purchase, build and erect, or hire, two houses or theatres, with all convenient rooms and other necessaries thereunto appertaining, for the representation of tragedies, comedies, plays, operas, and all other entertainments of that nature. The managers were also authorised to fix such rates of admission as were customary or reasonable "in regard of the great expenses of scenes, music, and such new decorations as have not been formerly used:" with full power "to make such allowances out of that which they shall so receive to the actors and other persons employed in the same representations, in both houses respectively, as they shall think fit." For these patents other grants were afterwards substituted, Davenant receiving his new letters on January 15th, and Killigrew *his* on April 25th, 1662.

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The new grants did not differ much from the old ones, except that the powers vested in the patentees were more fully declared. No other companies but those of the two patentees were to be permitted to perform within the cities of London and Westminster; all others were to be silenced and suppressed. Killigrew's actors were styled the "Company of his Majesty and his Royal Consort;" Davenant's the "Servants of his Majesty's dearly-beloved brother, James, Duke of York." The better to preserve "amity and correspondence" between the two theatres, no actor was to be allowed to quit one company for the other without the consent of his manager being first obtained. And forasmuch as many plays formerly acted contained objectionable matter, and the women's parts therein being acted by men in the habits of women, gave offence to some, the managers were further enjoined to act no plays "containing any passages offensive to piety and good manners, until they had first corrected and purged the same;" and permission was given that all the women's parts to be acted by either of the companies for the time to come might be performed by women, so that recreations which, by reason of the abuses aforesaid, were scandalous and offensive, might by such reformation be esteemed not only harmless delights, but useful and instructive representations of human life to such of "our good subjects" as should resort to see the same.

These patents proved a cause of numberless dissensions in future years. Practically they reduced the London theatres to two. Before the Civil War there had been six: the Blackfriars and the Globe, belonging to the same company, called the King's Servants; the Cockpit or Phoenix, in Drury Lane, the actors of which were called the Queen's Servants; a theatre in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, occupied by the Prince's Servants; and the Fortune, in Golden Lane, and the Red Bull in St. John Street, Clerkenwell—-establishments for the lower class, "mostly frequented by citizens and the meaner sort of people." Earlier Elizabethan theatres, the Swan, the Rose, and the Hope, seem to have closed their career some time in the reign of James I.

The introduction of actresses upon the English stage has usually been credited to Sir William Davenant, whose theatre, however, did not open until more than six months after the performance of "Othello," with an actress in the part of Desdemona, at Killigrew's establishment in Vere Street. "Went to Sir William Davenant's opera," records Pepys, on July 2nd, 1661, "this being the fourth day it had begun, and the first that I have seen it." Although regular tragedies and comedies were acted there, Pepys constantly speaks of Davenant's theatre as the *opera*, the manager having produced various musical pieces before the Restoration. Of the memorable performance of "Othello" in Vere Street, on December 10th, 1660, Pepys makes no mention. He duly chronicles, however, a visit to Killigrew's theatre on the following 3rd January,

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when he saw the comedy of “The Beggar’s Bush” performed; “it being very well done, and was the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage.” He had seen the same play in the previous November, when it was represented by male performers only. But even after the introduction of actresses the heroines of the stage were still occasionally impersonated by men. Thus in January, 1661, Pepys saw Kynaston appear in “The Silent Woman,” and pronounced the young actor “the prettiest woman in the whole house.” As Cibber states, the stage “could not be so suddenly supplied with women but that there was still a necessity to put the handsomest young men into petticoats.”

Strange to say, the name of the actress who played Desdemona under Killigrew’s management in 1660 has not been discovered. Who, then, was the first English actress, assuming that she was the Desdemona of the Vere Street Theatre? She must be looked for in Killigrew’s company. His “leading lady” was Mrs. Ann Marshall, of whom Pepys makes frequent mention, who is known to have obtained distinction alike in tragedy and in comedy, and to have personated such characters as the heroine of Beaumont and Fletcher’s “Scornful Lady,” Roxana in “Alexander the Great,” Calphurnia in “Julius Caesar,” Evadne in “The Maid’s Tragedy,” and so on; there is no record, however, of her having appeared in the part of Desdemona. Indeed, this part is not invariably assumed by “leading ladies;” it has occasionally devolved upon the *seconda donna* of the company. And in a representation of “Othello” on February 6th, 1669, at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane (to which establishment Killigrew and his troop had removed from Vere Street in April, 1663), it is certain, on the evidence of Downes’s “Roscius Anglicanus,” that a Mrs. Hughes played the part of Desdemona to the Othello of Burt, the Iago of Mohun, and the Cassio of Hart. Now, was this Mrs. Hughes, who had been a member of Killigrew’s company from the first, the Desdemona on whose behalf, nine years before, Mr. Thomas Jordan wrote his apologetic prologue? It seems not unlikely. At the same time it must be stated that there are other claimants to the distinction. Tradition long pointed to Mrs. Betterton, the wife of the famous tragedian, as the first woman who ever appeared on the English stage. She was originally known as Mrs. Saunderson—the title of Mistress being applied alike to maidens and matrons at the time of the Restoration—and married her illustrious husband about the year 1663. She was one of four principal actresses whom Sir William Davenant lodged at his own house, and she appeared with great success as Ianthe upon the opening of his theatre with “The Siege of Rhodes.” Pepys, indeed, repeatedly refers to her by her dramatic name of Ianthe. Has the belief that she was the first actress arisen from confusing her assumption of Ianthe with the performance of the same part by Mrs. Coleman in 1656, a fact of which mention has

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already been made? Otherwise it is hardly creditable that she, one of Davenant's actresses, had been previously attached to Killigrew's company, and had in such wise chanced to play Desdemona in Vere Street. There is no evidence of this whatever, nor can it be discovered that she appeared as Desdemona at any period of her career. The Vere Street Desdemona, we repeat, must be looked for in Killigrew's company, which commenced operations more than half a year before the rival theatre. It is true that some time before the opening of this theatre Davenant had been the responsible manager in regard to certain performances at the Blackfriars Theatre and elsewhere; but there is no reason to suppose that actresses took part in these entertainments; it is known, indeed, that the feminine characters in the plays exhibited were sustained by the young actors of the company—Kynaston, James Nokes, Angel, and William Betterton. Altogether, Mrs. Betterton's title to honour as the first English actress seems defective; and as much may be said of the pretensions of another actress, Mrs. Norris, although she has met with support from Tom Davies in his "Dramatic Miscellanies," and from Curl in his "History of the Stage," a very unworthy production. Mrs. Norris was an actress of small note attached to Davenant's company; she was the mother of Henry Norris, a popular comedian, surnamed "Jubilee Dicky," from his performance of the part of Dicky in Farquhar's "Constant Couple." Chetwood correctly describes her as "ONE of the first women that came on the stage as an actress." To her, as to Mrs. Betterton, the objection applies that she was a member of Davenant's company—not of Killigrew's—-and therefore could not have appeared in Vere Street. Moreover, she never attained such a position in her profession as would have entitled her to assume a part of the importance of Desdemona.

On the whole, the case of Mrs. Hughes seems to have the support of more probabilities than any other. But even if it is to be accepted as a fact that she was in truth the first actress, there the matter remains. Very little is known of the lady. She lived in a world which kept scarcely any count of its proceedings—which left no record behind to be used as evidence, either for or against it. She was in her time the subject of talk enough, very likely; was admired for her beauty, possibly for her talents too; but hardly a written scrap concerning her has come down to us. The ordinary historian of the time, impressed with a sense of the dignity of his task, did not concern himself with the players, and rated as insignificant and unworthy of his notice such matters as the pursuits, pastimes, tastes, manners, and customs of the people. We know more of the manner of life in Charles II.'s time from the diarist Pepys than from all the writers of history put together. Unfortunately, concerning Mrs. Hughes, even Pepys is silent. It is known that in addition to the character of Desdemona, which

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she certainly sustained in February, 1669, at any rate, she also appeared as Panura, in Fletcher's "Island Princess," and as Theodosia, in Dryden's comedy of "An Evening's Love, or, The Mock Astrologer," to the Jacyntha of Nell Gwynne; there is scarcely a record of her assumption of any other part, unless she be the same Mrs. Hughes who impersonated Mrs. Monylove, in a comedy called "Tom Essence," produced at the Dorset Garden Theatre in 1676. But it is believed that she quitted or was taken from her profession—was "erept the stage," to employ old Downes's phrase—at an earlier date. The famous Prince Rupert of the Rhine was her lover. He bought for her, at a cost of L20,000, the once magnificent seat of Sir Nicholas Crispe, near Hammersmith, which afterwards became the residence of the Margrave of Brandenburg; and at a later date the retreat of Queen Caroline, the wife of George IV. Ruperta, the daughter of Mrs. Hughes, was married to Lieutenant-General Howe, and, surviving her husband many years, died at Somerset House about 1740. In the "Memoirs" of Count Grammont mention is found of Prince Rupert's passion for the actress. She is stated to have "brought down and greatly subdued his natural fierceness." She is described as an impertinent gipsy, and accused of pride, in that she conducted herself, all things considered, unselfishly, and even with some dignity. The King is said to have been "greatly pleased with this event"—he was probably amused at it; Charles II. was very willing at all times to be amused—"for which great rejoicings" (why rejoicings?) "were made at Tunbridge; but nobody was bold enough to make it the subject of satire, though the same constraint was not observed with other ridiculous personages." Upon the Prince the effect of his love seems to have been marked enough. "From this time adieu alembics, crucibles, furnaces, and all the black furniture of the forges; a complete farewell to all mathematical instruments and chemical speculations; sweet powder and essences were now the only ingredients that occupied any share of his attention." Further of Mrs. Hughes there is nothing to relate, with the exception of the use made of her name by the unseemly and unsavoury Tom Brown in his "Letters from the Dead to the Living." Mrs. Hughes and Nell Gwynne are supposed to address letters to each other, exchanging reproaches in regard to the impropriety of their manner of life. Nell Gwynne accuses her correspondent of squandering her money and of gaming. "I am ashamed to think that a woman who had wit enough to tickle a Prince out of so fine an estate should at last prove such a fool as to be bubbled of it by a little spotted ivory and painted paper." "Peg Hughes," as she is called, replies, congratulating herself upon her generosity, treating the loss of her estate as "the only piece of carelessness I ever committed worth my boast," and charging "Madam Gwynne" with vulgar avarice and the love of "lucre of base coin." We can glean nothing more of the story of Mrs. Hughes.

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It is uncertain indeed in what degree the advent of the first actress affected her audience; whether the novelty of the proceeding gratified or shocked them the more. It was really a startling innovation—a wonderful improvement as it seems to us; yet assuredly there were numerous conservative playgoers who held fast to the old ways of the theatre, and approved "boy-actresses"—not needing such aids to illusion as the personation of women by women, but rather objecting thereto, for the same reason that they deprecated the introduction of scenery, because of appeal and stimulus to the imagination of the audience becoming in such wise greatly and perilously reduced. Then of course there were staid and sober folk who judged the profession of the stage to be most ill-suited for women. And certainly this view of the matter was much confirmed by the conduct of our earlier actresses, which was indeed open to the gravest reproach. From Mr. Jordan's prologue may be gathered some notion of the situation of the spectators on the night, or rather the afternoon, of December 8th, 1660. The theatre was probably but a poor-looking structure, hastily put together in the Tennis-court to serve the purpose of the manager for a time merely. Seven years later, Tom Killigrew, talking to Mr. Pepys, boasted that the stage had become "by his pains a thousand times better and more glorious than ever before." There had been improvement in the candles; the audience was more civilised; the orchestra had been increased; the rushes had been swept from the stage; everything that had been mean was now "all otherwise." The manager possibly had in his mind during this retrospect the condition of the Vere Street Theatre while under his management. The audience possessed an unruly element. 'Prentices and servants filled the gallery; there were citizens and tradesmen in the pit, with yet a contingent of spruce gallants and scented fops, who combed their wigs during the pauses in the performance, took snuff, ogled the ladies in the boxes, and bantered the orange-girls. The prologue begins:

I come, unknown to any of the rest,
To tell the news: I saw the lady drest—
The woman plays to-day; mistake me not,
No man in gown or page in petticoat.

* * * * *

'Tis possible a virtuous woman may
Abhor all sorts of looseness and yet play;
Play on the stage—where all eyes are upon her:
Shall we count that a crime France counts an honour?
In other kingdoms husbands safely trust 'em.
The difference lies only in the custom.

The gentlemen sitting in that "Star Chamber of the house, the pit," were then besought to think respectfully and modestly of the actress, and not to run "to give her visits when the play is done." We have, then, a picture of the male performers of female characters:

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But to the point: in this reforming age
We have intent to civilise the stage.
Our women are defective, and so sized
You'd think they were some of the guard disguised;
For, to speak truth, men act, that are between
Forty and fifty, wenches of fifteen;
With bone so large and nerve so incompliant.
When you call Desdemona, *enter giant*.

The prologue concludes with a promise, which certainly was not kept, that the drama should be purged of all offensive matter:

And when we've put all things in this fair way,
Barebones himself may come to see a play.

In the epilogue the spectators were asked: "How do you like her?"—especial appeal being made to those among the audience of the gentler sex:

But, ladies, what think *you*? For if you tax
Her freedom with dishonour to your sex,
She means to act no more, and this shall be
No other play but her own tragedy.
She will submit to none but your commands,
And take commission only from your hands.

The ladies, no doubt, applauded sufficiently, and "women-actors" from that time forward became more and more secure of their position in the theatre. At the same time it would seem that there lingered in the minds of many a certain prejudice against them, and that some apprehension concerning the reception they might obtain from the audience often occupied the managers. A prologue to the second part of Davenant's "Siege of Rhodes," acted in April, 1662, demonstrates that the matter had still to be dealt with cautiously. Indulgence is besought for the bashful fears of the actresses, and their shrinking from the judgment and observation of the wits and critics is much dwelt upon.

It is worthy of note that the leading actors who took part in the representation of "Othello" at the Vere Street Theatre had all in early life been apprentices to older players, and accustomed to personate the heroines of the stage. Thus Burt, the Othello of the cast, had served as a boy under the actors Shanke and Beeston at the Blackfriars and Cockpit Theatres respectively. Mohun, the Iago, had been his playfellow at this time; so that when Burt appeared as Clariana in Shirley's tragedy of "Love's Cruelty," Mohun represented Bellamonte in the same work. During the Civil War Mohun had drawn his sword for the king, acquiring the rank of major, and acquitting himself as a soldier with much distinction. He was celebrated by Lord Rochester as the AEsopus of

the stage; Nat Lee delighted in his acting, exclaiming: "O Mohun, Mohun, thou little man of mettle, if I should write a hundred plays, I'd write one for thy mouth!" And King Charles ventured to pun upon his name as badly as even a king might when he said of some representation: "Mohun (pronounce *Moon*) shone like a sun; Hart like the moon!" Charles Hart, the Cassio of the Vere

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Street Theatre, could boast descent from Shakespeare's sister Joan, and described himself as the poet's great-nephew. He, too, fought for the king in the great Civil War, serving as a lieutenant of horse under Sir Thomas Dallison in Prince Rupert's regiment. He had been apprenticed to Robinson the actor, and had played women's parts at the Blackfriars Theatre, winning special renown by his performance of the Duchess in Shirley's tragedy of "The Cardinal." As an actor Hart won extraordinary admiration; he soon took the lead of Burt, and from his physical gifts and graces was enabled even to surpass Mohun in popularity. He introduced Nell Gwynne to the stage, and became one of the sharers in the management and profits of the theatrical company to which he was attached.

There was soon an ample supply of actresses, and a decline altogether in the demand for boy-performers of female characters. There was an absolute end, indeed, of that industry; the established actors had no more apprentices, now to serve as their footboys and pages, and now as heroines of tragedy and comedy. A modern playgoer may well have a difficulty in believing that these had ever any real existence, sharing Lamb's amazement at a boy-Juliet, a boy-Desdemona, a boy-Ophelia. There must have been much skill among the players; much simple good faith, contentment, and willingness to connive at theatrical illusion on the part of the audience. It must have been hard to tolerate a heroine with too obvious a beard, or of very perceptible masculine breadth of shoulders, length of limb, and freedom of gait. Let us note in conclusion that there is clearly a "boy-actress" among the players welcomed by Hamlet to Elsinore, although the modern stage has rarely taken note of the fact. The player-queen, when not robed for performance in the tragedy of "The Mousetrap," should wear a boy's dress. "What, my young lady and mistress!" says Hamlet jestingly to the youthful apprentice; and he adds allusion to the boy's increase of stature: "By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a *chopine!*"—in other words: "How the boy has grown!"—a chopine being a shoe with a heel of inordinate height. And then comes reference to that change of voice from alto to bass which attends advance from boyhood to adolescence.

CHAPTER XVII.

STAGE WHISPERS.

When the consummate villain of melodrama mysteriously approaches the foot-lights, and, with a scowl at the front row of the pit, remarks: "I must dissemble," or something to that effect, it is certain that he is perfectly audible in all parts of the theatre in which he performs; and yet it is required of the personages nearest to him on the stage—let us say, the rival lover he has resolved to despatch and the beauteous heroine he has planned to betray—that they should pretend to be absolutely deaf to his observation,

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the manifest gravity of its bearing upon their interests and future happiness notwithstanding. Moreover, we who are among the spectators are bound to credit this curious auricular infirmity on the part of the lover and the lady. We can of course hear perfectly well the speech of their playfellow, and are thoroughly aware that from their position they must of necessity hear it at least as distinctly as we do. Yet it is incumbent upon us to ignore our convictions and perceptions on this head. For, indeed, the drama depends for its due existence and conduct upon a system of connivance and conspiracy, in which the audience, no less than the actors, are comprehended. The makeshifts and artifices of the theatre have to be met half-way, and indulgently accepted.

The stage could not live without its whispers, which, after all, are only whispers in a non-natural sense. For that can hardly be in truth a whisper, which is designed to reach the ears of some hundreds of persons. But the “asides” of the theatre are a convenient and indispensable method of revealing to the audience the state of mind of the speaker, and of admitting them to his confidence. The novelist can stop his story, and indulge in analytical descriptions of his characters, their emotions, moods, intentions, and opinions; but the dramatist can only make his creatures intelligible by means of the speeches he puts into their mouths. So, for the information of the audience and the carrying on of the business of the scene, we have soliloquies and asides, the artful delivery of which, duly to secure attention and enlist sympathy, evokes the best abilities of the player, bound to invest with an air of nature and truth-seeming purely fictitious and unreasonable proceedings.

But there are other than these recognised and established whispers of the stage. Voices are occasionally audible in the theatre which obviously were never intended to reach the public ear. The existence of such a functionary as the prompter may be one of those things which are “generally known;” but the knowledge should not come, to those who sit in front of the curtain, from any exercise of their organs of sight or of sound. To do the prompter justice, he is rarely visible; but his tones, however still and small they may pretend to be, sometimes travel to those whom they do not really concern. One of the first scraps of information acquired by the theatrical student relates to the meaning of the letters P.S. and O.P. Otherwise he might, perhaps, have some difficulty in comprehending the apparently magnetic attraction which one particular side of the proscenium has for so many of our players. We say *our* players advisedly, for the position of the prompter is different on the foreign stage. Abroad, and, indeed, during alien and lyrical performances in this country, he is hidden in a sort of gipsy-tent in front of the desk of the conductor. The accommodation provided for him is limited enough; little more than

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his head can be permitted to emerge from the hole cut for him in the stage. But his situation has its advantages. He cannot possibly be seen by the audience; he can conveniently instruct the performers without requiring them “to look off” appealingly, or to rush desperately to the wing to be reminded of their parts; while the sloping roof of his temporary abode has the effect of directing his whispers on to the stage, and away from the spectators. It seems strange that this system of posting the prompter in the van instead of on the flank of the actors has never been permanently adopted in this country. But a change of the kind indicated would certainly be energetically denounced by a number of very respectable and sensible people as “un-English,” an objection that is generally regarded as quite final and convincing, although it is conceivable, at any rate, that a thing may be of fair value and yet of foreign origin. “Gad, sir, if a few very sensible persons had been attended to we should still have been champing acorns!” observed Luttrell the witty, when certain enlightened folk strenuously opposed the building of Waterloo Bridge on the plea that it would spoil the river!

It is certain, however, that with the first introduction here of operatic performances came the gipsy-tent, or hut, of the prompter. The singers voted it quite indispensable. It was much ridiculed, of course, by the general public. It was even made the special subject of burlesque on a rival stage. A century ago the imbecility was indulged in of playing “The Beggar’s Opera” with “the characters reversed,” as it was called; that is to say, the female characters were assumed by the actors, the male by the actresses. This was at the Haymarket Theatre, under George Colman’s management. The foolish proceeding won prodigious applause. A prologue or preliminary act in three scenes was written for the occasion. The fun of this introduction seems now gross and flat enough. Towards the conclusion of it, we read, a stage-carpenter raised his head through a trap in the centre of the stage. He was greeted with a roar of laughter from the gallery. The prompter appears on the scene and demands of the carpenter what he means by opening the trap? The carpenter explains that he designs to prompt the performers after the fashion of the Opera House on the other side of the Haymarket. “Psha!” cries the prompter, “none of your Italian tricks with me! Shut up the trap again! I shall prompt in my old place; for we won’t do all they do on the other side of the way till they can do all we do on ours.” So soundly English a speech is received with great cheering—the foreigners and their new-fangled ways are laughed to scorn, and the performance is a very complete success.

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To singers, the convenient position of the prompter is a matter of real importance. Their memories are severely tried, for, in addition to the words, they have to bear in mind the music of their parts. While delivering their scenas they are compelled to remain almost stationary, well in front of the stage, so that their voices may be thrown towards their audience and not lose effect by escaping into the flies. Meanwhile their hasty movement towards a prompter in the wings, upon any sudden forgetfulness of the words of their songs, would be most awkward and unseemly. It is very necessary that their prompter and their conductor should be their near neighbours, able to render them assistance and support upon the shortest notice. But this proximity of the prompter has, perhaps, induced them to rely too much upon his help, and to burden their memories too little. The majority of singers are but indifferently acquainted with the words they are required to utter. They gather these as they want them, from the hidden friend in his hutch at their feet. The occupants of the proscenium boxes at the opera-houses must be familiarly acquainted with the tones of the prompter's voice, as he delivers to the singers, line by line, the matter of their parts; and occasionally these stage whispers are audible at a greater distance from the foot-lights. In operatic performances, however, the words are of very inferior importance to the music; the composer quite eclipses the author. A musician has been known to call a libretto the "verbiage" of his opera. The term was not perhaps altogether inappropriate. Even actors are apt to underrate the importance of the speeches they are called upon to deliver, laying the greater stress upon the "business" they propose to originate, or the scenic effects that are to be introduced into the play. They sometimes describe the words of their parts as "cackle." But perhaps this term also may be accepted as applying, fitly enough, to much of the dialogue of the modern drama.

It is a popular notion that, although all persons may not be endowed with histrionic gifts, it is open to everybody to perform the duties of a prompter without preparation or study. Still the office requires some exercise of care and judgment. "Here's a nice mess you've got me into," said once a tragedian, imperfect in his text, to an inexperienced or incautious prompter. "What am I to do now? Thanks to you, I've been and spoken all the next act!" And the prompter has a task of serious difficulty before him when the actors are but distantly acquainted with their parts, or "shy of the syls," that is, syllables, as they prefer to describe their condition. "Where have they got to now?" he has sometimes to ask himself, when he finds them making havoc of their speeches, missing their cues, and leading him a sort of steeple-chase through the book of the play. It is the golden rule of the player who is "stuck"—at a loss for words—to "come to Hecuba,"

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or pass to some portion of his duty which he happens to bear in recollection. "What's the use of bothering about a handful of words?" demanded a veteran stroller. "I never stick. I always say something and get on, and no one has hissed me yet!" It was probably this performer, who, during his impersonation of Macbeth, finding himself at a loss as to the text soon after the commencement of his second scene with Lady Macbeth, coolly observed: "Let us retire, dearest chuck, and con this matter over in a more sequestered spot, far from the busy haunts of men. Here the walls and doors are spies, and our every word is echoed far and near. Come, then, let's away! False heart must hide, you know, what false heart dare not show." A prompter could be of little service to a gentleman so fertile in resources. He may be left to pair off with that provincial Montano who modernised his speech in reference to Cassio:

> And 'tis great pity that the noble Moor
> Should hazard such a place as his own second
> With one of an ingraft infirmity.
> It were an honest action to say
> So to the Moor—

into "It's a pity, don't you think, that Othello should place such a man in such an office. Hadn't we better tell him so, sir?"

In small provincial or strolling companies it often becomes expedient to press every member of the establishment into the service of the stage. We read of a useful property-man and scene-shifter who was occasionally required to fill small parts in the performance, such, for instance, as "the cream-faced loon" in "Macbeth," and who thus explained his system of representation, admitting that from his other occupations he could rarely commit perfectly to memory the words he was required to utter. "I tell you how I manage. I inwariably contrives to get a reg'lar knowledge of the natur' of the *char*-ac-ter, and ginnerally gives the haudience words as near like the truth as need be. I seldom or never puts any of you out, and takes as much pains as anybody can expect for two-and-six a week extra, which is all I gets for doing such-like parts as mine. I finds Shakespeare's parts worse to get into my head nor any other; he goes in and out so to tell a thing. I should like to know how I was to say all that rigmarole about the wood coming; and I'm sure my telling Macbeth as Birnam Wood was a-walking three miles off the castle, did very well. But some gentlemen is sadly pertickler, and never considers circumstances!"

Such players as this provoke the despair of prompters, who must often be tempted to close their books altogether. It would almost seem that there are some performers whom it is quite vain to prompt: it is safer to let them alone, doing what they list, lest bad should be made worse. Something of this kind happened once in the case of a

certain Marcellus. Hamlet demands of Horatio concerning the ghost of “buried Denmark:” “Stayed it long?” Horatio answers: “While one with moderate

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haste might tell a hundred." Marcellus should add: "Longer, longer." But the Marcellus of this special occasion was mute. "Longer, longer," whispered the prompter. Then out spoke Marcellus, to the consternation of his associates: "Well, say two hundred!" So prosaic a Marcellus is only to be matched by that literal Guildenstern who, when besought by Hamlet to "Play upon this pipe," was so moved by the urgent manner of the tragedian, that he actually made the attempt, seizing the instrument, and evoking from it most eccentric sounds.

It is curious how many of the incidents and details of representation escape the notice of the audience. And here we are referring less to merits than to mischances. Good acting may not always obtain due recognition; but then how often bad acting and accidental deficiencies remain undetected! "We were all terribly out, but the audience did not see it," actors will often candidly admit. Although we in front sometimes see and hear things we should not, some peculiarity of our position blinds and deafens us too much. Our eyes are beguiled into accepting age for youth, shabbiness for finery, tinsel for splendour. Garrick frankly owned that he had once appeared upon the stage so inebriated as to be scarcely able to articulate, but "his friends endeavoured to stifle or cover this trespass with loud applause," and the majority of the audience did not perceive that anything extraordinary was the matter. What happened to Garrick on that occasion has happened to others of his profession. And our ears do not catch much of what is uttered on the stage. Young, the actor, used to relate that on one occasion, when playing the hero of "The Gamester" to the Mrs. Beverley of Sarah Siddons, he was so overcome by the passion of her acting as to be quite unable to proceed with his part. There was a long pause, during which the prompter several times repeated the words which Beverley should speak. Then "Mrs. Siddons coming up to her fellow-actor, put the tips of her fingers upon his shoulders, and said, in a low voice, 'Mr. Young, recollect yourself.'" Yet probably from the front of the house nothing was seen or heard of this. In the same way the players will sometimes prompt each other through whole scenes, interchange remarks as to necessary adjustments of dress, or instructions as to "business" to be gone through, without exciting the attention of the audience. Kean's pathetic whisper, "I am dying, speak to them for me," when, playing for the last time, he sank into the arms of his son, was probably not heard across the orchestra.

Mrs. Fanny Kemble, in her "Journal" of her Tour in America, gives an amusing account of a performance of the last scene of "Romeo and Juliet," not as it seemed to the spectators, but as it really was, with the whispered communications of the actors. Romeo, at the words "Quick, let me snatch thee to thy Romeo's arms," pounced upon his playfellow, plucked her up in his arms "like an uncomfortable bundle," and staggered down the stage with her. Juliet whispers; "Oh, you've got me up horridly! That'll never do; let me down! Pray let me down!" But Romeo proceeds, from the acting version of the play, be it understood:

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There, breathe a vital spirit on thy lips,
And call thee back, my soul, to life and love!

Juliet continues to whisper: "Pray put me down; you'll certainly throw me down if you don't set me on the ground directly." "In the midst of 'cruel, cursed fate,' his dagger fell out of his dress. I, embracing him tenderly, crammed it back again, because I knew I should want it at the end." The performance thus went on:

ROMEO. Tear not my heart-strings thus!
They break! they crack! Juliet! Juliet!
[*Dies.*

JULIET (*to corpse*). Am I smothering you?

CORPSE. Not at all. But could you, do you think, be so kind as to put my wig on again for me? It has fallen off.

JULIET (*to corpse*). I'm afraid I can't, but I'll throw my muslin veil over it. You've broken the phial, haven't you? (*Corpse nodded*).

JULIET (*to corpse*). Where's your dagger?

CORPSE (*to Juliet*). 'Pon my soul I don't know.

The same vivacious writer supplies a corresponding account of the representation of "Venice Preserved," in which, of course, she appeared as Belvidera. "When I went on, I was near tumbling down at the sight of my Jaffier, who looked like the apothecary in 'Romeo and Juliet,' with the addition of some devilish red slashes along his thighs and arms. The first scene passed off well, but, oh! the next, and the next to that! Whenever he was not glued to my side (and that was seldom), he stood three yards behind me; he did nothing but seize my hand and grapple it so hard that, unless I had knocked him down (which I felt much inclined to try), I could not disengage myself. In the senate scene, when I was entreating for mercy, and struggling, as Otway has it, for my life, he was prancing round the stage in every direction, flourishing his dagger in the air. I wish to heaven I had got up and run away: it would have been natural, and have served him extremely right. In the parting scene—oh, what a scene it was!—instead of going away from me when he said, 'Farewell for ever!' he stuck to my skirts, though in the same breath that I adjured him, in the words of my part, not to leave me, I added, aside, 'Get away from me, oh do!' When I exclaimed, 'Not one kiss at parting!' he kept embracing and kissing me like mad, and when I ought to have been pursuing him, and calling after him, 'Leave thy dagger with me!' he hung himself up against the wing, and remained dangling there for five minutes. I was half crazy. I prompted him constantly, and once, after struggling in vain to free myself from him, was obliged, in the middle of my part, to

exclaim, ‘You hurt me dreadfully, Mr. ——.’ He clung to me, cramped me, crumpled me —dreadful! I never experienced anything like this before, and made up my mind that I never would again.”

Yet the ludicrous imperfections of this performance passed unnoticed by the audience. The applause seems to have been unbounded, and the Jaffier of the night was even honoured by a special call before the curtain!

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There is hardly necessity for further record of the curiosities of stage whispers; but here is a story of a *sotto voce* communication which must have gravely troubled its recipient. A famous Lady Macbeth, “starring” in America, had been accidentally detained on her journey to a remote theatre. She arrived in time only to change her dress rapidly and hurry on the scene. The performers were all strangers to her. At the conclusion of her first soliloquy, a messenger should enter to announce the coming of King Duncan. But what was her amazement to hear, in answer to her demand, “What is your tidings?” not the usual reply, “The king comes here to-night,” but the whisper, spoken from behind a Scotch bonnet, upheld to prevent the words reaching the ears of the audience, “Hush! I’m Macbeth. We’ve cut the messenger out—go on, please!”

Another disconcerted performer must have been the provincial Richard III., to whom the Ratcliffe of the theatre—who ordinarily played harlequin, and could not enter without something of that tripping and twirling gait peculiar to pantomime—brought the information, long before it was due, that “the Duke of Buckingham is taken!” “Not yet, you fool,” whispered Richard. “Beg pardon; thought he was,” cried Harlequin Ratcliffe, as, carried away by his feelings or the force of habit, he threw what tumblers call “a Catherine wheel,” and made a rapid exit.

We conclude with noting a stage whisper of an old-established and yet most mysterious kind. In a book of recent date dealing with theatrical life, we read that the words “John Orderly” uttered by the proprietor of a strolling theatre, behind the scenes, or in the wings of his establishment, constitute a hint to the players to curtail the performances and allow the curtain to fall as soon as may be. Who was “John Orderly,” and how comes his name to be thus used as a watchword? The Life of Edwin the actor, written by (to quote Macaulay) “that filthy and malignant baboon, John Williams, who called himself Anthony Pasquin,” and published late in the last century, contains the following passage: “When theatric performers intend to abridge an act or play, they are accustomed to say, we will ‘John Audley’ it. It originated thus: In the year 1749, Shuter was master of a booth at Bartholomew Fair in West Smithfield, and it was his mode to lengthen the exhibition until a sufficient number of persons were gathered at the door to fill the house. This event was signified by a fellow popping his head in at the gallery door and bellowing out ’John Audley!’ as if in the act of inquiry, though the intention was to let Shuter know that a fresh audience were in high expectation below. The consequence of this notification was that the entertainments were instantly concluded, and the gates of the booth thrown open for a new auditory.” That “John Audley” should be in time corrupted into “John Orderly,” is intelligible enough. We don’t look to the showman or the strolling manager for nicety or correctness of pronunciation. But whether such a person as John Audley ever existed, who he was, and what he did, that his name should be handed down in this way, from generation to generation, we are still left inquiring.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

STAGE GHOSTS.

The ghost, as a vehicle of terror, a solvent of dramatic difficulties, and a source of pleasurable excitement to theatrical audiences, seems to have become quite an extinct creature. As Bob Acres said of “damns,” ghosts “have had their day;” or perhaps it would be more correct to say, their night. It may be some consolation to them, however, in their present fallen state, to reflect that they were at one time in the enjoyment of an almost boundless prosperity and popularity. For long years they were accounted among the most precious possessions of the stage. Addison writes in “The Spectator”: “Among the several artifices which are put in practice by the poets, to fill the minds of the audience with terror, the first place is due to thunder and lightning, which are often made use of at the descending of a god, at the vanishing of a devil, or at the death of a tyrant. I have known a bell introduced into several tragedies with good effect, and have seen the whole assembly in very great alarm all the while it has been ringing. But there is nothing which delights and terrifies our English theatre so much as a ghost, especially when he appears in a bloody shirt. A spectre has very often saved a play, though he has done nothing but stalked solemnly across the stage, or rose through a cleft in it and sunk again without speaking one word. There may be a proper season for these several terrors, and when they only come in as aids and assistances to the poet, they are not only to be excused but to be applauded.”

The reader may be reminded that Shakespeare has evinced a very decided partiality for ghosts. In “The Second Part of King Henry VI.,” Bolingbroke, the conjurer, raises up a spirit. In “Julius Caesar,” Brutus is visited in his tent by the ghost of the murdered Caesar. In “Hamlet,” we have, of course, the ghost of the late king. In “Macbeth” the ghost of Banquo takes his seat at the banquet, and in the caldron scene we are shown apparitions of “an armed head,” “a bloody child,” “a child crowned, with a tree in his hand,” and “eight kings” who pass across the stage, “the last with a glass in his hand.” In “Richard III.” quite a large army of ghosts present and address themselves alternately to Richard and to Richmond. The ghosts of Prince Edward, Henry VI., Clarence, Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan, Hastings, the two young Princes, Queen Anne, and Buckingham invoke curses upon the tyrant and blessings upon his opponent. It would be hard to find in the annals of the drama another instance of such an assembly of apparitions present upon the stage at the same time.

In Otway’s tragedy of “Venice Preserved,” the ghosts of Jaffier and Pierre, which confronted the distracted Belvidera in the last scene, were for a long time very popular apparitions, although in later performances of the play it was thought proper to omit them, and to allow the audience to imagine their presence, or to conclude that Belvidera only fancied that she saw them. Here, however, is the extract from the original play:

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BELVIDERA. Ha! look there!
[*The Ghosts of Jaffier and Pierre rise together, both bloody.*
My husband bloody, and his friend too! Murder!
Who has done this? Speak to me, thou sad vision!
[*Ghosts sink.*
On these poor trembling knees, I beg it. Vanished!
Here they went down. Oh! I'll dig, dig the den up.
You shan't delude me thus. Ho! Jaffier, Jaffier,
Peep up and give me but a look. I have him!
I've got him, father! Oh, now I'll smuggle him!
My love! my dear! my blessing! help me! help me!
They have hold on me, and drag me to the bottom.
Nay, now they pull so hard. Farewell. [*She dies.*

MAID. She's dead.
Breathless and dead.

This may seem very sad stuff, but it would be unfair to judge Otway's plays by this one extract. "Venice Preserved" is now shelved as an acting drama, but it was formerly received with extraordinary favour, and is by no means deficient in poetic merit. Campbell, the poet, speaks of it, in his life of Mrs. Siddons, as "a tragedy which so constantly commands the tears of audiences that it would be a work of supererogation for me to extol its tenderness. There may be dramas where human character is depicted with subtler skill—though Belvidera might rank among Shakespeare's creations; and 'Venice Preserved' may not contain, like 'Macbeth' and 'Lear,' certain high conceptions which exceed even the power of stage representation—but it is as full as a tragedy can be of all the pathos that is transfusable into action." Belvidera was one of Mrs. Siddons's greatest characters. Campbell notes that "until the middle of the last century the ghosts of Jaffier and Pierre used to come in upon the stage, haunting Belvidera in her last agonies, which certainly require no aggravation from spectral agency." The play was much condensed for presentment on the stage; but it would not appear that Belvidera's dying speech, quoted above, was interfered with. Boaden, in his memoir of the actress, expressly commends Mrs. Siddons's delivery of the passage, "I'll dig, dig the den up!" and the action which accompanied the words.

For the time ghosts had been only incidental to a performance; by-and-by they were to become the main features and attractions of stage representation. Still they had not escaped ridicule and caricature. Fielding, in his burlesque tragedy of "Tom Thumb," introduced the audience to a scene between King Arthur and the ghost of Gaffer Thumb. The king threatens to kill the ghost, and prepares to execute his threat, when the apparition kindly explains to him, "I am a ghost and am already dead." "Ye stars!" exclaims King Arthur, "'tis well."

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In his humorous notes to the published play, Fielding states, with mock gravity: "Of all the particulars in which the modern stage falls short of the ancient, there is none so much to be lamented as the great scarcity of ghosts. Whence this proceeds I will not presume to determine. Some are of opinion that the moderns are unequal to that sublime sort of language which a ghost ought to speak. One says ludicrously that ghosts are out of fashion; another that they are properer for comedy; forgetting, I suppose, that Aristotle hath told us that a ghost is the soul of tragedy," &c. &c. But when, towards the commencement of the present century, melodrama was first brought upon the boards, the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe were being dramatised, and such pieces as "The Tale of Mystery," "The Bleeding Nun," and "The Castle Spectre," were obtaining public favour, it was clear that room was being made for the stage ghost; the way was cleared for it to become the be-all and the end-all of the performance, the prominent attraction of the evening.

Here is an extract from Lewis's "Castle Spectre," including certain stage directions, by no means the least important part of the play.

> *Enter* HASSAN, *hastily*.
>
> HASSAN. My lord, all is lost! Percy has surprised the castle,
> and speeds this way!
>
> OSMOND. Confusion! Then I must be sudden! Aid me, Hassan!

HASSAN *and* OSMOND *force* ANGELA *from her father, who suddenly disengages himself from* MULEY *and* ALARIC. OSMOND, *drawing his sword, rushes upon* REGINALD, *who is disarmed, and beaten upon his knees; when at the moment that* OSMOND *lifts his arm to stab him,* EVELINA'S *ghost throws herself between them*. OSMOND *starts back and drops his sword.*

> OSMOND. Horror! What form is this?
>
> ANGELA. Die!

Disengages herself from HASSAN, *who springs suddenly forward, and plunges her dagger in* OSMOND'S *bosom, who falls with a loud groan and faints. The ghost vanishes.* ANGELA *and* REGINALD *rush into each other's arms.*

"The Castle Spectre" enjoyed great success. It was supported by the whole strength of the Drury Lane company, John Kemble appearing as Earl Percy, and Mrs. Jordan as the heroine, and was repeated some fifty nights during its first season.

It may be worth recording that in the course of the play, the great John Kemble was required to execute, not exactly what is now known as a "sensation header," but still a gymnastic feat of some difficulty and danger. Earl Percy has something of the agility of

a harlequin about him, and when he obtains admission into his enemy's castle to rescue Angela, he is required to climb from a sofa up to a gothic window high above him, and then, alarmed by the approach of his negro sentinels, to fall from the height flat

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again at full length upon his sofa, and to pretend to be asleep as his guards had previously left him. Kemble is said to have done this “as boldly and suddenly as if he had been shot.” When people complimented him upon his unsuspected agility, he would answer: “Nay, gentlemen, Mr. Boaden has exceeded all compliment upon this feat of mine, for he counselled me from Macbeth to ‘jump the life to come.’” “It was melancholy,” comments Mr. Boaden, recording the success of the play, “to see the abuse of such talents;” and then he adds the remarkable opinion: “It is only in a barn that the Cato of a company should be allowed to risk his neck!”

Against “The Castle Spectre” the critics, of course, raised their voices. Its popularity was viewed with much bitterness and jealousy. “The great run the piece had,” writes the reverend author of “The History of the Stage,” “is a striking proof that success is a very uncertain criterion of merit. The plot is rendered contemptible by the introduction of the ghost.” “I hope it will not be hereafter believed,” cried Cooke the actor, “that ‘The Castle Spectre’ could attract crowded houses when the most sublime productions of the immortal Shakespeare could be played to empty benches.” A dispute arising in the green-room of the theatre between Lewis and Sheridan, Lewis offered to bet all the money which the play had brought that he was in the right. “No,” said Sheridan, “I can’t afford to bet so much as that; but I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll bet you all it’s worth.” Still, there was no cavilling down the play. The stage ghost was triumphant. He had attained his apogee. “The Castle Spectre” remained a stock piece for years, and has even appeared upon the stage in quite recent times.

Formerly the public had been satisfied with a very prosaic ghost. A substantial figure, with a whitened face, and a streak of red paint on his brow, was thrust through a trap-door, and it was held that all had been done that was necessary in the way of stage illusion. The ghost of Hamlet’s father was frequently attired in a suit of real armour borrowed from the Tower. There is a story of a ghost thus heavily accoutred, who, overcome by the weight of his harness, fell down on the stage and rolled towards the foot-lights, the pit raising an alarm lest the poor apparition should indeed be burnt by the fires of the lamps. Barton Booth, the great actor in the time of Queen Anne and George I., is said to have been the first representative of the ghost in “Hamlet” who wore list shoes to deaden the noise of his footsteps as he moved across the stage. In the poem of “The Actor,” by Robert Lloyd, the friend of Churchill, published in 1757, we have an explicit description of the treatment of ghosts then in vogue upon the stage, with special reference to the ghost of “our dear friend” Banquo:

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But in stage customs what offends me most
Is the slip-door, and slowly rising ghost.
Tell me—nor count the question too severe—
Why need the dismal powdered forms appear?
When chilling horrors shake the affrighted king,
And guilt torments him with her scorpion sting,
When keenest feelings at his bosom pull,
And fancy tells him that the seat is full;
Why need the ghost usurp the monarch's place,
To frighten children with his mealy face?
The king alone should form the phantom there,
And talk and tremble at the vacant chair.

Farther on the poet discourses of the ghosts in "Venice Preserved," of which mention has already been made:

If Belvidera her loved lost deplore,
Why for twin spectres burst the yawning floor?
When, with disordered starts and horrid cries,
She paints the murdered forms before her eyes,
And still pursues them with a frantic stare,
'Tis pregnant madness brings the visions there.
More instant horror would enforce the scene
If all her shudderings were at shapes unseen.

It may have been due to Lloyd's poem, and to the opinions it expressed and obtained favour for, that when Drury Lane Theatre opened in 1794 with a performance of "Macbeth," the experiment was tried of omitting the appearance of Banquo's ghost, and leaving its presence to be imagined by the spectators. The alteration, however, was not found to be agreeable to the audience. While granting that Mr. Kemble's fine acting was almost enough to make them believe they really did see the ghost, they preferred that there should be no mistake about the matter, and that Banquo's shade should come on bodily—be distinctly visible. Further, they were able to point to Shakespeare's stage direction: "Enter the ghost of Banquo, and sits in Macbeth's place." Surely there could be no mistake, they argued, as to what the dramatist himself intended. In subsequent performances the old system was restored, and in all modern representations of the tragedy the phantom has not failed to be visible to the spectators. Nevertheless Banquo's ghost remains the *crux* of stage managers. How to get him on? How to get him off? How to make him look anything like a ghost—respectable, if not awful? How to avoid that distressing titter generally audible among those of the spectators who cannot suppress their sense of the ludicrous even in one of Shakespeare's grandest scenes? Upon a darkened stage a ghost, skilfully attired in vaporous draperies, may be made sufficiently impressive, as in "Hamlet," for instance. The shade of the departed king, if tolerably treated, seldom provokes a smile, even from the most hardened and

jocose of spectators. But in “Macbeth” the scene must be well lighted, for the nobles, courtiers, and guests are at high banquet; and the ghost must appear towards the front of the stage, otherwise Macbeth will be

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compelled to turn his back upon the public, and his simulated horror will be absolutely thrown away; if the actor's face cannot be seen, his acting, of necessity, goes for little or nothing. Even in our own days of triumphant stage illusion, it must be owned that the presentment of Banquo's ghost still remains incomplete and unsatisfactory; but where such adroit managers as Mr. Macready, Mr. Charles Kean, and Mr. Phelps (to name no more) have failed, it seems vain to hope for success. Pictorially, Banquo's ghost has fared better, as all who are acquainted with Mr. Maclise's "Macbeth" will readily acknowledge.

A curious fact in connection with the Banquo of Betterton's time may here be noted. Banquo was represented by an actor named Smith; the ghost, however, was personated by another actor—Sandford. Why this division of the part between two performers? Smith was possessed of a handsome face and form, whereas Sandford was of "a low and crooked figure." He was the stage villain of his time, and was famed for his uncomely and malignant aspect; "the Spagnolet of the stage," Cibber calls him; but it is certainly strange that he should therefore have enjoyed a prescriptive right to impersonate ghosts.

The attempted omission of Banquo's ghost, however, made it clear that the old substantial shade emerging from a trap-door in the stage had ceased to satisfy the town. Something more was required. The public were becoming critical about their ghosts. Credit could not be given to the spirits of the theatre if they exceeded a certain consistency. There was a demand for something vaporous and unearthly, gliding, transparent, mysterious. Scenic illusion was acquiring an artistic quality. The old homely simple processes of the theatre were exploded. The audience would only be deceived upon certain terms. Mr. Boaden, adapting Ann Radcliffe's "Romance of the Forest" to the stage of Covent Garden Theatre, records the anxiety he felt about the proper presentment of its supernatural incidents. The contrivance he hit upon has since become one of the commonplaces of theatrical illusion. It was arranged that the spectre should be seen through a bluish-gray gauze, so as to remove the too corporeal effect of a live actor, and convert the moving substance into a gliding essence.

The plan, however, was not carried into effect without considerable difficulty. Mr. Harris, the manager, ordered a night rehearsal of the play, so that the author might judge of the success of the effects introduced. The spectre was to be personated by one Thompson, a portly jovial actor, whose views as to the treatment of the supernatural upon the stage were of a very primitive kind. He appeared upon the scene clad in the conventional solid armour of the theatre, with over all a gray gauze veil, as stiff as buckram, thrown about him. Mr. Boaden describes his horror and astonishment at the misconception. It had been intended that the gauze, stretched on a frame, should

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cover a portal of the scene, and that the figure of the spectre should be seen dimly through it. But even then the contour of Thompson was found very inappropriate to a phantom. It was necessary to select for the part an actor of a slighter and taller form. At length a representative of the ghost was found in the person of Follet, the clown, "celebrated for his eating of carrots in the pantomimes." Follet readily accepted the part: his height was heroic, he was a skilled posture-maker, he was well versed in the duties of a mime. Still there was a further difficulty. The ghost had to speak—only two words, it is true—he had to utter the words "Perished here!" and, as the clown very frankly admitted: "'Perished here' will be exactly the fate of the author if I'm left to say it." The gallery would recognise the clown's voice, and all seriousness would be over for the evening. It was like the ass in the lion's skin—he would bray, and all would be betrayed. At last it was determined that the part should be divided; Follet should perform the actions of the ghost, while Thompson, in the wings, out of the sight of the audience, should pronounce the important words. The success of the experiment was signal. Follet, in a closely-fitting suit of dark-gray stuff, made in the shape of armour, faintly visible through the sheet of gauze, flitted across the stage like a shadow, amidst the breathless silence of the house, to be followed presently, on the falling of the curtain, by peal after peal of excited applause.

A humorous story of a stage ghost is told in Raymond's "Life of Elliston," aided by an illustration from the etching-needle of George Cruikshank, executed in quite his happiest manner. Dowton the actor, performing a ghost part—to judge from the illustration, it must have been the ghost in "Hamlet," but the teller of the story does not say formally that such was the fact—had, of course, to be lowered in the old-fashioned way through a trap-door in the stage, his face being turned towards the audience. Elliston and De Camp, concealed beneath the stage, had provided themselves with small ratan canes, and as their brother-actor slowly and solemnly descended, they applied their sticks sharply and rapidly to the calves of his legs, unprotected by the plate armour that graced his shins. Poor Dowton with difficulty preserved his gravity of countenance, or refrained from the utterance of a yell of agony while in the presence of the audience. His lower limbs, beneath the surface of the stage, frisked and curvetted about "like a horse in Ducrow's arena." His passage below was maliciously made as deliberate as possible. At length, wholly let down, and completely out of the sight of the audience, he looked round the obscure regions beneath the stage to discover the base perpetrators of the outrage. He was speechless with rage and burning for revenge. Elliston and his companion had of course vanished. Unfortunately, at that moment, Charles Holland, another

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member of the company, splendidly dressed, appeared in sight. The enraged Dowton, mistaking his man, and believing that Holland's imperturbability of manner was assumed and an evidence of his guilt, seized a mop at that moment at hand immersed in very dirty water, and thrusting it in his face, utterly ruined wig, ruffles, point-lace, and every particular of his elaborate attire. In vain Holland protested his innocence and implored for mercy; his cries only stimulated the avenger's exertions, and again and again the saturated mop did desperate execution over the unhappy victim's finery.

Somewhat appeased at last, Dowton stayed his hand; but in the meantime Holland was summoned to appear upon the stage. The play was proceeding—what was to be done! All was confusion. It was not possible for Holland to present himself before the audience in such a plight as he had been reduced to. An apology was made "for the sudden indisposition of Mr. Holland," and the public were informed that "Mr. De Camp had kindly undertaken to go on for the part." Whether Dowton ever discovered his real persecutors is not stated. The story, indeed, may not be true, or it may be much rouged and burnt-corked, as are so many theatrical anecdotes, to conceal its natural poverty and weakness of constitution. But it is an amusing legend in any case.

The melodrama of "The Corsican Brothers," first produced in England at the Princess's Theatre in 1852, and splendidly revived at the Lyceum by Mr. Irving in 1880, reawakened the public interest in the ghosts of the theatre; and the spectre that rose from the stage as from a cellar, and crossing it, gained his full stature gradually as he proceeded, was for some time a great popular favourite, though burlesque dogged his course, and a certain ridicule always attended his exertions. The fidgety musical accompaniment brought from Paris, and known as "The Ghost Melody," by M. Varney, excited much admiration, while the intricate stage machinery involved in the production of the apparition of Louis dei Franchi gave additional interest to the performance. Of late years the modern drama has made scarcely any addition to our stock of stage ghosts. The ingenious invention known as the Spectral Illusion of Messrs. Dircks and Pepper obtained great favour at one time, and awakened some interest upon the subject of theatrical phantoms. But it soon became clear that the public cared for the Illusion, and not for the Spectre. They were concerned about the mechanism of the contrivance, not awed by the supernatural appearances it brought before them. When once you begin to inquire by what process a ghost is produced, it is clear you are not moved by its character as a spectre merely. Puppets lose their power to please when the spectators are bent upon detecting the wires by which they are made to move.

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The old melodramatic stage ghost—the spectre of “The Castle Spectre” school of plays—the phantom in a white sheet with a dab of red paint upon its breast, that rose from behind a tomb when a blow was struck upon a gong and a teaspoonful of blue fire was lighted in the wings, probably found its last home in the travelling theatre long known as “Richardson’s.” Expelled from the regular theatre, it became a wanderer upon the face of the earth, appearing at country fairs, and bringing to bear upon remote agricultural populations those terrors that had long since lost all value in the eyes of the townsfolk. It lived to become a thing of scorn. “Richardson’s Ghost” became a byword for a bankrupt phantom—a preposterous apparition, that was, in fact, only too thoroughly seen through: not to apply the words too literally. Whether there is still a show calling itself “Richardson’s” (the original Richardson died a quarter of a century ago, and his immediate followers settled in a permanent London theatre long years back), and whether there is yet a phantom perambulating the country and calling itself “Richardson’s Ghost,” may be left to the very curious to inquire into and determine. The travelling theatre nowadays has lost its occupation. When the audiences began to travel, the stage could afford to be stationary.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BOOK OF THE PLAY.

Mr. Thackeray has described a memorable performance at the Theatre Royal, Chatteries. Arthur Pendennis and his young friend Harry Foker were among the audience; Lieutenants Rodgers and Podgers, and Cornet Tidmus, of the Dragoons, occupied a private box. The play was “The Stranger.” Bingley, the manager, appeared as the hero of the sombre work; Mrs. Haller was impersonated by Miss Fotheringay. “I think ye’ll like Miss Fotheringay in Mrs. Haller, or me name’s not Jack Costigan,” observed the father of the actress. Bingley, we are told, was great in the character of the Stranger, and wore the tight pantaloons and Hessian boots which stage tradition has duly prescribed as the costume of that doleful personage. “Can’t stand you in tights and Hessians, Bingley,” young Mr. Foker had previously remarked. He had the stage jewellery on too, selecting “the largest and most shining rings for himself,” and allowing his little finger to quiver out of his cloak, with a sham diamond ring covering the first joint of the finger, and twiddling it in the faces of the pit. It is told of him that he made it a favour to the young men of his company to go on in light-comedy parts with that ring. They flattered him by asking its history. “It had belonged to George Frederick Cooke, who had had it from Mr. Quin, who may have bought it for a shilling.” But Bingley fancied the world was fascinated by its glitter.

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And he read out of that stage-book—the genuine and old-established "book of the play"—that wonderful volume, "which is not bound like any other book in the world, but is rouged and tawdry like the hero or heroine who holds it; and who holds it as people never do hold books: and points with his finger to a passage, and wags his head ominously at the audience, and then lifts up eyes and finger to the ceiling, professing to derive some intense consolation from the work between which and heaven there is a strong affinity. Any one," proceeds the author of "Pendennis," "who has ever seen one of our great light comedians X., in a chintz dressing-gown, such as nobody ever wore, and representing himself as a young nobleman in his apartments, and whiling away the time with light literature, until his friend Sir Harry shall arrive, or his father shall come down to breakfast—anybody, I say, who has seen the great X. over a sham book, has indeed had a great pleasure, and an abiding matter for thought."

The Stranger reads from morning to night, as his servant Francis reports of him. When he bestows a purse upon the aged Tobias, that he may be enabled to purchase his only son's discharge from the army, he first sends away Francis with the stage-book, that there may be no witness of the benevolent deed. "Here, take this book, and lay it on my desk," says the Stranger; and the stage direction runs: "Francis goes into the lodge with the book." Bingley, it is stated, marked the page carefully, so that he might continue the perusal of the volume off the stage if he liked. Two acts later, and the Stranger is again to be beheld, "on a seat, reading." But after that he has to put from him his precious book, for the incidents of the drama demand his very serious attention.

Dismissed from the Stranger, however, the stage-book probably reappears in the afterpiece. In how many dramatic works figures this useful property—the "book of the play"? Shakespeare has by no means disdained its use. Imogen is discovered reading in her bed in the second act of "Cymbeline." She inquires the hour of the lady in attendance:

Almost midnight, madam.

IMOGEN. I have read three hours, then; mine eyes are weak.
Fold down the leaf where I have left! To bed!

By-and-by, when Iachimo steals from his trunk to "note the chamber," he observes the book, examines it, and proclaims its nature:

She hath been reading late
The tale of Tereus! here's the leaf turned down
Where Philomel gave up.

Brutus reads within his tent:

Let me see, let me see; is not the leaf turned down
Where I left reading? Here it is, I think.
How ill this taper burns! Ha! Who comes here?

And thereupon enters the ghost of Caesar, and appoints a meeting at Philippi.

In the third act of “The Third Part of King Henry VI.,” that monarch enters, “disguised, with a prayer-book.” Farther on, when a prisoner in the Tower, he is “discovered sitting with a book in his hand, the Lieutenant attending;” when Gloucester enters, abruptly dismisses the Lieutenant, and forthwith proceeds to the assassination of the king.

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But Gloucester himself is by-and-by to have dealings with the “book of the play.” In the seventh scene of the third act of “King Richard III.,” a stage direction runs: “Enter Gloucester in a gallery above, between two bishops.” Whereupon the Lord Mayor, who has come with divers aldermen and citizens to beseech the duke to accept the crown of England, observes:

> See where his grace stands ’tween two clergymen!

Says Buckingham:

> Two props of virtue for a Christian prince,
> To stay him from the fall of vanity;
> And, see, a book of prayer in his hand;
> True ornaments to know a holy man.

The mayor and citizens departing, Gloucester, in Cibber’s acting version of the tragedy, was wont wildly to toss his prayer-book in the air. Here is an apposite note from John Taylor’s “Records of my Life,” relative to Garrick’s method of accomplishing this piece of stage business: “My father, who saw him perform King Richard on the first night of his appearance at Goodman’s Fields, told me that the audience were particularly struck with his manner of throwing away the book when the lord mayor and aldermen had retired, as it manifested a spirit totally different from the solemn dignity which characterised the former old school, and which his natural acting wholly overturned.”

A certain antiquary, when Kemble first assumed the part of Richard, took objection to the prayer-book he affected to read in this scene. “This book,” writes Boaden, “for aught I know the ’Secret History of the Green Room,’ which Kemble took from the property-man before he went on, our exact friend said should have been some illuminated missal. This was somewhat inconsistent, because one would suppose the heart of the antiquary must have grieved to see the actor skirr away so precious a relic of the dark ages, as if, like Careless, in ’The School for Scandal,’ he would willingly ’knock down the mayor and aldermen.’” It was at this time, probably, that antiquarianism first stirred itself on the subject of scenic decorations. The solitary banner unfurled by Kemble, as Richard, bore a white rose embroidered upon it. “What!” cried the antiquaries, “a king of England battling with invaders and yet not displaying his royal banner!” And remark was made upon the frequent mention of armour that occurs in the later scenes of the play. We have “locked up in steel;” “What! is my beaver easier than it was?” “And all my armour laid into my tent;” “The armourers accomplishing the knights;” “With clink of hammers closing rivets up;” “Your friends up and buckle on their armour.” Yet, as Boaden relates, it was no less strange than true, that, in Kemble’s time, “excepting the breastplate and thigh-pieces on Richmond, not one of the *dramatis personae* had the smallest particle of armour upon him in either army.”

There is a stage-book in “King Henry VIII.” The Duke of Norfolk, in the second act, “opens a folding-door; the king is discovered sitting and reading pensively.” The book of Prospero is spoken of, but not seen. In “Hamlet” the stage-book plays an important part. Says Polonius to Ophelia, when he and Claudius would be “lawful espials” of her meeting with Hamlet:

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Read on this book,
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness.

The book is now usually a missal which the lady employs at her orisons. But it is oftentimes—for so stage-management will have it—the identical volume with which Hamlet had entered reading in an earlier act, and which he describes, upon being interrogated by Polonius, as containing, “words, words, words!” and “slanders, sir!” It was John Kemble’s way, we are told, to tear out a leaf from the book at this period of the performance, by way of conveying the “stronger impression of Hamlet’s wildness.” The actor’s method of rendering this scene has not been adopted by later representatives of the character. Indeed, a long run of the tragedy, such as happens in these times, would involve serious outlay for stage-books, if so destructive a system were persisted in. Moreover, there is no sort of warrant in the text for tearing a leaf out of the “satirical rogue’s” work.

The “book of the play” frequently figures in theatrical anecdote. Wilkinson relates, that when Reddish made his first essay upon the stage, he inserted a paragraph in the newspaper, informing the public that he was “a gentleman of easy fortune.” He appeared as Sir John Dorilant, in “The School for Lovers,” and in the course of his performance threw from him an elegantly-bound book, which he was supposed to have been studying. Observing this, a gentleman in the pit inquired of Macklin, who happened to be present: “Pray, sir, do you think such conduct natural?” “Why, no, sir,” Macklin replied gravely, “not in a Sir John Dorilant, but strictly natural as Mr. Reddish; for, as you know, he has advertised himself as a gentleman of easy fortune.” It has been pointed out, however, that the inaccuracy, fatal to so many anecdotes, affects even this one. The book is thrown away in strict accordance with the stage directions of the play; and it is so treated, not by Sir John Dorilant, but by another character named Belmont.

Macklin administered a similar rebuke, while his comedy of “The True-born Irishman” was in rehearsal, to an actor personating one of the characters, and acquitting himself very indifferently. Upon his mispronouncing the name of Lady Kennegad, Macklin stepped up to him and demanded angrily, “What trade he was of?” The player replied that he was a gentleman. Macklin rejoined: “Stick to that, sir! stick to that; for you will never be an actor.”

In Farquhar’s comedy of “The Inconstant,” when Bisarre is first addressed by Mirabel and Duretete, Miss Farren, playing Bisarre, held a book in her hand, which she affected to have been reading before she spoke. Mrs. Jordan, we are told, who afterwards assumed the character, declined to make use of the stage-book, and dispensed with it altogether. She sat perfectly still, affecting to be lost in thought. Then, before speaking, she took a pinch of snuff! Half a century ago a heroine who indulged in snuff was

deemed no more objectionable than is one of our modern heroes of the stage, who cannot forego cigars or cigarettes.

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There is a stage-book to be seen in “The School for Scandal.” Joseph Surface affects to pore over its pages immediately after he has secreted Lady Teazle behind the screen, and while Sir Peter is on the stairs. “Ever improving himself,” notes Sir Peter, and then taps the reader on the shoulder. Joseph starts. “I have been dozing over a stupid book,” he says; and the stage direction bids him “gape, and throw down the book.” And many volumes are needed in “The Rivals.” Miss Languish’s maid Lucy returns after having traversed half the town, and visited all the circulating libraries in Bath. She has failed to obtain “The Reward of Constancy;” “The Fatal Connexion;” “The Mistakes of the Heart;” “The Delicate Mistress, or the Memoirs of Lady Woodford.” But she has secured, as she says, “taking the books from under her cloak, and from her pockets, ‘The Gordian Knot’ and ‘Peregrine Pickle.’ Here are ‘The Tears of Sensibility’ and ’Humphry Clinker.’ This, ‘The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality,’ written by herself; and here the second volume of ‘The Sentimental Journey.’”

> LYDIA. Heigh-ho! What are those books by the glass?
>
> LUCY. The great one is only “The Whole Duty of Man,” where I press a few blonds, ma’am.
>
> LYDIA. Very well; give me the sal volatile.
>
> LUCY. Is it in a blue cover, ma’am?
>
> LYDIA. My smelling-bottle, you simpleton!
>
> LUCY. Oh, the drops! Here, ma’am.

Presently the approach of Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthony Absolute is announced. Cries Lydia: “Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick, quick. Fling ‘Peregrine Pickle’ under the toilet; throw ’Roderick Random’ into the closet; put ‘The Innocent Adultery’ into ’The Whole Duty of Man;’ thrust ‘Lord Aimworth’ under the sofa; cram ‘Ovid’ behind the bolster; there, put ‘The Man of Feeling’ into your pocket—so, so—now lay ‘Mrs. Chapone’ in sight, and leave ’Fordyce’s Sermons’ open on the table.”

> LUCY. O, burn it, ma’am. The hairdresser has torn away as far as “Proper Pride.”
>
> LYDIA. Never mind; open at “Sobriety.” Fling me “Lord Chesterfield’s Letters.” Now for ’em!

It will be perceived that the property-master of the theatre is here required to produce quite a library of stage-books. Does he buy them by the dozen, from the nearest book-stall—out of that trunk full of miscellaneous volumes, boldly labelled, “All these at fourpence”? And does he then recover them with the bright blue or scarlet that is so dear to him, daubing them here and there with his indispensable Dutch metal? Of

course their contents can matter little. Like all the other things of the theatre, they are not what they pretend to be, nor what they would have the audience think them. The "book of the play" is something of a mystery. Let us take for granted, however, that it is rarely interesting to the reader, that it is not one of those volumes which, when once

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taken up, cannot again be laid down—which thrill, enchain, and absorb. For otherwise what might happen? When some necessary question of the play had to be considered, the actor, over-occupied with the volume in his hand, fairly tied and bound by its chain of interest, might forget his part—the book might ruin the play. Of course such an accident could not be permitted. The stage-book is bound to be a dull book, however much it may seem to entertain Brutus and Henry, the Stranger and Bisarre, Hamlet and Joseph Surface, Imogen and Lydia Languish. It is in truth, a book for all stage-readers. Now it is a prayer-book—as in the case of Richard III.; and now, in "The Hunchback," it is "Ovid's Art of Love." According to the prompt-book of the play, Modus is to enter "with a neatly-bound book."

HELEN. What is the book?

MODUS. Tis "Ovid's Art of Love."

HELEN. That Ovid was a fool.

MODUS. In what?

HELEN. In that.
To call that thing an art which art is none.

She strikes the book from his hand, and reproves him for reading in the presence of a lady.

MODUS. Right you say,
And well you served me, cousin, so to strike
The volume from my hand. I own my fault:
So please you—may I pick it up again?
I'll put it in my pocket.

It is the misfortune of the "book of the play" to be much maltreated by the *dramatis personae*. It is now flung away, now torn, now struck to earth; the property-master, it may be, watching its fate from the side-wings—anxious not so much because of its contents or intrinsic value, as on account of the gaudy cover his art has supplied it with, and the pains he must take to repair any injuries it may receive in the course of the performance.

CHAPTER XX.

"HALF-PRICE AT NINE O'CLOCK."

The plan of admitting the public to the theatres at “half-price,” after the conclusion of a certain portion of the entertainments of the evening, has, of late years, gone out of fashion. Half-price was an institution of old date, however, and by no means without advantage to the playgoer.

Formerly, the prices of admission to the theatres were not fixed so definitely as at present. In Colley Cibber’s time it was held to be reasonable that the prices should be raised whenever a new play was produced, on account of which any great expense in the way of scenery, dresses, and decorations had been incurred, or when pantomimes were brought out, involving an outlay of a thousand pounds or so. After the bloom had a little worn off these novelties, the prices fell again to their old standard; consisting for some years of four shillings, two shillings and sixpence, eighteenpence, and one shilling.

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In November, 1744, when Mr. Fleetwood was manager of Drury Lane, he was charged by the public with raising his charges too capriciously, without the excuse of having presented his patrons with a new or a costly entertainment. Thereupon ensued a disturbance in the theatre, and Mr. Fleetwood was required by the audience to give an immediate explanation of his conduct. The manager pleaded that not being an actor he was exempt from the necessity of appearing on the stage publicly before the audience; but he gave notice, through one of his players, that he was willing to confer with any persons might be deputed to meet him in his own room. A deputation accordingly went from the pit to confer with the manager, and the house waited patiently their return. The result of the consultation was stated in a note to the playbill of the following day (Saturday):

"Whenever a pantomime or farce shall be advertised, the advanced prices shall be returned to those who do not choose to stay; and, on Thursday next, will be published the manager's reasons for his conduct in the present dispute."

This arrangement was very far from giving satisfaction, however, and the disturbance was renewed the next night. A country gentleman, who had distinguished himself by the warmth and violence of his expressions of disapproval, was forcibly removed by the constables from the upper boxes and carried before a magistrate, who, however, it would seem, declined to entertain the charge against the offender. The theatre was closed for two or three nights, and a notice appeared in the playbills: "The great damage occasioned by the disturbances makes it impossible to perform." The manager published an address to the public in *The General Advertiser*, setting forth a statement of the case and justifying his conduct.

He reminded the public that the extraordinary disturbances which had lately occurred greatly affected their diversions as well as his property. He apprehended that the reasons of complaint assigned were, "the exhibition of pantomimes, advanced prices, and insults on the audience." As to the first charge, he submitted that, however distasteful pantomimes might be to the delicacy of some judgments, yet they were suited to the taste of many others; and as the playhouse might be considered as the general mart of pleasure, it was only from the variety of entertainment the different desires of the public could be supplied. He urged that the receipts of the house were sufficient evidence that without the occasional performance of pantomimes he could not afford to produce plays of a higher class. With regard to the advance in prices, he hoped he should be thought justified in that measure, when the great increase in his expenses was considered. Further, he conceived he should be no longer the subject of the displeasure of the public, since he had complied with the demand that the advanced prices should be returned to those who

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quitted the theatre after the first piece, without waiting to see the pantomime. He denied that he had ever had any intention to insult the audience. The arrest of the gentleman in the upper boxes was not in consequence of his orders, nor was he in anyway acquainted with the fact until after the discharge of the prisoner. There had been a quarrel in the theatre and much confusion consequent upon some persons flinging the candles and sconces on the stage. He denied that he had employed “bruisers” to coerce the audience. The peace-officers, carpenters, and scenemen (which last, on account of the pantomime, were very numerous), and other servants of the theatre, had not appeared until the tumult was at its height. The benches were being torn up, and there were threats of storming the stage and demolishing the scenes. If any “bruisers” were in the pit, the manager presumed that they must have entered the house with the multitude who came in after the doorkeepers had been driven from their posts. Finally, he appealed to the public to pronounce whether, after the concession he had made, and the injury he had sustained, to the extent of several hundred pounds, they would persist in a course which would only deprive them of their diversions, the players of subsistence, and compel him to resign his property.

This appeal had its effect: the disturbance ceased: although there was some discontent that an arrangement so profitable to the manager had been agreed to. It was found that in practice, when people were once comfortably seated, “very few ever went out to demand their advanced money; and those few very soon grew tired of doing so; until at last it settled in the quiet payment of the advanced prices.” Mr. Fleetwood, however, did not long continue in the management.

In the year 1763 there occurred another disturbance. An adaptation of Shakespeare’s “Two Gentlemen of Verona,” by Mr. Benjamin Victor, had been produced at Drury Lane Theatre. It was played five nights with success, but, on the sixth, when, according to the old theatrical custom, the receipts went to the author of the adaptation, the performance was interrupted. “A set of young men,” writes Mr. Victor, “who called themselves ‘The Town,’ had consulted together and determined to compel the manager to admit them at the end of the third act at half-price to every performance except in the run of a new pantomime; and they chose to make that demand on the sixth night of ‘The Two Gentlemen of Verona,’ though it was printed on the playbills ‘for the benefit of the author of the alterations.’” The performance of the play was actually forbidden. One Mr. Fitzpatrick, who was the avowed ringleader of the reformers, harangued the audience from the boxes, and set forth in very warm language the impositions of the managers, vehemently pleading the right of the public to fix the price of their bill of fare. Garrick came forward to address the house, but was received with a storm of disapprobation, and refused a hearing. The uproar continued; the benches were torn up, and the lustres and girandoles broken. Ultimately, the money taken at the doors was returned to the audience, and the theatre cleared.

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On the following night, Mr. Mallet's tragedy of "Elvira" was played for the first time. The disturbance was renewed, and Mr. Garrick was called for. He was asked peremptorily: "Will you or will you not give admittance for half-price after the third act of a play, except during the first winter a pantomime is performed?" The manager, dreading a repetition of the riot of the preceding evening, replied in the affirmative. A demand was then made for an apology from Moody the actor, who had interfered to prevent the theatre being fired. Moody appeared, and, after an Irish fashion, expressed regret that he had displeased the audience "by saving their lives in putting out the fire." This pleasantry was very ill received. Mr. Fitzpatrick's party insisted that the actor should go down on his knees and implore their pardon. Moody refused with an oath, and abruptly quitted the stage. He was received with open arms by Garrick in the wings, who assured him he should not suffer for his spirited conduct. But the tumult in the theatre became so great, that the manager was compelled to promise that Moody should not appear on the stage while he was under the displeasure of the public. A reconciliation was some time afterwards brought about between the actor and his audience. It may be noted that in 1763, according to a manuscript memorandum in his own hand (discovered by Mr. Parkes), Sir Phillip Francis, the supposed "Junius," commenced to write anonymously for the Press, the occasion being "a row in a theatre, to help Fitzpatrick out of the scrape."

Mr. Fitzpatrick's plan of reform was supposed to be chiefly levelled at Mr. Garrick, yet it became evident that the management of the rival theatre must be made to accept the regulations that had been imposed on Drury Lane. With this view the rioters paid a visit to Covent Garden, where the opera of "Artaxerxes" was being represented. Mr. Fitzpatrick delivered his inflammatory speech from the boxes, and insisted upon immediate compliance with the demands of his party. Mr. Beard, the manager, replied with great firmness. He stated that operas had never been performed at such low prices as at his theatre; that his expenses were very great; and, he urged, that the public should not grudge the full price of admission, seeing that no expense in the way of actors, dresses, scenery, music, and decorations of all kinds, had been spared for their entertainment. Finally, he declined to accept the tariff of admission proposed by Mr. Fitzpatrick. A riot then ensued, and so much damage was done that the carpenters were employed for four or five days in repairing the theatre. Mr. Beard, however, by means of a chief justice's warrant, brought two or three of the rioters before Lord Mansfield. His lordship solemnly cautioned Mr. Fitzpatrick that if any loss of life were to occur in consequence of the breach of the peace he had instigated, the law would hold him accountable for the disaster. This somewhat checked the violence of the rioters, who contented themselves thenceforward with laughing and hissing, and forbore to inflict injury upon the furniture and fittings of the theatre. Mr. Beard, at last, finding it impossible to keep open the doors of his theatre to any purpose, submitted to the terms of the dictators; peace was restored, and half-price established.

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The exception made in favour of new pantomimes was much remarked upon at the time. It was declared that the effect of the arrangement would be to exalt a worthless class of entertainment at the expense of tragedy and comedy; in order to obtain full prices the managers would be encouraged to produce a succession of pantomimes, to the neglect of works of real dramatic worth. Further, it was declared that the proceedings of Mr. Fitzpatrick, though professedly in the interests of the public, were, in truth, due to motives of private resentment and malice. According to Davies, in his "Life of Garrick," there would seem to be much reason for this charge. Mr. Fitzpatrick was a gentleman of moderate fortune, constantly attending the theatres, frequenting the coffee-houses about Covent Garden, and dabbling in dramatic criticism. He had been introduced to Garrick, had been received with much favour by the great actor, and placed on the free list of Drury Lane. His success somewhat turned his brain. He began to conceive himself a person of great importance. He assumed severely critical airs, and published letters in "The Craftsman," dealing with the players, and especially with Garrick, after a very arrogant and acrimonious fashion. Garrick took up his pen to reply, and in his poem "The Fribbleriad"—the hero of which is named Fizgigg—he rather severely satirised his critic. Churchill, following suit, to the eighth edition of his "Rosciad" added fifty lines, scourging Mr. Fitzpatrick savagely enough. The "half-price" disturbance was the method of replying to these attacks of the actor and his friend, which Mr. Fitzpatrick found to be the most suitable and convenient. Arthur Murphy, however, says for Mr. Fitzpatrick, that he was admired for his talents and amiable manners, and that Churchill caricatured him in the "Rosciad" to gratify the resentment of Garrick. In any case, however, it would be hard to justify the riot of which Fitzpatrick was certainly the instigator.

In 1817, the experiment was tried at the English Opera House, or Lyceum Theatre, of giving two distinct performances in the evening, in lieu of taking half-price at nine o'clock. The management alleged that objection had been taken to the length of theatrical performances, which were often made to extend over five hours; that the half-price system did not remedy the evil complained of by those whose habits of life or avocations would not permit their early attendance at the theatre. "Many persons who would be desirous to witness the early part of a performance, are indisposed to pay the price of a whole evening's entertainment, for that portion of it only which they can enjoy; and it may reasonably be supposed that thousands who might wish to enter the theatre at a later hour (as at the usual time for second price), are wholly excluded by the certainty of finding the best seats occupied. Thus numberless persons, from the one or the other cause, are deterred from frequenting the amusements

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of the stage." In order, therefore, to accommodate the patrons who required the performances to commence at an early hour, and to gratify those who demanded that the entertainments should be continued until late, it was proposed to divide every evening's entertainment into two distinct parts or performances. Each performance was to consist of a full three-act opera; or of a short opera with a ballet or musical entertainment. The first performance was to begin at six o'clock, and to last till about nine; and the second performance was to begin at half-past nine, and to conclude at twelve; the prices to either performance being considerably reduced. "We are fully aware," said the public address of the management, "that we shall have to encounter many professional jokes on this occasion, but we are prepared to smile at the good-humoured raillery of our friends, and the hostile attempts of our enemies, who may both, perhaps, be inclined to call this a 'Bartholomew Fair scheme.' Let them call it what they will, we know that our sole aim is to exist by your favour, and by devising all means for your entertainment, till we ultimately receive an honest reward for our labours."

The new plan was not found to work very well, however. A very thin audience attended the first performance, and a few hisses were heard in opposition to the project; the friends of the management applauding lustily. At the conclusion of the first entertainment, certain obstinate persons refused to resign their seats and make way for their successors, though the stage lamps were extinguished and they were threatened with total darkness. The manager then came forward, and formally announced that the first performance had concluded. One or two then threw their money on the stage, as the price of their admission to the second performance, and finding that the malcontents were resolved to keep their seats, the manager submitted and retired. The plan was only continued for ten nights, when the theatre was closed for the season. In a farewell address, the manager stated that the experiment, so far as he could judge, had succeeded; during the ten nights, compared with the ten nights preceding, an addition of one-third having been made to the number of persons visiting the theatre. Still, he did not feel justified in pledging himself to continue the arrangement in future seasons. There was indeed no further trial of the double-performance system in lieu of half-price.

It is rather curious to find the plan of half-price having any sort of effect upon dramatic literature, yet we find, in the "Autobiography of Thomas Dibdin," 1827, the following advice, given him by Lewis, the stage-manager at Covent Garden, in regard to writing for the stage, and apropos of Mr. Dibdin's comedy, called "Liberal Opinions":

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“MY DEAR TOM,—This will be your first five-act production, and don’t be offended if an old practitioner ventures to offer (from the respect he bears you) the fruits of his long experience. Half-price is a very proper privilege for those whose time or pockets do not afford them an opportunity of visiting the theatre earlier; but it is often the bane of an author on the first night of a five-act play. The new-comers know nothing of the foregone part of the drama; and having no context with which to connect allusions in the fourth and fifth acts, are apt to damn without consideration that which they are no judges of—

And what they cannot comprehend deny.

“To be fore-armed against this contingency, contrive to make some character (either in the heat of passion, or in any way you please) briefly run over all the foregoing parts of the story, so as to put everyone in possession of what they otherwise would have lost by absence; and, take my word, you will reap the benefit of it.”

Mr. Dibdin expresses so much gratitude for Mr. Lewis’s counsel, and recommends it so earnestly to the consideration of all young dramatists, that we cannot doubt that some effect upon subsequent writings for the stage must in this indirect way have resulted from the half-price system, and in avoidance of its disadvantages, as set forth by the stage-manager of Covent Garden Theatre.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DRAMA UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

For such a triumph as fanaticism enjoyed over the fine arts in England during and for some time after the great Civil War, no parallel can be found in the history of any other nation. And it was not, be it remembered, the work of a capricious and cruel despot; it was the tyranny of a solemn legislative assembly. Hypocrisy had some share in the proceeding, very likely; but in the main the Puritanism of the time was sincere even to its frenzies of intolerance. Good men and true held that they were doing only what was sound, and wise, and right, when they made ruthless war upon poetry, and painting, and all the refinements and graces of life, denouncing them as scandals and sins, ungodly devices, pernicious wiles of the author of all evil; when they peremptorily closed the doors of the theatres, and dismissed actors, authors, managers, and all concerned, to absolute starvation.

In the England of that time, no doubt, Puritanism obtained supporters out of respect for superior power; just as in France, at a later date, Republicanism gained converts by means of terror. The prudent, when conflict and tumult are at hand, will usually side with the stronger combatant. Thus it was with little resistance that there passed through both Houses of Parliament, in 1647, the ordinance by virtue of which the theatres were

to be dismantled and suppressed; all actors of plays to be publicly whipped; and all spectators and playgoers, for every offence, condemned

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to forfeit five shillings. This was the *coup de grace;* for the stage had already undergone many and severe assaults. The player's tenure of his art had become more and more precarious, until acting seemed to be as a service of danger. The ordinance of 1647 closed the theatres for nearly fourteen years; but for some sixteen years before the stage had been in a more or less depressed condition. Scarcely any new dramatists of distinction had appeared after 1630. The theatres were considerably reduced in number by the time 1636 was arrived at. Then came the arbitrary closing of the playhouses—professedly but for a season. Thus in 1636 they were closed for ten months; in 1642 for eighteen months. In truth Puritanism carried on its victorious campaign against the drama for something like thirty years; while even at an earlier date there had been certain skirmishing attacks upon the stage. With the first Puritan began the quarrel with the players. As Isaac Disraeli has observed, "we must go back to the reign of Elizabeth to comprehend an event which occurred in that of Charles I." A sanctimonious sect urged extravagant reforms—at first, perhaps, in all simplicity—-founding their opinions upon cramped and literal interpretations of divine precepts, and forming views of human nature "more practicable in a desert than a city, and rather suited to a monastic order than to a polished people." Still, these fanatics could scarcely have dreamed that power would ever be given them to carry their peculiar theories into practice, and to govern a nation as though it were composed entirely of precisians and bigots. For two generations—from the Reformation to the Civil War—the Puritans had been the butt of the satirical, the jest of the wits—ridiculed and laughed at on all sides. Then came a time, "when," in the words of Macaulay, "the laughers began to look grave in their turn. The rigid ungainly zealots ... rose up in arms, conquered, ruled, and, grimly smiling, trod down under their feet the whole crowd of mockers."

Yet from the first the Puritans had not neglected the pen as a weapon of offence. In 1579 Stephen Gosson published his curious pamphlet bearing the lengthy title of "The Schoole of Abuse, containing a pleasant Invective against Poets, Pipers, Jesters, and such like Catterpillars of a Commonwealth; setting up the Flag of Defiance to their mischievous exercise, and overthrowing their Bulwarks, by Profane Writers, natural reason, and common experience: A Discourse as pleasant for gentlemen that favour learning as profitable for all that will follow virtue." Gosson expresses himself with much quaint force, but he is not absolutely intolerant. He was a student of Oxford University, had in his youth written poems and plays, and even appeared upon the scene as an actor. Although he had repented of these follies, he still viewed them without acrimony. To his pamphlet we are indebted for certain interesting details in regard to the manners and customs of the Elizabethan

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playgoers. A further attack upon the theatre was led by Dr. Reynolds, of Queen's College, who was greatly troubled by the performance of a play at Christchurch, and who published, in 1593, "The Overthrow of Stage Plays," described by Disraeli as "a tedious invective, foaming at the mouth of its text with quotations and authorities." Reynolds was especially severe upon "the sin of boys wearing the dress and affecting the airs of women;" and thus unconsciously helped on a change he would have regarded as still more deplorable—the appearance of actresses upon the stage. But a fiercer far than Reynolds was to arise. In 1633 Prynne produced his "Histriomastix; or, The Player's Scourge," a monstrous work of more than a thousand closely-printed quarto pages, devoted to the most searching indictment of the stage and its votaries. The author has been described as a man of great learning, but little judgment; of sour and austere principles, but wholly deficient in candour. His book was judged libellous, for he had unwittingly aspersed the Queen in his attack upon the masques performed at Court. He was cited in the Star Chamber, and sentenced to stand in the pillory, to lose both ears, to pay a heavy fine, and to undergo imprisonment for life. This severe punishment probably stimulated the Puritans, when opportunity came to them, to deal mercilessly with the actors by way of avenging Prynne's wrongs, or of expressing sympathy with his sufferings.

And it is to be noted that early legislation in regard to the players had been far from lenient. For such actors as had obtained the countenance of "any Baron of this Realme," or "any other honourable personage of greater degree," exception was to be made; otherwise, all common players in interludes, all fencers, bearwards, and minstrels, were declared by an Act passed in the 14th year of Elizabeth to be rogues and vagabonds, and, whether male or female, liable on a first conviction "to be grievously whipped and burned through the gristle of the right ear with an hot iron of the compass of an inch about, manifesting his or her roguish kind of life;" a second offence was adjudged to be felony; a third entailed death without benefit of clergy or privilege of sanctuary. Meanwhile, the regular companies of players to whom this harsh Act did not apply, were not left unmolested. The Court might encourage them, but the City would have none of them. They had long been accustomed to perform in the yards of the City inns, but an order of the Common Council, dated December, 1575, expelled the players from the City. Thereupon public playhouses were erected outside the "liberties" or boundaries of the City. The first was probably the theatre in Shoreditch; the second, opened in its immediate neighbourhood, was known as the Curtain; the third, built by John Burbadge and other of the Earl of Leicester's company of players, was the famous Blackfriars Theatre. These were all erected about 1576, and other playhouses

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were opened soon afterwards. Probably to avoid the penalties of the Act of Elizabeth, all strolling and unattached players made haste to join regular companies, or to shelter themselves under noble patronage. And now the Church raised its voice, and a controversy which still possesses some vitality touching the morality or immorality of playhouses, plays and players, was fairly and formally entered upon. A sermon preached at Paul's Cross, November, 1577, "in the time of the plague," by the Rev. T. Wilcocks, denounced in strong language the "common plays" in London, and the multitude that flocked to them and followed them, and described "the sumptuous theatre houses" as a continual monument of London's prodigality and folly. Performances, it seems, had for a while been forbidden because of the plague. "I like the policy well if it hold still," said the preacher; "for a disease is but bodged and patched up that is not cured in the cause, and the cause of plague is sin, if you look to it well; and the cause of sin are playes; therefore, the cause of plagues are playes." It is clear, too, that the clergy had become affected by a certain jealousy of the players, the sound of whose trumpet attracted more attention than the ringing of the church-bells, and brought together a larger audience. John Stockwood, schoolmaster of Tunbridge, who preached at Paul's Cross on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1578, demanded, "will not a filthy play, with the blast of a trumpet, sooner call thither a thousand than an hour's tolling bring to the sermon a hundred?" It was, moreover, an especial grievance to the devout at this period that plays were represented on a Sunday, the church and the theatre being thus brought into positive rivalry and antagonism. The clergy saw with dismay that their own congregations were thin and listless, while crowded and excited audiences rewarded the exertions of the players. Mr. Stockwood, declining to discuss whether plays were or not wholly unlawful, yet protested with good reason that in a Christian commonwealth they were intolerable on the seventh day, and exclaimed against the "horrible profanity" and "devilish inventions" of the lords of misrule, morrice, and May-day dancers, whom he accused of tripping about the church, even during the hours of service, and of figuring in costumes which, by their texture and scantiness, outraged ordinary notions of decency.

But notwithstanding this old-established opposition to the theatres on the part of both Churchmen and Puritans, and the severe oppression of the players by the authorities, it is yet indisputable that the English were essentially a playgoing people; proud, as well they might be, of the fact that they possessed the finest drama and the best actors in the world. And, allowing for the licence and grossness which the times permitted if they did not encourage, and a certain liberty of speech and action allowed time out of mind to the clowns of the stage, the drama suppressed by the Puritans was of sound and wholesome

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constitution, rich in poetry of the noblest class. It is sufficient to say, indeed, that it was the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. To a very large class, therefore, the persecution of the players and the suppression of the stage must have been grave misfortune and real privation. To many the theatre still supplied not merely recreation but education and enlightenment as well. That there was any rising of the public on behalf of the players does not appear. Puritanism was too strong for opposition; and besides, the playgoer, by the nature of his favourite pursuit, almost avows himself a man of peace and obedient to the law. The public had to submit, as best it could, to the tyranny of fanaticism. But that bitter mortification was felt by very many may be taken for granted.

The authors were deprived of occupation so far as concerned the stage; they sought other employment for their pens; printing a play, however, now and then, by way of keeping their hands in as dramatists. The managers, left with nothing to manage, perhaps turned to trade in quest of outlet for their energies—the manager has been always something of the trader. But for the actors, forbidden to act, what were they to do? They had been constituted Malignants or Royalists almost by Act of Parliament. The younger players promptly joined the army of King Charles. Mohun acquired the rank of captain, and at the close of the war, served in Flanders, receiving the pay of a major. Hart became a lieutenant of horse, under Sir Thomas Dallison, in the regiment of Prince Rupert. In the same troop served Burt as cornet, and Shatterel as quartermaster. Allen, of the Cockpit, was a major and quartermaster-general at Oxford. Robinson, serving on the side of the King, was long reputed to have lost his life at the taking of Basing House. The story went that the Cromwellian General Harrison had, with his own hands, slain the actor, crying, as he struck him down: “Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently.” Chalmers maintains, however, that an entry in the parish register of St. Anne’s, Blackfriars, of the death and burial of “Richard Robinson, a player,” in March, 1647, negatives this account of the actor’s fate. Possibly there were two actors bearing the not uncommon name of Robinson. These were all players of note, who had acquitted themselves with applause in the best plays of the time. Of certain older actors, unable to bear arms for the king, Lowin turned innkeeper, and died, at an advanced age, landlord of the Three Pigeons at Brentford. He had been an actor of eminence in the reign of James I.; “and his poverty was as great as his age,” says one account of him. Taylor, who was reputed to have been taught by Shakespeare himself the correct method of interpreting the part of Hamlet, died and was buried at Richmond. These two actors, as did others probably, sought to pick up a little money by publishing copies of plays that had obtained favour

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in performance, but had not before been printed. Thus, in 1652, Beaumont and Fletcher's "Wild Goose Chase" was printed in folio, "for the public use of all the ingenious, and the private benefit of John Lowin and Joseph Taylor, servants to his late Majesty, and by them dedicated to the honoured few lovers of dramatic poesy: wherein they modestly intimate their wants, and that with sufficient cause, for whatever they were before the wars, they were afterwards reduced to a necessitous condition." Pollard, possessed of some means, withdrew to his relatives in the country, and there ended his days peacefully. Perkins and Sumner lodged humbly together in Clerkenwell, and were interred in that parish. None of these unfortunate old actors lived to see the re-opening of the theatres or the restoration of the monarchy.

But one actor is known to have sided with the Parliament and against the King. He renounced the stage and took up the trade of a jeweller in Aldermanbury. This was Swanston who had played Othello, and had been described as "a brave roaring fellow, who would make the house shake again." "One wretched actor only," Mr. Gifford writes, in the introduction to his edition of Massinger, "deserted his sovereign." But it may be questioned whether Swanston really merited this reprehension. He was a Presbyterian, it seems, and remained true to his political opinions, even though these now involved the abandonment of his profession. If his brother-players fought for the King, they fought no less for themselves, and for the theatre the Puritans had suppressed. Nor is the contrast Mr. Gifford draws, between the conduct of our actors at the time of the Civil War, and the proceedings of the French players during the first French Revolution, altogether fair. As Isaac Disraeli has pointed out, there was no question of suppressing the stage in France—it was rather employed as an instrument in aid of the Revolution. The actors may have sympathised sincerely with the royal family in their afflicted state, but it was hardly to be expected that men would abandon, on that account, the profession of their choice, in which they had won real distinction, and which seemed to flourish the more owing to the excited condition of France. The French Revolution, in truth, brought to the stage great increase of national patronage.

The Civil War concluded, and the cause of King Charles wholly lost, the actors were at their wits' end to earn bread. Certain of them resolved to defy the law, and to give theatrical performances in spite of the Parliament. Out of the wreck of the companies of the different theatres they made up a tolerable troop, and ventured to present some few plays, with as much caution and privacy as possible, at the Cockpit, in Drury Lane. This was in the winter of 1648. Doubtless there were many to whom the stage was dear, who were willing enough to encourage the poor players. Playgoing had now become as a vice or a misdemeanour, to be prosecuted

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in secret—like dram-drinking. The Cockpit representations lasted but a few days. During a performance of Fletcher's tragedy of "Rollo, Duke of Normandy," in which such excellent actors as Lowin, Taylor, Pollard, Burt, and Hart were concerned, a party of troopers beset the house, broke in about the middle of the play, and carried off the players, accoutred as they were in their stage dresses, to Hatton House, then a prison, where, after being detained some time, they were plundered of their clothes and dismissed. "Afterwards, in Oliver's time," as an old chronicler of dramatic events has left upon record, "they used to act privately, three or four miles or more out of town, now here, now there, sometimes in noblemen's houses—in particular Holland House, at Kensington—where the nobility and gentry who met (but in no great numbers) used to make a sum for them, each giving a broad-piece or the like." The widow of the Earl of Holland who was beheaded in March, 1649, occupied Holland House at this time. She was the granddaughter of Sir Walter Cope, and a stout-hearted lady, who doubtless took pride in encouraging the entertainments her late lord's foes had tried so hard to suppress. Alexander Goffe, "the woman-actor at Blackfriars," acted as "Jackal" on the occasion of these furtive performances. He had made himself known to the persons of quality who patronised plays, and gave them notice of the time when and the place where the next representation would "come off." A stage-play, indeed, in those days was much what a prize-fight has been in later times—absolutely illegal, and yet assured of many persistent supporters. Goffe was probably a slim, innocent-looking youth, who was enabled to baffle the vigilance of the Puritan functionaries, and to pass freely and unsuspected between the players and their patrons. At Christmas-time and during the few days devoted to Bartholomew Fair, the actors, by dint of bribing the officer in command of the guard at Whitehall, and securing in such wise his connivance, were enabled to present performances at the Red Bull in St. John Street. Sometimes the Puritan troopers were mean enough to accept the hard-earned money of these poor players, and, nevertheless, to interrupt their performance, carrying them off to be imprisoned and punished for their breach of the law. But their great trouble arose from the frequent seizure of their wardrobe by the covetous soldiers. The clothes worn by the players upon the stage were of superior quality—fine dresses were of especial value in times prior to the introduction of scenery—and the loss was hard to bear. The public, it was feared, would be loath to believe in the merits of an actor who was no better attired than themselves. But at length it became too hazardous, as Kirkman relates, in the preface to "The Wits, or Sport upon Sport," 1672, "to act anything that required any good cloaths; instead of which painted cloath many times served the turn to represent rich habits."

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Kirkman's book is a collection of certain "scenes or parts of plays ... the fittest for the actors to represent at this period, there being little cost in the cloaths, which often then were in great danger to be seized by the soldiers." These "select pieces of drollery, digested into scenes by way of dialogue, together with variety of humours of several nations, fitted for the pleasure and content of all persons, either in court, city, county, or camp," were first printed in 1662, by H. Marsh, and were originally contrived by Robert Cox, a comic genius in his way, who exhibited great ingenuity in evading the ordinances of Parliament, and in carrying on dramatic performances in spite of the Puritans. He presented at the Red Bull what were professedly entertainments of rope-dancing, gymnastic feats, and such coarse practical fun as may even now be seen in the circus of strolling equestrian companies; but with these he cunningly intermingled select scenes from the comedies of the best English dramatists. From Kirkman's book, which is now highly prized from its rarity, it appears that the "drollery" entitled "The Bouncing Knight, or the Robbers Robbed," is, in truth, a famous adventure of Sir John Falstaff's, set forth in close accordance with the original text; while the comedy of "Rule a Wife and have a Wife" is reduced to a brief entertainment called "The Equal Match." Other popular plays are similarly dealt with. But Cox, it seems, invented not less than he borrowed. Upon the foundation of certain old-established farces, he raised up entertainments something of the nature of the extemporary comedy of Italy: characters being devised or developed expressly with a view to his own performance of them. "All we could divert ourselves with," writes Kirkman, "were these humours and pieces of plays, which, passing under the name of a merry conceited fellow called Bottom the Weaver, Simpleton the Smith, John Swabber, or some such title, were only allowed us, and that by stealth too ... and these small things were as profitable and as great get-pennies to the actors as any of our late famed plays." He relates, moreover, that these performances attracted "a great confluence of auditors," insomuch that the Red Bull, a playhouse of large size, was often so full, that "as many went back for want of room as had entered;" and that meanly as these "drolls" might be thought of in later times, they were acted by the best comedians "then and now in being." Especially he applauds the actor, author, and contriver of the majority of the farces—"the incomparable Robert Cox." Isaac Disraeli gives him credit for preserving alive, as it were by stealth, the suppressed spirit of the drama. That he was a very natural actor, or what would now be called "realistic," may be judged from the story told of his performance of a comic blacksmith, and his securing thereby an invitation to work at the forge of a master smith, who had been present among the audience. "Although your father speaks so ill of you," said the employer of labour, "if you will come and work with me, I will give you twelvepence a-week more than I give any other journeyman." As Kirkman adds: "Thus was he taken for a smith bred, that was, indeed, as much of any trade."

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It seems certain that for some few years prior to the Restoration there had been far less stringent treatment of the players than in the earlier days of the triumph of Puritanism. Cromwell, perhaps, rather despised the stage than condemned it seriously on religious grounds; the while he did not object to indulge in buffoonery and horseplay, even in the gallery of Whitehall. Some love of music he has been credited with, and this, perhaps, induced him to tolerate the operatic dramas of Sir William Davenant, which obtained representation during the Commonwealth: such as “The History of Sir Francis Drake,” “represented by instrumental and vocal music, and by art of Perspective in Scenes,” and “The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru.” According to Langbaine, the two plays called “The Siege of Rhodes” were likewise acted *"in stilo recitativo"* during the time of the Civil Wars, and upon the Restoration were rewritten and enlarged for regular performance at the Duke of York’s Theatre, in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. It seems to have been held that a play was no longer a play if its words were sung instead of spoken—or these representations of Davenant’s works may have been altogether stealthy, and without the cognisance of the legal authorities of the time. Isaac Disraeli, however, has pointed out that in some verses, published in 1653, and prefixed to the plays of Richard Brome, there is evident a tone of exultation at the passing away of power from the hands of those who had oppressed the actors. The poet, in a moralising vein, alludes to the fate of the players as it was affected by the dissolution of the Long Parliament:

> See the strange twirl of times! When such poor things
> Outlive the dates of parliaments or kings!
> This revolution makes exploded wit
> Now see the fall of those that ruined it;
> And the condemned stage hath now obtained
> To see her executioners arraigned.
> There’s nothing permanent; those high great men
> That rose from dust to dust may fall again;
> And fate so orders things that the same hour
> Sees the same man both in contempt and power!

For complete emancipation, however, the stage had to wait some years; until, indeed, it pleased Monk, acting in accordance with the desire of the nation, to march his army to London, and to restore the monarchy. Encamped in Hyde Park, Monk was visited by one Rhodes, a bookseller, who had been formerly occupied as wardrobe-keeper to King Charles I.’s company of comedians in Blackfriars, and who now applied to the general for permission to reopen the Cockpit in Drury Lane as a playhouse. Monk, it seems, held histrionic art in some esteem; at any rate the City companies, when with his council of state he dined in their halls, were wont to entertain him with performances of a theatrical kind: satirical farces, dancing and singing, “many shapes and ghosts, and the like; and all to please His Excellency the Lord General,” say the newspapers of the time. Rhodes obtained the boon he sought, and, promptly engaging a troop of actors, reopened the Cockpit. His chief actor was his apprentice, Thomas Betterton, the son of Charles I.’s cook. For some fifty years the great Mr. Betterton held his place upon the

stage, and upon his death was interred with something like royal honours in Westminster Abbey.

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Of the fate of Rhodes nothing further is recorded. He was the first to give back to Londoners a theatre they might visit legally and safely; and that done, he is heard of no more. Killigrew and Davenant were soon invested with patent rights, and entitled to a monopoly of theatrical management in London; probably they prospered by displacing Rhodes—but so much cannot be positively asserted.

The drama was now out of its difficulties. Yet the influence and effect of these did not soon abate. Upon them followed indeed a sort of after-crop of troubles, seriously injurious to the stage. The Cavaliers engendered a drama that was other than the drama the Puritans had destroyed. The theatre was restored, it is true, but with an altered constitution. It was not only that the old race of poets and dramatists had died out, and that writing for the stage was as a new profession, almost as a lost art. Taste had altered. As Evelyn regretfully notes in 1662, after witnessing a performance of Hamlet—to which, perhaps, the audience paid little heed, although the incomparable Betterton appeared in the tragedy—"but now the old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty's being so long abroad." Shakespeare and his brother-bards were out of fashion. There was a demand for tragedies of the French school—with rhyming lines and artificial sentiment—for comedies of intrigue and equivoque, after a foreign pattern, in lieu of our old English plays of wit, humour, and character. Plagiarism, translation, and adaptation took up a secure position on the stage. The leading playwrights of the Restoration—Dryden, Shadwell, Durfey, Wycherley—all borrowed freely from the French. Dryden frankly apologised—he was required to produce so many plays all could not be of his own inventing. The King encouraged appropriation of foreign works. He drew Sir Samuel Tuke's attention to an admired Spanish comedy, advising its adaptation to the English stage: the result was "The Adventures of Five Hours," a work very highly esteemed by Mr. Pepys. The introduction of scenery was due in a great measure to French example, although "paintings in perspective" had already been seen in an English theatre. But now scenery was imperatively necessary to a dramatic performance, and a sort of passion arose for mechanical devices and decorative appliances of a novel kind. Dryden was no reformer—in truth, to suit his own purposes, he pandered laboriously to the follies and caprices of his patrons; nevertheless, he was fully sensible of the errors of the time, and often chronicles these in his prologues and epilogues. He writes:

True wit has run its best days long ago,
It ne'er looked up since we were lost in show,
When sense in doggrel rhymes and clouds was lost,
And dulness nourished at the actor's cost.
Nor stopped it here; when tragedy was done,
Satire and humour the same fate have run,
And comedy is sunk to trick and pun.

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Let them who the rebellion first began
To wit, restore the monarch if they can;
Our author dares not be the first bold man.

And upon another occasion:

But when all failed to strike the stage quite dumb,
Those wicked engines, called machines, are come.
Thunder and lightning now for wit are played,
And shortly scenes in Lapland will be laid.

* * * * *

Fletcher's despised, your Jonson out of fashion.
And wit the only drug in all the nation.

Actresses, too, were introduced upon the stage in pursuance of continental example. But for these there was really great necessity. The boys who, prior to the Civil War, had personated the heroines of the drama, were now too mature, both in years and aspect, for such an occupation.

> Doubting we should never play agen,
> We have played all our women into men!

says the prologue, introducing the first actress. Hart and Mohun, Clun, Shatterel and Burt, who were now leading actors, had been boy-actresses before the closing of the theatres. And even after the Restoration, Mohun whose military title of major was always awarded him in the playbills, still appeared as Bellamante, one of the heroines of Shirley's tragedy of "Love's Cruelty." But this must have been rather too absurd. At the time of the Restoration Mohun could hardly have been less than thirty-five years of age. It is to be noted, however, that Kynaston, a very distinguished boy-actress, who, with Betterton, was a pupil of Rhodes, arose after the Restoration. Of the earlier boy-actresses, their methods and artifices of performance, Kynaston could have known nothing. He was undoubtedly a great artist, winning extraordinary favour both in male and female characters, the last and perhaps the best of all the epicene stage-players of the past.

But if the stage, after the Restoration, differed greatly from what it had been previously, it yet prospered and gained strength more and more. It was most fortunate in its actors and actresses, who lent it invaluable support. It never attained again the poetic heights to which it had once soared; but it surrendered gradually much of its grossness and its baser qualities, in deference to the improving tastes of its patrons, and in alarm at the

sound strictures of men like Jeremy Collier. The plagiarist, the adapter, and the translator did not relax their hold upon it; but eventually it obtained the aid of numerous dramatists of enduring distinction. The fact that it again underwent decline is traceable to various causes—among them, the monopoly enjoyed by privileged persons under the patents granted by Charles II.; the bungling intervention of court officials invested with supreme power over the dramatic literature of the nation; and defective copyright laws, that rendered justice neither to the native nor to the foreign writer for the theatre. And something, too, the stage of later years has been affected by a change in public taste, which has subordinated the play to the novel or poem, and converted playgoers into the supporters of circulating libraries.

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CHAPTER XXII.

STAGE BANQUETS.

A veteran actor of inferior fame once expressed his extreme dislike to what he was pleased to term “the sham wine-parties” of Macbeth and others. He was aweary of the Barmecide banquets of the stage, of affecting to quaff with gusto imaginary wine out of empty pasteboard goblets, and of making believe to have an appetite for wooden apples and “property” comestibles. He was in every sense a poor player, and had often been a very hungry one. He took especial pleasure in remembering the entertainments of the theatre in which the necessities of performance, or regard for rooted tradition, involved the setting of real edible food before the actors. At the same time he greatly lamented the limited number of dramas in which these precious opportunities occurred.

He had grateful memories of the rather obsolete Scottish melodrama of “Cramond Brig;” for in this work old custom demanded the introduction of a real sheep’s head with accompanying “trotters.” He told of a North British manager who was wont—especially when the salaries he was supposed to pay were somewhat in arrear, and he desired to keep his company in good humour and, may be, alive—to produce this play on Saturday nights. For some days before the performance the dainties that were destined to grace it underwent exhibition in the green-room. A label bore the inscription: “This sheep’s head will appear in the play of ‘Cramond Brig’ on next Saturday night. God save the King!” “It afforded us all two famous dinners,” reveals our veteran. “We had a large pot of broth made with the head and feet; these we ate on Saturday night; the broth we had on Sunday.” So in another Scottish play, “The Gentle Shepherd” of Allan Ramsay, it was long the custom on stages north of the Tweed to present a real haggis, although niggard managers were often tempted to substitute for the genuine dish a far less savoury if more wholesome mess of oatmeal. But a play more famous still for the reality of its victuals, and better known to modern times, was Prince Hoare’s musical farce, “No Song no Supper.” A steaming-hot boiled leg of lamb and turnips may be described as quite the leading character in this entertainment. Without this appetising addition the play has never been represented. There is a story, however, which one can only hope is incorrect, of an *impresario* of oriental origin, who supplying the necessary meal, yet subsequently fined his company all round, on the ground that they had “combined to destroy certain of the properties of the theatre.”

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There are many other plays in the course of which genuine food is consumed on the stage. But some excuse for the generally fictitious nature of theatrical repasts is to be found in the fact that eating during performance is often a very difficult matter for the actors to accomplish. Michael Kelly, in his “Memoirs,” relates that he was required to eat part of a fowl in the supper scene of a bygone operatic play called, “A House to be Sold.” Bannister at rehearsal had informed him that it was very difficult to swallow food on the stage. Kelly was incredulous however. “But strange as it may appear,” he writes, “I found it a fact that I could not get down a morsel. My embarrassment was a great source of fun to Bannister and Suett, who were both gifted with the accommodating talent of stage feeding. Whoever saw poor Suett as the lawyer in ‘No Song no Supper,’ tucking in his boiled leg of lamb, or in ‘The Siege of Belgrade,’ will be little disposed to question my testimony to the fact.” From this account, however, it is manifest that the difficulty of “stage feeding,” as Kelly calls it, is not invariably felt by all actors alike. And probably, although the appetites of the superior players may often fail them, the supernumerary or the representative of minor characters could generally contrive to make a respectable meal if the circumstances of the case supplied the opportunity.

The difficulty that attends eating on the stage does not, it would seem, extend to drinking, and sometimes the introduction of real and potent liquors during the performance has led to unfortunate results. Thus Whincop, to whose tragedy called “Scanderbeg,” published in 1747, added “a List of all the Dramatic Authors, with some Account of their Lives,” &c., describes a curious occurrence at the Theatre Royal in 1693. A comedy entitled “The Wary Widow, or Sir Noisy Parrot,” written by one Higden, and now a very scarce book, had been produced; but on the first representation, “the author had contrived so much drinking of punch in the play that the actors almost all got drunk, and were unable to get through with it, so that the audience were dismissed at the end of the third act.” Upon subsequent performances of the comedy no doubt the management reduced the strength of the punch, or substituted some harmless beverage, toast-and-water perhaps, imitative of that ardent compound so far as mere colour is concerned. There have been actors, however, who have refused to accept the innocent semblance of vinous liquor supplied by the management, and especially when, as part of their performance, they were required to simulate intoxication. A certain representative of Cassio was wont to carry to the theatre a bottle of claret from his own cellar, whenever he was called upon to sustain that character. It took possession of him too thoroughly, he said, with a plausible air, to allow of his affecting inebriety after holding an empty goblet to his lips, or swallowing mere toast-and-water

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or small beer. Still his precaution had its disadvantages. The real claret he consumed might make his intemperance somewhat too genuine and accurate; and his portrayal of Cassio's speedy return to sobriety might be in such wise very difficult of accomplishment. So there have been players of dainty taste, who, required to eat in the presence of the audience, have elected to bring their own provisions, from some suspicion of the quality of the food provided by the management. We have heard of a clown who, entering the theatre nightly to undertake the duties of his part, was observed to carry with him always a neat little paper parcel. What did it contain? bystanders inquired of each other. Well, in the comic scenes of pantomime it is not unusual to see a very small child, dressed perhaps as a charity-boy, crossing the stage, bearing in his hands a slice of bread-and-butter. The clown steals this article of food and devours it; whereupon the child, crying aloud, pursues him hither and thither about the stage. The incident always excites much amusement; for in pantomimes the world is turned upside-down, and moral principles have no existence; cruelty is only comical, and outrageous crime the best of jokes. The paper parcel borne to the theatre by the clown under mention enclosed the bread-and-butter that was to figure in the harlequinade. "You see I'm a particular feeder," the performer explained. "I can't eat bread-and-butter of anyone's cutting. Besides, I've tried it, and they only afford salt butter. I can't stand that. So as I've got to eat it and no mistake, with all the house looking at me, I cut a slice when I'm having my own tea, at home, and bring it down with me."

Rather among the refreshments of the side-wings than of the stage must be counted that reeking tumbler of "very brown, very hot, and very strong brandy-and-water," which, as Dr. Doran relates, was prepared for poor Edmund Kean, as, towards the close of his career, he was wont to stagger from before the foot-lights, and, overcome by his exertions and infirmities, to sink, "a helpless, speechless, fainting, bent-up mass," into the chair placed in readiness to receive the shattered, ruined actor. With Kean's prototype in acting and in excess, George Frederick Cooke, it was less a question of stage or side-wing refreshments than of the measure of preliminary potation he had indulged in. In what state would he come down to the theatre? Upon the answer to that inquiry the entertainments of the night greatly depended. "I was drunk the night before last," Cooke said on one occasion; "still I acted, and they hissed me. Last night I was drunk again, and I didn't act; they hissed all the same. There's no knowing how to please the public." A fine actor, Cooke was also a genuine humorist, and it must be said for him, although a like excuse has been perhaps too often pleaded for such failings as his, that his senses gave way, and his brain became affected after very slight indulgence. From this, however, he could not be persuaded to abstain, and so made havoc of his genius, and terminated, prematurely and ignobly enough, his professional career.

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Many stories are extant as to performances being interrupted by the entry of innocent messengers bringing to the players, in the presence of the audience, refreshments they had designed to consume behind the scenes, or sheltered from observation between the wings. Thus it is told of one Walls, who was the prompter in a Scottish theatre, and occasionally appeared in minor parts, that he once directed a maid-of-all-work, employed in the wardrobe department of the theatre, to bring him a gill of whisky. The night was wet, so the girl, not caring to go out, intrusted the commission to a little boy who happened to be standing by. The play was "Othello," and Walls played the Duke. The scene of the senate was in course of representation. Brabantio had just stated:

> My particular grief
> Is of so flood-gate and o'erbearing nature,
> That it engluts and swallows other sorrows,
> And it is still itself—

and the Duke, obedient to his cue, had inquired:

Why, what's the matter?

when the little boy appeared upon the stage, bearing a pewter measure, and explained: "It's just the whisky, Mr. Walls; and I couldna git ony at fourpence, so yer awn the landlord a penny: and he says it's time you was payin' what's doon i' the book." The senate broke up amidst the uproarious laughter of the audience.

Upon our early stage a kind of biscuit—a "marchpane"—was consumed by the players when they required to eat upon the stage. In "Romeo and Juliet" one of the servants says: "Good thou, save me a piece of marchpane." In Marston's "What you Will" occurs the passage:

> Now work the cooks, the pastry sweats with slaves,
> The marchpanes glitter.

And in Brome's "City Wit" Mrs. Pyannet tells Toby Sneakup: "You have your kickshaws, your players' marchpanes—all show and no meat."

Real macaroni in "Masaniello," and real champagne in "Don Giovanni," in order that Leporello may have opportunities for "comic business" in the supper scene, are demanded by the customs of the operatic stage. Realism generally, indeed, is greatly affected in the modern theatre. The audiences of to-day require not merely that real water shall be seen to flow from a pump, or to form a cataract, but that real wine shall proceed from real bottles, and be fairly swallowed by the performers. In Paris, a complaint was recently made that, in a scene representing an entertainment in modern fashionable society, the champagne supplied was only of a second-rate quality. Through powerful opera-glasses the bottle labels could be read, and the management's

sacrifice of truthfulness to economy was severely criticised. The audience resented the introduction of the cheaper liquor as though they had themselves been constrained to drink it.

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As part also of the modern regard for realism may be noted the “cooking scenes” which have frequently figured in recent plays. The old conjuring trick of making a pudding in a hat never won more admiration than is now obtained by such simple expedients as frying bacon or sausages, or broiling chops or steaks, upon the stage in sight of the audience. The manufacture of paste for puddings or pies by one of the *dramatis personae* has also been very favourably received, and the first glimpse of the real rolling-pin and the real flour to be thus employed has always been attended with applause. In a late production, the opening of a soda-water bottle by one of the characters was generally regarded as quite the most impressive effect of the representation.

At Christmas-time, when the shops are so copiously supplied with articles of food as to suggest a notion that the world is content to live upon half-rations at other seasons of the year, there is extraordinary storing of provisions at certain of the theatres. These are not edible, however; they are due to the art of the property-maker, and are designed for what are known as the “spill and pelt” scenes of the pantomime. They represent juicy legs of mutton, brightly streaked with red and white, quartern loaves, trussed fowls, turnips, carrots, and cabbages, strings of sausages, fish of all kinds, sizes, and colours; they are to be stolen and pocketed by the clown, recaptured by the policeman, and afterwards wildly whirled in all directions in a general “rally” of all the characters in the harlequinade. They are but adroitly painted canvas stuffed with straw or sawdust. No doubt the property-maker sometimes views from the wings with considerable dismay the severe usage to which his works of art are subjected. “He’s an excellent clown, sir,” one such was once heard to say, regarding from his own standpoint the performance of the jester in question; “he don’t destroy the properties as some do.” Perhaps now and then, too, a minor actor or a supernumerary, who has derided “the sham wine-parties of Macbeth and others,” may lament the scandalous waste of seeming good victuals in a pantomime. But, as a rule, these performers are not fanciful on this, or, indeed, on any other subject. They are not to be deceived by the illusions of the stage; they are themselves too much a part of its shams and artifices. Property legs of mutton are to them not even food for reflection but simply “properties,” and nothing more.

CHAPTER XXIII.

STAGE WIGS.

Wigs have claims to be considered amongst the most essential appliances of the actors; means at once of their disguise and their decoration. Without false hair the fictions of the stage could scarcely be set forth. How could the old look young, or the young look old, how could scanty locks be augmented, or baldness concealed, if the *coiffeur* did not lend his aid to the costumier? Nay, oftentimes

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calvity has to be simulated, and fictitious foreheads of canvas assumed. Hence the quaint advertisements of the theatrical hairdresser in professional organs, that he is prepared to vend “old men’s bald pates” at a remarkably cheap rate. King Lear has been known to appear without his beard—Mr. Garrick, as his portrait reveals, played the part with a clean-shaven face, and John Kemble followed his example; but could the ghost of Hamlet’s father ever have defied the poet’s portraiture of him, and walked the platform of Elsinore Castle without a “sable-silvered” chin? Has an audience ever viewed tolerantly a bald Romeo, or a Juliet grown gray in learning how to impersonate that heroine to perfection? It is clear that at a very early date the players must have acquired the simple arts of altering and amending their personal appearance in these respects.

The accounts still extant of the revels at court during the reigns of Elizabeth and James contain many charges for wigs and beards. Thus a certain John Ogle is paid “for four yeallowe heares for head-attires for women, twenty-six shillings and eightpence;” and “for a pound of heare twelvepence.” Probably the auburn tresses of Elizabeth had made blonde wigs fashionable. John Owgle, who is no doubt the same trader, receives thirteen shillings and fourpence for “eight long white berds at twenty pence the peece.” He has charges also on account of “a black fyzician’s berde,” “berds white and black,” “heares for palmers,” “berds for fyshers,” &c. It would seem, however, that these adornments were really made of silk. There is an entry: “John Ogle for curling of heare made of black silk for Discord’s heade (being sixty ounces), price of his woorkmanshipp thereon only is seven shillings and eightpence;” and mention is made of a delivery to Mrs. Swegoo the silk-woman, of “Spanish silke of sundry cullers, weighing four ounces and three quarters, at two shillings and sixpence the ounce, to garnishe nine heads and nine scarfes for the nine muses; heads of heare drest and trimmed at twenty-three shillings and fourpence the peece, in all nine, ten pounds ten shillings.”

The diary or account-book of Philip Henslowe, the manager, supplies much information concerning the usual appointments of a theatre prior to the year 1600. In his inventory of dresses and properties, bearing date 1598, is included a record of “six head tiers,” or attires. An early and entertaining account of the contents of a theatrical “tiring-room” is to be found in Richard Brome’s comedy, “The Antipodes,” first published in 1640. Byeplay says of Peregrine, the leading comic character:

> He has got into our tiring-house amongst us,
> And ta’en a strict survey of all our properties,
> Our statues and our images of gods,
> Our planets and our constellations,
> Our giants, monsters, furies, beasts, and bugbears,
> Our helmets, shields, and vizors, hairs and beards.

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With the Restoration wigs came into general wear, and gradually the beards and moustaches, which had literally flourished so remarkably from the time of Elizabeth, were yielded to the razor. At this period theatrical costume was simply regulated by the prevailing fashions, and made no pretensions to historical truth or antiquarian correctness. The actors appeared upon all occasions in the enormous perukes that were introduced in the reign of Charles II., and continued in vogue until 1720. The flowing flaxen wigs assumed by Booth, Wilks, Cibber, and others, were said to cost some forty guineas each. "Till within these twenty-five years," writes Tom Davies in 1784, "our Tamberlanes and Catos had as much hair on their heads as our judges on the bench." Cibber narrates how he sold a superb fair full-bottomed periwig he had worn in 1695 in his first play, "The Fool in Fashion," to Colonel Brett, so that the officer might appear to advantage in his wooing of the Countess of Macclesfield, the lady whom, upon unsatisfactory evidence, the poet Savage persistently claimed as his mother.

But if the heroes of the theatre delighted in long flaxen hair, it was always held necessary that the stage villain's should appear in jet-black periwigs. For many years this continued to be an established law of the drama. "What is the meaning," demanded Charles II., "that we never see a rogue in the play but, odds-fish! they always clap him on a black periwig, when it is well known one of the greatest rogues in England always wears a fair one?" The king was understood to refer to Titus Oates. But this custom was of long life. Davies describes "certain actors who were cast into the parts of conspirators, traitors, and murderers, who used to disguise themselves in large black wigs, and to distort their features in order to appear terrible. I have seen," he adds, "Hippesley act the First Murderer in 'Macbeth;' his face was made pale with chalk, distinguished with large whiskers and a long black wig." "Begin, murderer; leave thy damnable faces and begin!" cries Hamlet to Lucianus, the poisoner; so that even in Shakespeare's time grimness of aspect on the part of the stage villain may have been thought indispensable. Churchill's friend, Lloyd, in his admirable poem, "The Actor," published in 1762, writes on this head:

> To suit the dress demands the actor's art,
> Yet there are those who over-dress the part:
> To some prescriptive right gives settled things—
> Black wigs to murderers, feathered hats to kings.

Quin appeared upon the stage almost invariably in a profuse full-bottomed periwig. Garrick brought into fashion a wig of much smaller size, worn low on the forehead, with five crisp curls on either side, and known generally as the "Garrick cut." But the great actor occasionally varied the mode of his peruke. The portraits by Wood, Sherwin, and Dance exhibit him in three different forms of wigs.

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As Hotspur, he wore “a laced frock and Ramilies wig.” When John Kemble first played Hamlet he appeared in a black velvet court suit, with laced ruffles and powdered hair, if not a periwig. It is to be noted, however, that there was nothing in this system of dress to shock the spectators of the time. Powdered wigs were the vogue, and it was not considered strange that the actor should be attired similarly to the audience. Some ventures had been made in the direction of correctness of costume, but they had been regarded as rather dangerous innovations. Garrick candidly confessed himself timid about the matter. Benjamin West once inquired of the actor why he did not reform the costume of the stage. “The audience would not stand it,” said Garrick; “they would throw a bottle at my head if I attempted any alteration.” The truth was, perhaps, that Garrick had won his triumphs under the old system, and was disinclined, therefore, to risk any change.

Actors have often been zealous treasurers of theatrical properties and appliances, and some have formed very curious collections of stage-wigs. Munden, who was most heedful as to his appearance in the theatre, always provided his own costume, wearing nothing that belonged to the wardrobe of the manager, and giving large sums for any dress that suited his fancy. His wigs were said to be of great antiquity and value; they were in the care of, and daily inspected by, a hairdresser attached to the theatre. Edwin’s biography records that that actor’s “wiggery cost him more than a hundred pounds, and he could boast of having perukes in his collection which had decorated the heads of monarchs, judges, aldermen, philosophers, sailors, jockeys, beaux, thieves, tailors, tinkers, and haberdashers.” Suett, also a great wig-collector, is reputed to have assumed on the stage, in the burlesque of “Tom Thumb,” a large black peruke with flowing curls, that had once been the property of King Charles II. He had purchased this curious relic at the sale of the effects of a Mr. Rawle, accoutrement-maker to George III. When the wig was submitted for sale, Suett took possession of it, and, putting it on his head, began to bid for it with a gravity that the bystanders found to be irresistibly comical. It was at once declared that the wig should become the actor’s property upon his own terms, and it was forthwith knocked down to him by the auctioneer. The wig appeared upon the stage during many years, until at last it was destroyed, with much other valuable property, in the fire which burnt to the ground the Birmingham Theatre. Suett’s grief was extreme. “My wig’s gone!” he would say, mournfully, for some time after the fire, to every one he met. Suett, Mathews, and Knight were at one time reputed to possess the most valuable stock of wigs in the profession. Knight’s collection was valued, after his death, at L250.

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The stage-wig is sometimes liable to unfortunate accidents. In the turbulent scenes of tragedy, when the catastrophe is reached, and the hero, mortally stricken, falls upon the stage heavily and rigidly, in accordance with the ruling of immemorial tradition, the wig, like an unskilful rider upon a restive steed, is apt to become unseated. Many a defunct Romeo has been constrained to return to life for a moment in order that he might entreat Juliet, in a whisper, just as her own suicide is imminent, to contrive, if possible, a readjustment of his wig, which, in the throes of his demise, had parted from his head, or, at least, to fling her veil over him, and so conceal his mischance from public observation. To Mr. Bensley, the tragedian, so much admired by Charles Lamb, and so little by any other critic, a curious accident is said to have happened. He was playing Richard III. in an Irish theatre; the curtain had risen, and he was advancing to the foot-lights to deliver his opening soliloquy, when an unlucky nail in the side wing caught a curl of his full-flowing majestic wig and dragged it from his head. He was a pedantic, solemn actor, with a sepulchral voice and a stiff stalking gait. Anthony Pasquin has recorded a derisive description of his histrionic method:

With three minuet steps in all parts he advances,
Then retires three more, strokes his chin, prates and prances,
With a port as majestic as Astley's horse dances.

* * * * *

Should we judge of this man by his visage and note,
We'd imagine a rookery built in his throat,
Whose caws were immixed with his vocal recitals,
While others stole downwards and fed on his vitals.

Still there can be no doubt that he played with extreme conscientiousness, and was fully impressed with a sense of his professional responsibilities. The loss of his wig must have occasioned him acute distress. For a moment he hesitated. What was he to do? Should he forget that he was Richard? Should he remember that he was only Mr. Bensley? He resolved to ignore the accident, to abandon his wig. Shorn of his locks, he delivered his speech in his most impressive manner. Of course he had to endure many interruptions. An Irish audience is rarely forbearing—has a very quick perception of the ludicrous. The jeering and ironic cheering that arose must have gravely tried the tragedian. "Mr. Bensley, darling, put on your jasey!" cried the gallery. "Bad luck to your politics! Will you suffer a Whig to be hung?" But the actor did not flinch. His exit was as dignified and commanding as had been his entrance. He did not even condescend to notice his wig as he passed it, depending from its nail like a scarecrow. One of the attendants of the stage was sent on to remove it, the duty being accomplished amidst the most boisterous laughter and applause of the whole house.

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Mr. Bernard, in his “Retrospections of the Stage,” makes humorous mention of a provincial manager of the last century who was always referred to as “Pentland and his wig,” from his persistent adherence to an ancient peruke, which, as he declared, had once belonged to Colley Cibber. The wig was of the pattern worn on state occasions by the Lord Chief Justice of England, a structure of horsehair, that descended to the shoulders in dense lappels. Pentland, who had been fifty years a manager, was much bent with infirmity, and afflicted with gout in all his members, still was wont to appear as the juvenile heroes of the drama. But in his every part, whether Hamlet or Don Felix, Othello or Lord Townley, he invariably assumed this formidable wig. Altogether his aspect and performance must have been of an extraordinary kind. He played Plume, the lively hero of Farquhar’s “Recruiting Officer,” dressed in an old suit of regimentals, and wearing above his famous wig a prodigious cocked hat. The rising of the curtain discovered him seated in an easy-chair with his lower limbs swathed in flannels. He was, indeed, unable to walk, or even to stand, and throughout the performance had to be wheeled on and off the stage. Surely light comedy was never seen under such disadvantageous conditions. He endeavoured to compensate for his want of locomotive power by taking snuff with great frequency, and waving energetically in the air a large and soiled pocket-handkerchief. This Pentland, indeed, appears to have been a curious example of the strolling manager of the old school. His company consisted but of some half-dozen performers, including himself, his wife, and his daughter. He journeyed from town to town on a donkey, the faithful companion of all his wanderings, with his gouty legs resting upon the panniers, into which were packed the wardrobe and scenic embellishments of his theatre. On these occasions he always wore his best light-comedy suit of brown and gold, his inevitable wig, and a little three-cornered hat cocked on one side, “giving the septuagenarian an air of gaiety that well accorded with his known attachment to the rakes and heroes of the drama; one hand was knuckled in his side—his favourite position—and the other raised a pinch of snuff to his nose; and as he passed along he nodded and bowed to all about him, and seemed greatly pleased with the attention he excited.” His company followed the manager on foot. Yet for many years Mr. Pentland was the sole purveyor of theatrical entertainments to several English counties, and did not shrink from presenting to his audiences the most important works in the dramatic repertory.

When, in 1817, Edmund Kean played Eustache de Saint Pierre in the play of “The Surrender of Calais,” he designed to impress the town powerfully by the help of a wig made after the pattern of Count Ugolino’s. “I’ll frighten the audience with it,” said he; but, as it happened, the audience declined to be frightened. On the contrary, when the actor appeared upon the scene he was only partially recognised by the spectators. Some persons even inquired: “Who is that fellow?” None cried: “God bless him!” The wig, in short, was not appreciated, for all it was of elaborate construction, and stood up, bristling with its gray hairs like a *chevaux de frise*. The tragedian very soon gave up the part in disgust.

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It is odd to find a stage wig invested with political significance, viewed almost as a cabinet question, considered as a possible provocation of hostilities between two great nations; yet something of this kind happened some fifty years ago. Mr. Bunn, then manager of Covent Garden Theatre, had adapted to the English stage Monsieur Scribe's capital comedy of "Bertrand et Raton." The scene of the play, it may be stated, is laid at Copenhagen, and the subject relates to the intrigues that preceded the fall of Struensee in 1772. The adaptation was duly submitted to George Colman, the examiner of plays, and was by him forwarded to the Earl of Belfast, then Lord Chamberlain, with an observation that the work contained nothing of a kind that was inadmissible upon the English stage.

Suddenly a rumour was born, and rapidly attained growth and strength, to the purport that the leading character of Count Bertrand was designed to be a portraiture of Talleyrand, at that time the French ambassador at the court of St. James's. Some hesitation arose as to licensing the play, and on the 17th of January, 1834, the authorities decided to prohibit its representation. Mr. Bunn sought an interview with the Chamberlain, urging a reversal of the judgment, and undertaking to make any retrenchments and modifications of the work that might be thought expedient. The manager could only obtain a promise that the matter should be further considered. Already the stage had been a source of trouble to the political and diplomatic world. It was understood that the Swedish ambassador had abruptly withdrawn from the court of the Tuileries in consequence of the production in Paris of a vaudeville called "Le Camarade au Lit," reflecting, so many held, upon the early life of Bernadotte, King of Sweden. That nothing of this kind should happen in London the Chamberlain was determined. He read the comedy most carefully and, having marked several passages as objectionable, forwarded it to the examiner, from whom, in due course, Mr. Bunn received the following characteristic note:

"January 20th, 1834.

"MY DEAR B.—With all we have to do, I don't see how I can return the manuscript with alterations before to-morrow. Pray dine with me to-day at half-past five—but come at four. We shall then have time to cut the play before we cut the mutton.

"Yours most truly,

"G.C."

Both these "cuttings" were successfully accomplished, and on the 25th of January the comedy was officially licensed. Still the authorities were uneasy. A suspicion prevailed that Mr. Farren, who was to sustain the part of Bertrand, meditated dressing and "making up" after the manner of Talleyrand. Sir Thomas Mash, the comptroller of the Chamberlain's office, made direct inquiries in this respect. The manager supplied a sketch of the costume to be worn by the actor. "I knew it was to be submitted to the

king," writes Mr. Bunn, and he looked forward to the result with anxious curiosity. On the 7th of February came an answer from Sir Thomas Mash. "I have the pleasure to return your drawing without a syllable of objection." On the 8th, "Bertrand et Raton," under the name of "The Minister and the Mercer," was first produced on the English stage.

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The success of the performance was unquestionable, but the alarms of the authorities were not over. Many of the players took upon themselves to restore passages in the comedy which had been effaced by the examiner; and, worse than this, Mr. Farren's appearance did not correspond with the drawing sent to the Chamberlain's office. His wig was especially objectionable; it was an exact copy of the silvery silken tresses of Talleyrand, which had acquired a European celebrity. It was plain that the actor had "made up" after the portrait of the statesman in the well-known engravings of the Congress of Vienna. Mr. Bunn had again to meet the angry expostulations of the Chamberlain. On the 14th of February he wrote to Lord Belfast: "The passages bearing reference to the Queen Matilda in conjunction with Struensee having been entirely omitted, will, I trust, be satisfactory to your lordship. Until the evening of performance I was not aware what style of wig Mr. Farren meant to adopt, such matters being entirely at the discretion of performers of his standard. I have since mentioned to him the objections which have been pointed out to me, but he has sent me word that he cannot consent so to mutilate his appearance, adding that it is a wig he wore two years ago in a comedy called 'Lords and Commons.'" If this was true there can be little doubt that the wig had been dressed anew and curling-ironed into a Talleyrand form that had not originally pertained to it. Meantime King William IV. had stirred in the matter, despatching his Chamberlain to the Lords Grey and Palmerston. "They—said to be exceedingly irate—instantly attended the performance. In the box exactly opposite to the one they occupied, sat, however, the gentleman himself, *l'homme veritable*, his Excellency Prince Talleyrand, *in propria persona*, and he laughed so heartily at the play, without once exhibiting any signs of annoyance at the appearance of his supposed prototype, that the whole affair wore a most absurd aspect; and thus terminated a singular specimen of 'great cry and little wool.'"

A stage wig has hardly since this risen to the importance of a state affair. Yet the Chamberlain has sometimes interfered to stay any direct stage portraiture of eminent characters. Thus Mr. Buckstone was prohibited from appearing "made up" as Lord John Russell, and Mr. A. Wigan, when performing the part of a French naval officer some five-and-twenty years ago, was directed by the authorities to reform his aspect, which too much resembled, it was alleged, the portraits of the Prince de Joinville. The actor effected a change in this instance which did not much mend the matter. It was understood at the time indeed that he had simply made his costume more correct, and otherwise had rather heightened than diminished his resemblance to the son of Louis Philippe. Other stage-wig questions have been of minor import—relating chiefly to the appropriateness of the *coiffures*

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of Hamlet and others. Should the Prince wear flaxen tresses or a “Brutus”? Should the Moor of Venice appear in a negro’s close woolly curls, or are flowing locks permissible to him? These inquiries have a good deal exercised the histrionic profession from time to time. And there have been doubts about hair-powder and its compatibility with tragic purposes. Mademoiselle Mars, the famous French actress, decided upon defying accuracy of costume, and declined to wear a powdered wig in a serious part. Her example was followed by Rachel, Ristori, and others. When Auber’s “Gustave, ou le Bal Masque,” was in rehearsal, the singers complained of the difficulty they experienced in expressing passionate sentiments in the powdered wigs and stately dress of the time of Louis XV. In the masquerade they were therefore permitted to assume such costumes as seemed to them suited to the violent catastrophe of the story. They argued that *"le moindre geste violent peut exciter le rire en provoquant l’explosion d’un nuage blanc; les artistes sont donc contraints de se tenir dans une reserve et dans une immobilite qui jettent du froid sur toutes les situations."* It is true that Garrick and his contemporaries wore hair-powder, and that in their hands the drama certainly did not lack vehemently emotional displays. But then the spectators were in like case; and *"explosions d’un nuage blanc"* were probably of too common occurrence to excite derision or even attention.

Wigs are still matters of vital interest to the actors, and it is to be noted that the theatrical hairdressers have of late years devoted much study to this branch of their industry. The light comedian still indulges sometimes in curls of an unnatural flaxen, and the comic countryman is too often allowed to wear locks of a quite impossible crimson colour. Indeed, the headdresses that seem only contrived to move the laughter of the gallery, yet remain in an unsatisfactory condition. But in what are known as “character wigs” there has been marked amendment. The fictitious forehead is now very often artfully joined on to the real brow of the performer, without those distressing discrepancies of hue and texture which at one time were so very apparent, disturbing credibility and destroying illusion. And the decline of hair in colour and quantity has often been imitated in the theatre with very happy ingenuity. Heads in an iron-gray or partially bald state—varying from the first slight thinning of the locks to the time when they come to be combed over with a kind of “cat’s cradle” or trellis-work look, to veil absolute calvity—are now represented by the actors with a completeness of a most artistic kind. With the ladies of the theatre blond wigs are now almost to be regarded as necessaries of histrionic life. This may be only a transient fashion, although it seems to have obtained very enduring vitality. Dr. Veron, writing of his experiences as manager of the Paris Opera House forty years ago, affirms:

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"Il y a des beautes de jour et des beautes du soir; une peau brune, jaune, ou noire, devient blanche a eclat de la lumiere; les cheveux noirs reussissent mieux aussi au theatre que les cheveux blonds." But the times have changed; the arts of the theatrical toilet have no doubt advanced greatly. On the stage now all complexions are brilliant, and light tresses are pronounced to be more admirable than dark. Yet Dr. Veron was not without skill and learning on these curious matters. He discourses learnedly in regard to the cosmetics of the theatre—paint and powder, Indian ink and carmine, and the chemical preparations necessary for the due fabrication of eyebrows and lashes, for making the eyes look larger than life, for colouring the cheeks and lips, and whitening the nose and forehead. And especially the manager took pride in the capillary artifices of his establishment, and employed an "artist in hair," who held almost arrogant views of his professional acquirements. "My claim to the grateful remembrance of posterity," this superb *coiffeur* was wont to observe, "will consist in the fact that I made the wig in which Monsieur Talma performed his great part of Sylla!" The triumphs of the scene are necessarily short-lived; they exist only in the recollection of actual spectators, and these gradually dwindle and depart as Time goes and Death comes. Nevertheless something of this wig-maker's fame still survives, although Talma has been dead nearly half a century.

As Sylla, Talma was "made up" to resemble the first Napoleon. Macready writes in his "Journal" of Talma's appearance as Sylla: "The toga sat upon him as if it had been his daily costume. His *coiffure* might have been taken from an antique bust; but was in strict resemblance of Napoleon's. It was reported that several passages had been struck out of the text by the censor, under the apprehension of their application by the Parisians to the exiled Emperor; and an order was said to have been sent from the police forbidding Talma to cross his hands behind him, the ordinary habit of Napoleon." The tragedy of "Sylla" was written by M. Jouy, and was first performed at the Theatre Francais in 1822.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS."

It is clear that playgoers of the Shakespearean period dearly loved to see a battle represented upon the stage. The great poet thoroughly understood his public, and how to gratify it. In some fifteen of his plays he has introduced the encounter or the marshalling of hostile forces. "Alarums and excursions" is with him a very frequent stage direction; and as much may be said of "they fight," or "*exeunt* fighting." Combats and the clash of arms he obviously did not count as "inexplicable dumb show and noise." He was conscious, however, that the battles of the stage demanded a very large measure of faith on the part of the spectators. Of necessity they were required to "make believe" a good deal. In the prologue to "Henry V." especial apology is advanced

for the presumption of the dramatist in dealing with so comprehensive a subject; and indulgence is claimed for the unavoidable feebleness of the representation as compared with the force of the reality:

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Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance:
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there; jumping o'er times;
Turning th' accomplishment of many years
Into an hour-glass.

These conditions, however, were accepted by the audiences of the time in the most liberal spirit. Critics were prone to deride the popular liking for "cutler's work" and "the horrid noise of target fight;" "the fools in the yard" were censured for their "gaping and gazing" at such exhibitions. But the battles of the stage were still fought on; "alarums and excursions" continued to engage the scene. Indeed, variety and stir have always been elements in the British drama as opposed to the uniformity and repose which were characteristics of the ancient classical theatre.

Yet our early audiences must have been extremely willing to help out the illusions of the performance, and abet the tax thus levied upon their credulity. Shakespeare's battles could hardly have been very forcibly presented. In his time no "host of auxiliaries" assisted the company. "Two armies flye in," Sir Philip Sidney writes in his "Apologie for Poetrie," 1595, "represented with four swords and bucklers, and what harde heart will not receive it for a pitched fielde?" So limited an array would not be deemed very impressive in these days; but it was held sufficient by the lieges of Elizabeth. Just as the Irish peasant is even now content to describe a mere squad of soldiers as "the army," so Shakespeare's audiences were willing to regard a few "blue-coated stage-keepers" as a formidable body of troops. And certainly the poet sometimes exercised to the utmost the imaginations of his patrons. He required them to believe that his small stage was immeasurably spacious; that his handful of "supers" was in truth a vast multitude. During one scene in "King John" he does not hesitate to bring together upon the boards the three distinct armies of Philip of France, the Archduke of Austria, and the King of England; while, in addition, the citizens of Angiers are supposed to appear upon the walls of their town and discuss the terms of its capitulation. So in "King Richard III.," Bosworth Field is represented, and the armies of Richard and Richmond are made to encamp within a few feet of each other. The ghosts of Richard's victims rise from the stage and address speeches alternately to him and to his opponent. Playgoers who can look back a score of years may remember a textual revival of the tragedy, in which this scene was exhibited in exact accordance with the original stage directions. Colley Cibber's famous acting version was for once discarded, and Richard and Richmond on the eve of their great battle quietly retired to rest in the presence of each other, and

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of their audience. However to be commended on the score of its fidelity to the author's intentions, the scene had assuredly its ludicrous side. The rival tents wore the aspect of opposition shower-baths. It was exceedingly difficult to humour the idea that the figures occupying the stage could neither see nor hear one another. Why, if they but outstretched their arms they could have touched each other; and they were supposed to be mutually eager for combat to the death! It became manifest, indeed, that the spectators had lost greatly their ancestors' old power of "making believe." They could no longer hold their reason in suspense for the sake of enhancing the effect of a theatrical performance, though prepared to be indulgent in that respect. What is called "realism" had invaded the stage since Shakespeare's time, and could not now be repelled or denied. Hints and suggestions did not suffice; the positive and the actual had become indispensable.

There can be no doubt, however, that Shakespeare's battles had oftentimes the important aid of real gunpowder. The armies might be small; but the noise that accompanied their movements was surely very great. The stage direction "alarums and chambers go off" occurs more than once in "King Henry V." The Chorus to the play expressly states:

Behold the ordnance on their carriages,
With fatal mouths gaping on girded Harfleur;
... and the nimble gunner
With linstook now the devilish cannon touches,
And down goes all before them.

Gunpowder was even employed in plays wherein battles were not introduced. Thus at the close of "Hamlet," Fortinbras says: "Go bid the soldiers shoot," and the stage direction runs: "A dead march. *Exeunt* bearing off the dead bodies; after which a peal of ordnance is shot *off*." And just as, in 1846, the Garrick Theatre, in Goodman's Fields, was destroyed by fire, owing to some wadding lodging in the flies after a performance of the Battle of Waterloo, so in 1613, the Globe Theatre, in Southwark, was burnt to the ground from the firing of "chambers" during a representation of "King Henry VIII." Howes, in his additions to "Stowe's Chronicle," thus describes the event: "Also upon St. Peter's Day, 1613, the playhouse or theatre called the Globe, upon the Bankside, near London, by negligent discharging of a peal of ordnance, close to the south side thereof, the theatre took fire, and the wind suddenly dispersed the flame round about, and in a very short space the whole building was quite consumed and no man hurt; the house being filled with people to behold the play, namely, of 'Henry VIII.;' and the next spring it was new builded in a far fairer manner than before."

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The paucity of Shakespeare's stage armies has sometimes found its reflex in the limited means of country theatres of more modern date. The ambition of strolling managers is apt to be far in advance of their appliances; they are rarely stayed by the difficulties of representation, or troubled with doubts as to the adequacy of their troupe, in the words of a famous commander, to "go anywhere and do anything." We have heard of a provincial Rolla who at the last moment discovered that the army, wherewith he proposed to repulse the forces of Pizarro, consisted of one supernumerary only. The Peruvian chieftain proved himself equal to the situation, however, and adapted his speech to the case. Addressing his one soldier, he declaimed in his most dignified manner: "My brave associate, partner of my toil, my feelings, and my fame, can Rolla's words add vigour to the virtuous energies which inspire your heart?" and so on. Thus altered, the speech was found to be sufficiently effective.

In his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," Dryden complains of the "tumults to which we are subject in England by representing duels, battles, and the like, which renders our stage too like the theatres where they fight prizes. For what is more ridiculous than to represent an army with a drum and four men behind it, all which the hero of the other side is to drive before him? or to see a duel fought and one slain with two or three thrusts of the foils, which we know are so blunted that we might give a man an hour to kill another in good earnest with them?"

Two things were especially prized by the audiences of the past: a speech and a combat. "For God's sake, George, give me a speech and let me go home!" cried from the pit the wearied country squire of Queen Anne's time to his boon companion Powell, the actor, doomed to appear in a part deficient in opportunities for oratory. "But, Mr. Bayes, might we not have a little fighting?" inquires Johnson, in the burlesque of "The Rehearsal," "for I love those plays where they cut and slash one another on the stage for a whole hour together."

The single combats that occur in Shakespeare's plays are very numerous. There is little need to remind the reader, for instance, of the hand-to-hand encounters of Macbeth and Macduff, Posthumus and Iachimo, Hotspur and the Prince of Wales, Richard and Richmond. Romeo has his fierce brawl with Tybalt, Hamlet his famous fencing scene, and there is serious crossing of swords both in "Lear" and "Othello." English audiences, from an inherent pugnacity, or a natural inclination for physical feats, were wont to esteem highly the combats of the stage. The players were skilled in the use of their weapons, and would give excellent effect to their mimic conflicts. And this continued long after the wearing of swords had ceased to be a necessity or a fashion. The youthful actor acquired the art of fencing as an indispensable step in his theatrical education. A sword was

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one of the earliest “properties” of which he became possessor. He always looked forward to impressing his audience deeply by his skill in combat. Charles Mathews, the elder, has recorded in his too brief chapters of autobiography, “his passion for fencing which nothing could overcome.” As an amateur actor he paid the manager of the Richmond Theatre seven guineas and a half for permission to undertake “the inferior insipid part of Richmond,” who does not appear until the fifth act of the play. The Richard of the night was a brother-amateur, equally enthusiastic, one Litchfield by name. “I cared for nothing,” wrote Mathews, “except the last scene of Richmond, but in that I was determined, to have my full swing of carte and tierce. I had no notion of paying my seven guineas and a half without indulging my passion. In vain did the tyrant try to die after a decent time; in vain did he give indications of exhaustion; I would not allow him to give in. I drove him by main force from any position convenient for his last dying speech. The audience laughed; I heeded them not. They shouted; I was deaf. Had they hooted I should have lunged on in my unconsciousness of their interruption. I was resolved to show them all my accomplishments. Litchfield frequently whispered ‘Enough!’ but I thought with Macbeth, ‘Damned be he who first cries, Hold, enough!’ I kept him at it, and I believe we fought almost literally a long hour by Shrewsbury clock. To add to the merriment, a matter-of-fact fellow in the gallery, who in his innocence took everything for reality, and who was completely wrapt up and lost by the very cunning of the scene, at last shouted out: ‘Why don’t he shoot him?’”

The famous Mrs. Jordan was, it seems, unknown to Mathews, present among the audience on this occasion, having been attracted from her residence at Bushey by the announcement of an amateur Richard. “Years afterwards,” records Mathews, “when we met in Drury Lane green-room, I was relating, amongst other theatrical anecdotes, the bumpkin’s call from the gallery in commiseration of the trouble I had in killing Richard, when she shook me from my feet almost by starting up, clasping her hands, and in her fervent, soul-stirring, warm-hearted tones, exclaiming: ‘Was that you? I was there!’ and she screamed with laughter at the recollection of my acting in Richmond, and the length of our combat.”

“Where shall I hit you, Mr. Kean?” inquired a provincial Laertes of the great tragedian. “Where you *can*, sir,” was the grim reply. For Kean had acquired fencing under Angelo, and was proud of his proficiency in the art. He delighted in prolonging his combats to the utmost, and invested them with extraordinary force and intensity. On some occasions he so identified himself with the character he represented as to decline to yield upon almost any terms. Hazlitt censures certain excesses of this kind which disfigured his performance of Richard. “He now actually fights with his doubled fists,

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after his sword is taken from him, like some helpless infant." "The fight," writes another critic, "was maintained under various vicissitudes, by one of which he was thrown to the earth; on his knee he defended himself, recovered his footing, and pressed his antagonist with renewed fury; his sword was struck from his grasp—he was mortally wounded; disdaining to fall"—and so on. No wonder that many Richmonds and Macduffs, after combating with Mr. Kean, were left so exhausted and scant of breath as to be scarcely able to deliver audibly the closing speeches of their parts. The American stage has a highly-coloured story of an English melodramatic actor with the pseudonym of Bill Shipton, who, "enacting a British officer in 'The Early Life of Washington,' got so stupidly intoxicated that when Miss Cuff, who played the youthful hero, had to fight and kill him in a duel, Bill Shipton wouldn't die; he even said loudly on the stage that he wouldn't. Mary Cuff fought on until she was ready to faint, and after she had repeated his cue for dying, which was, 'Cowardly, hired assassin!' for the fourteenth time, he absolutely jumped off the stage, not even pretending to be on the point of death. Our indignant citizens then chased him all over the house, and he only escaped by jumping into the coffin which they bring on in Hamlet, Romeo, and Richard." The story has its humour, but is not to be implicitly credited.

Broad-sword combats were at one time very popular interludes at minor theatres. They were often quite distinct performances, prized for their own sake, and quite irrespective of their dramatic relevancy. It cannot be said that they suggested much resemblance to actual warfare. Still they demanded of the performers skill of a peculiar kind, great physical endurance and ceaseless activity. The combat-sword was an unlikely-looking weapon, very short in the blade, with a protuberant hilt of curved bars to protect the knuckles of the combatant. The orchestra supplied a strongly-accentuated tune, and the swords clashed together in strict time with the music. The fight raged hither and thither about the stage, each blow and parry, thrust and guard, being a matter of strict pre-arrangement. The music was hurried or slackened accordingly as the combat became more or less furious. "One, two, three, and under; one, two, three, and over;" "robber's cuts;" "sixes"—the encounter had an abundance of technical terms. And each performer was allowed a fair share of the feats accomplished: the combatants took turns in executing the strangest exploits. Alternately they were beaten down on one knee, even lower still, till they crawled serpent-wise about the boards; they leaped into the air to avoid chopping blows at their lower members; they suddenly span round on their heels, recovering themselves in time to guard a serious blow, aimed with too much deliberation at some vital portion of their frames; occasionally they contrived an unexpected parry by

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swiftly passing the sword from the right hand to the left. Now and then they fought a kind of double combat, wielding a sword in either hand. Altogether, indeed, it was an extraordinary entertainment, which evoked thunders of applause from the audience. The eccentric agility of the combatants, the peculiarities of their method of engagement, the stirring staccato music of the band, the clashing of the swords and the shower of sparks thus occasioned, were found quite irresistible by numberless playgoers. Mr. Crummles, it will be remembered, had a very high opinion of this form of entertainment.

Of late, however, the broadsword combat has declined as a theatrical attraction if it has not altogether expired. The art involved in its presentment is less studied, or its professors are less capable than was once the case. And perhaps burlesque has exposed too glaringly its ridiculous or seamy side. It was not one of those things that could long endure the assaults of travesty. The spell was potent enough in its way, but it dissolved when once interruptive laughter became generally audible. A creature of theatrical tradition, curiously sophisticated and enveloped in absurdities, its long survival is perhaps more surprising than the fact of its decease. Some attempt at ridiculing it seems to have been made so far back as the seventeenth century, in the Duke of Buckingham's "Rehearsal." Two characters enter, each bearing a lute and a drawn sword, and alternately fight and sing; "so that," as Bayes explains, "you have at once your ear entertained with music and good language, and your eye satisfied with the garb and accoutrements of war." In the same play, also, the actors were wont to introduce hobby-horses, and fight a mimic battle of very extravagant nature.

Ridicule of a stage army was one of the established points of humour in the old burlesque of "Bombastes Furioso," and many a pantomime has won applause by the comical character of the troops brought upon the scene. It should be said, however, that of late years the more famous battles of the theatre have been reproduced with remarkable liberality and painstaking. In lieu of "four swords and bucklers," a very numerous army of supernumeraries has marched to and fro upon the boards. In the ornate revivals of Shakespeare, undertaken from time to time by various managers, especial attention has been directed to the effective presentment of the battle scenes. The "auxiliaries" have frequently consisted of soldiers selected from the household troops. They are reputed to be the best of "supers," imposing of aspect, stalwart and straight-limbed, obedient to command, and skilled in marching and military formations. Londoners, perhaps, are little aware of the services their favourite regiments are prompt to lend to theatrical representations. Notably our grand operas owe much to the Coldstreams and Grenadiers. After a performance of "Le Prophete" or "L'Etoile du Nord," let us say, hosts of these warriors

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may be seen hurrying from Covent Garden back to their barracks. Plays that have depended for their success solely upon the battles they have introduced have not been frequent of late years, and perhaps their popularity may fairly be counted as a thing of the past. We have left behind us the times when versatile Mr. Gomersal was found submitting to the public by turns his impersonation of Napoleon at Waterloo and Sir Arthur Wellesley at Seringapatam; when Shaw, the Lifeguardsman, after performing prodigies of valour, died heroically to slow music; when Lady Sale, armed with pistol and sabre, fought against heavy Afghan odds, and came off supremely victorious. Perhaps the public have ceased to care for history thus theatrically illustrated, or prefers to gather its information on the subject from despatches and special correspondence. The last theatrical venture of this class referred to our army's exploits in Abyssinia. But the play did not greatly please. Modern battles have, indeed, outgrown the stage, and the faculty of making "imaginary puissance" has become lost. In the theatre, as elsewhere, the demand is now for the literal, the accurate, and the strictly matter of fact.

CHAPTER XXV.

STAGE STORMS.

Addison accounted "thunder and lightning—which are often made use of at the descending of a god or the rising of a ghost, at the vanishing of a devil or the death of a tyrant"—as occupying the first place "among the several artifices put in practice by the poets to fill the minds of an audience with terror." Certainly the stage owes much to its storms: they have long been highly prized both by playwrights and playgoers, as awe-inspiring embellishments of the scene; and it must have been an early occupation of the theatrical machinist to devise some means of simulating the uproar of elemental strife. So far back as 1571, in the "Accounts of the Revels at Court," there appears a charge of L1 2s. paid to a certain John Izarde, for "mony to him due for his device in counterfeting thunder and lightning in the play of 'Narcisses;' and for sundry necessaries by him spent therein;" while to Robert Moore, the apothecary, a sum of L1 7s. 4d. is paid for "prepared corianders," musk, clove, cinnamon, and ginger comfits, rose and "spike" water, "all which," it is noted, "served for flakes of snow and haylestones in the maske of 'Janus;' the rose-water sweetened the balls made for snow-balls, and presented to her majesty by Janus." The storm in this masque must clearly have been of a very elegant and courtly kind, with sugar-plums for hailstones and perfumed water for rain. The tempests of the public theatres were assuredly conducted after a ruder method. In his prologue to "Every Man in his Humour," Ben Jonson finds occasion to censure contemporary dramatists for the "ill customs" of their plays, and to warn the audience that his production is not as others are:

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He rather prays you will be pleased to see
One such to-day as other plays should be;
Where neither chorus wafts you o'er the seas,
Nor creaking throne comes down the boys to please,
Nor nimble squib is seen to make afeard
The gentlewomen; nor rolled bullet heard
To say it thunders; nor tempestuous drum
Rumbles to tell you when the storm doth come, &c.

It has been conjectured that satirical allusion was here intended to the writings of Shakespeare; yet it is certain that Shakespeare sustained a part, most probably that of Old Knowell, in the first representation of Jonson's comedy. Storms are undoubtedly of frequent occurrence in Shakespeare's plays. Thus, "Macbeth" and "The Tempest" both open with thunder and lightning; there is "loud weather" in "The Winter's Tale;" there is thunder in "The First Part of King Henry VI.," when La Pucelle invokes the fiends to aid her endeavours; thunder and lightning in "The Second Part of King Henry VI.," when Margery Jourdain conjures up the spirit Asmath; thunder and lightning in "Julius Caesar;" a storm at sea in "Pericles," and a hurricane in "King Lear." It is to be noted, however, that all these plays could hardly have been represented so early as 1598, when "Every Man in his Humour" was first performed.

From Jonson's prologue it appears that the rumbling of thunder was at that time imitated by the rolling to and fro of bullets or cannon-balls. This plan was in time superseded by more ingenious contrivances. It is curious to find, however, that some fifty years ago one Lee, manager of the Edinburgh Theatre, with a view to improving the thunder of his stage, ventured upon a return to the Elizabethan system of representing a storm. His enterprise was attended with results at once ludicrous and disastrous. He placed ledges here and there along the back of his stage, and, obtaining a parcel of nine-pound cannon-balls, packed these in a wheelbarrow, which a carpenter was instructed to wheel to and fro over the ledges. The play was "Lear," and the jolting of the heavy barrow as it was trundled along its uneven path over the hollow stage, and the rumblings and reverberations thus produced, counterfeited most effectively the raging of the tempest in the third act. Unfortunately, however, while the King was braving, in front of the scene, the pitiless storm at the back, the carpenter missed his footing, tripped over one of the ledges, and fell down, wheelbarrow, cannon-balls, and all. The stage being on a declivity, the cannon-balls came rolling rapidly and noisily down towards the front, gathering force as they advanced, and overcoming the feeble resistance offered by the scene, struck it down, passed over its prostrate form, and made their way towards the foot-lights and the fiddlers, amidst the amusement and wonder of the audience, and the amazement and alarm of the Lear of the night. As the nine-pounders advanced towards him, and rolled

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about in all directions, he was compelled to display an activity in avoiding them, singularly inappropriate to the age and condition of the character he was personating. He was even said to resemble a dancer achieving the terpsichorean feat known as the egg hornpipe. Presently, too, the musicians became alarmed for the safety of themselves and their instruments, and deemed it advisable to scale the spiked partition which divided them from the pit; for the cannon-balls were upon them, smashing the lamps, and falling heavily into the orchestra. Meantime, exposed to the full gaze of the house, lay prone, beside his empty barrow, the carpenter, the innocent invoker of the storm he had been unable to allay or direct, not at all hurt, but exceedingly frightened and bewildered. After this unlucky experiment, the manager abandoned his wheelbarrow and cannon-balls, and reverted to more received methods of producing stage storms.

In 1713, a certain Dr. Reynardson published a poem called “The Stage,” which the critics of the time agreed to be a pretty and ingenious composition. It was dedicated to Addison, the preface stating that “‘The Spectator’s’ account of ‘The Distrest Mother’ had raised the author’s expectation to such a pitch that he made an excursion from college to see that tragedy acted, and upon his return was commanded by the dean to write upon the Art, Rise, and Progress of the English Stage; which how well he has performed is submitted to the judgment of that worthy gentleman to whom it is inscribed.” Dr. Reynardson’s poem is not a work of any great distinction, and need only be referred to here for its mention of the means then in use for raising the storms of the theatre. Noting the strange and incongruous articles to be found in the tiring-room of the players—such as Tarquin’s trousers and Lucretia’s vest, Roxana’s coif and Statira’s stays, the poet proceeds:

> Hard by a quart of bottled lightning lies
> A bowl of double use and monstrous size,
> Now rolls it high and rumbles in its speed,
> Now drowns the weaker crack of mustard-seed;
> So the true thunder all arrayed in smoke,
> Launched from the skies now rives the knotted oak,
> And sometimes naught the drunkard’s prayers prevail,
> And sometimes condescends to sour the ale.

There is also allusion to the mustard-bowl as applied to theatrical uses in “The Dunciad:”

> “Now turn to different sports,” the goddess cries,
> “And learn, my sons, the wondrous power of NOISE.
> To move, to raise, to ravish every heart,
> With Shakespeare’s nature or with Jonson’s art,

Let others aim; 'tis yours to shake the soul
With thunder rumbling from the mustard-bowl."

And further reference to the frequency of stage storms is continued in the well-known lines, written by way of parodying the mention of the Duke of Marlborough in Addison's poem "The Campaign:"

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Immortal Rich! how calm he sits at ease,
’Mid snows of paper and fierce hail of pease;
And proud his mistress’ orders to perform,
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

A note to the early editions of “The Dunciad” explains that the old ways of making thunder and mustard were the same, but that of late the thunder had been advantageously simulated by means of “troughs of wood with stops in them.” “Whether Mr. Dennis was the inventor of that improvement, I know not,” writes the annotator; “but it is certain that being once at a tragedy of a new author he fell into a great passion at hearing some, and cried: ‘’Sdeath! that is my thunder.’” Dennis’s thunder was first heard on the production at Drury Lane Theatre, in 1709, of his “Appius and Virginia,” a hopelessly dull tragedy, which not even the united exertions of Booth, Wilkes, and Betterton could keep upon the stage for more than four nights. “The Dunciad” was written in 1726, when Pope either did not really know that the old mustard-bowl style of storm was out of date, or purposely refrained from mentioning the recent invention of “troughs of wood with stops in them.”

In July, 1709, Drury-lane Theatre was closed by order of the Lord Chamberlain, whereon Addison published in “The Tatler” a facetious inventory of the goods and movables of Christopher Rich, the manager, to be disposed of in consequence of his “breaking up housekeeping.” Among the effects for sale are mentioned:

A mustard-bowl to make thunder with.

Another of a bigger sort, by Mr. D——’s directions, little used.

The catalogue is not of course to be viewed seriously, or it might be inferred that Dennis’s new thunder was still something of the mustard-bowl sort. Other items relative to the storms of the stage and their accessories are:

Spirits of right Nantz brandy for lambent flames and apparitions.

Three bottles and a half of lightning.

A sea consisting of a dozen large waves, the tenth bigger than ordinary, and a little damaged.

(According to poetic authority, it may be noted, the tenth wave is always the largest and most dangerous.)

A dozen and a half of clouds trimmed with black, and well conditioned.

> A set of clouds after the French mode, streaked with lightning
> and furbelowed.
>
> One shower of snow in the whitest French paper.
>
> Two showers of a browner sort.

It is probably to this mention of snow-storms we owe the familiar theatrical story of the manager who, when white paper failed him, met the difficulty of the situation by snowing brown.

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The humours of the theatre afforded great diversion to the writers in “The Spectator,” and the storms of the stage are repeatedly referred to in their essays. In 1771, Steele, discoursing about inanimate performers, published a fictitious letter from “the Salmoneus of Covent Garden,” demanding pity and favour on account of the unexpected vicissitudes of his fortune. “I have for many years past,” he writes, “been thunderer to the playhouse; and have not only made as much noise out of the clouds as any predecessor of mine in the theatre that ever bore that character, but have also descended, and spoke on the stage as the Bold Thunderer in ‘The Rehearsal.’ When they got me down thus low, they thought fit to degrade me further, and make me a ghost. I was contented with this for these last two winters; but they carry their tyranny still further, and not satisfied that I am banished from above ground, they have given me to understand that I am wholly to depart from their dominions, and taken from me even my subterraneous employment.” He concludes with a petition that his services may be engaged for the performance of a new opera to be called “The Expedition of Alexander,” the scheme of which had been set forth in an earlier “Spectator,” and that if the author of that work “thinks fit to use firearms, as other authors have done, in the time of Alexander, I may be a cannon against Porus; or else provide for me in the burning of Persepolis, or what other method you shall think fit.”

In 1714, Addison wrote: “I look upon the playhouse as a world within itself. They have lately furnished the middle region of it with a new set of meteors in order to give the sublime to many modern tragedies. I was there last winter at the first rehearsal of the new thunder, which is much more deep and sonorous than any hitherto made use of. They have a Salmoneus behind the scenes, who plays it off with great success. Their lightnings are made to flash more briskly than heretofore; their clouds are also better furbelowed and more voluminous; not to mention a violent storm locked up in a great chest that is designed for ‘The Tempest.’ They are also provided with a dozen showers of snow, which, as I am informed, are the plays of many unsuccessful poets, artificially cut and shredded for that vise.” In an earlier “Spectator” he had written: “I have often known a bell introduced into several tragedies with good effect, and have seen the whole assembly in a very great alarm all the while it has been ringing.” Pope has his mention in “The Dunciad” of the same artifice:

> With horns and trumpets now to madness swell.
> Now sink in sorrow with a tolling bell;
> Such happy arts attention can command,
> When fancy flags and sense is at a stand.

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The notion of storing lightning in a bottle for use when required seems to have been frequently reverted to by the authors of the last century as a means of entertaining the public. Thus a writer in “The World,” in 1754, makes no doubt “of being able to bring thunder and lightning to market at a much cheaper price than common gunpowder,” and describes a friend who has applied himself wholly to electrical experiments, and discovered that “the most effectual and easy method of making this commodity is by grinding a certain quantity of air between a glass ball and a bag of sand, and when you have ground it into fire your lightning is made, and then you may either bottle it up, or put it into casks properly seasoned for that purpose, and send it to market.” The inventor, however, confesses that what he has hitherto made is not of a sufficient degree of strength to answer all the purposes of natural lightning; but he is confident that he will soon be able to effect this, and has, indeed, already so far perfected his experiments that, in the presence of several of his neighbours, he has succeeded in producing a clap of thunder which blew out a candle, accompanied by a flash of lightning which made an impression upon a pat of butter standing upon the table. He is also confident that in warm weather he can shake all the pewters upon his shelf, and fully expects, when his thermometer is at sixty-two degrees and a half, to be able to sour all the small beer in his cellar, and to break his largest pier-glass. This paper in “The World,” apart from its humorous intention, is curious as a record of early dabblings in electrical experiments. It may be mentioned that in one of Franklin’s letters, written apparently before the year 1750, the points of resemblance between lightning and the spark obtained by friction from an electrical apparatus are distinctly stated. It is but some thirty-five years ago that Andrew Crosse, the famous amateur electrician, was asked by an elderly gentleman, who came to witness his experiments with two enormous Leyden jars charged by means of wires stretched for miles among the forest trees near Taunton: “Mr. Crosse, don’t you think it is rather impious to bottle the lightning?”

“Let me answer your question by asking another,” said Crosse, laughing. “Don’t you think it might be considered rather impious to bottle the rain-water?”

Further, it may be remembered that curious reference to this part of our subject is made by “the gentleman in the small clothes” who lived next door to Mrs. Nickleby, and presumed to descend the chimney of her house. “Very good,” he is reported to have said on that occasion, “then bring in the bottled lightning, a clean tumbler, and a corkscrew.”

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The early days of George Frederick Cooke were passed at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Left an orphan at a very tender age, he had been cared for and reared by two aunts, his mother's sisters, who provided him with such education as he ever obtained. There were no play-books in the library of these ladies, yet somehow the youth contrived to become acquainted with the British drama. Strolling companies occasionally visited the town, and a certain passion for the theatre possessed the boys of Berwick, with Cooke, of course, among them. They formed themselves into an amateur company, and represented, after a fashion, various plays, rather for their own entertainment, however, than the edification of their friends. And they patronised, so far as they could, every dramatic troupe that appeared in the neighbourhood of Berwick. But they had more goodwill than money to bestow upon the strollers, and were often driven to strange subterfuges in their anxiety to see the play, and in their inability to pay the price of admission to the theatre. On one occasion Cooke and two or three friends secreted themselves beneath the stage, in the hope of stealing out during the performance and joining the audience by means of an opening in a dark passage leading to the pit. Discovery and ignominious ejection followed upon this experiment. Another essay led to a curious adventure. Always on the alert to elude the vigilance of the doorkeeper, the boys again effected an entrance into the theatre. The next consideration was how to bestow themselves in a place of concealment until the time for raising the curtain should arrive, when they might hope, in the confusion and bustle behind the scenes, to escape notice, and enjoy the marvels of the show. "Cooke," records his biographer, "espied a barrel, and congratulating himself on this safe and snug retreat, he crept in, like the hero of that immortal modern drama, 'Tekeli.'" Unfortunately this hiding-place was one of considerable peril. Cooke perceived that for companion tenants of his barrel he had two large cannon-balls—twenty-four pounders; but being as yet but incompletely initiated into the mysteries of the scene, he did not suspect the theatrical use to which these implements of war were constantly applied. He was in the thunder-barrel of the theatre! The play was "Macbeth," and the thunder was required in the first scene, to give due effect to the entrance of the witches. "The Jupiter Tonans of the theatre, *alias* the property-man, approached and seized the barrel. Judge the breathless fear of my hero—it was too great for words, and he only shrunk closer to the bottom of his hiding-place. His tormentor proceeded to cover the open end of the barrel with a piece of old carpet, and to tie it carefully, to prevent the thunder from being spilt. Still George Frederick was most heroically silent; the machine was lifted by the Herculean property-man, and carried carefully to the side scene, lest in rolling the thunder

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should rumble before its cue. It would be a hopeless task to paint the agitation of the contents of the barrel. The property-man, swearing the barrel was unusually heavy, placed the complicated machine in readiness, the witches entered amid flames of rosin; the thunder-bell rang, the barrel renewed its impetus, and away rolled George Frederick and his ponderous companions. Silence would now have been no virtue, and he roared most manfully, to the surprise of the thunderer, who, neglecting to stop the rolling machine, it entered on the stage, and George Frederick, bursting off the carpet head of the barrel, appeared before the audience just as the witches had agreed to meet when 'the hurly-burly's done.'" Cooke's biographer, Mr. William Dunlap, thought that this story bore "sufficient marks of probability." It must be said, however, that as to anecdotes touching their heroes, biographers are greatly prone to be credulous.

The illusions of the stage were much enhanced by Garrick's Alsatian scene-painter, Philip James de Loutherbourg, a man of genius in his way, and an eminent innovator and reformer in the matter of theatrical decoration. Before his time the scenes had been merely strained "flats" of canvas, extending the whole breadth and height of the stage. He was the first to introduce set scenes and what are technically called "raking pieces." He invented transparent scenes, with representations of moonlight, rising and setting suns, fires, volcanoes, &c., and contrived effects of colour by means of silk screens of various hues placed before the foot and side lights. He was the first to represent a mist by suspending a gauze between the scene and the spectator. For two seasons he held a dioramic exhibition of his own, called the Eidophusikon, at the Patagonian Theatre in Exeter Change, and afterwards at a house in Panton Square. The special attraction of the entertainment was a storm at sea, with the wreck of the "Halsewell," East Indiaman. No pains were spared to picture the tempest and its most striking effects. The clouds were movable, painted upon a canvas of vast size, and rising diagonally by means of a winding machine. The artist excelled in his treatment of clouds, and by regulating the action of his windlass he could direct their movements, now permitting them to rise slowly from the horizon and sail obliquely across the heavens and now driving them swiftly along according to their supposed density and the power ascribed to the wind. The lightning quivered through transparent places in the sky. The waves carved in soft wood from models made in clay, coloured with great skill, and highly varnished to reflect the lightning, rose and fell with irregular action, flinging the foam now here, now there, diminishing in size, and dimming in colour, as they receded from the spectator. "De Loutherbourg's genius," we are informed, "was as prolific in imitations of nature to astonish the ear as to charm the sight. He introduced a new art—the picturesque

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of sound." That is to say, he imitated the noise of thunder by shaking one of the lower corners of a large thin sheet of copper suspended by a chain; the distant firing of signals of distress from the doomed vessel he counterfeited by suddenly striking a large tambourine with a sponge affixed to a whalebone spring, the reverberations of the sponge producing a peculiar echo as from cloud to cloud dying away in the distance. The rushing washing sound of the waves was simulated by turning round and round an octagonal pasteboard box, fitted with shelves, and containing small shells, peas, and shot; while two discs of tightly-strained silk, suddenly pressed together, produced a hollow whistling sound in imitation of loud and fitful gusts of wind. Cylinders, loosely charged with seed and small shot, lifted now at one end, now at the other, so us to allow the contents to fall in a pattering stream, effectually reproduced the noise of hail and rain. The moon was formed by a circular aperture cut in a tin box containing a powerful argand lamp, which was placed at the back of the scene, and brought near or removed from the canvas as the luminary was supposed to be shining brightly or to be obscured by clouds. These contrivances of Mr. de Loutherbourg may now, perhaps, be deemed to be of rather a commonplace description—they have figured so frequently, and in such amplified and amended forms, upon the modern stage; but they were calculated to impress the painter's patrons very considerably; they were then distinctly innovations due to his curiously inventive genius, and the result of much labour and heedful ingenuity. If the theatrical entertainments of the present time manifest little progress in histrionic art, there has been, at any rate, marked advance in the matter of scenic illusions and mechanical effects. The thunder of our modern stage storms may no more proceed from mustard-bowls, or from "troughs of wood with stops in them," but it is, at any rate, sufficiently formidable and uproarious, sometimes exciting, indeed, the anxiety of the audience, lest it should crash through the roof of the theatre, and visit them bodily in the pit; while for our magnesium or lime-light flashes of lightning, they are beyond anything that "spirit of right Nantz brandy" could effect in the way of lambent flames, have a vividness that equals reality, and, moreover, leave behind them a pungent and sulphurous odour that may be described as even supernaturally noxious. The stage storm still bursts upon the drama from time to time; the theatre is still visited in due course by its rainy and tempestuous season; and thunder and lightning are, as much as in Addison's time, among the favourite devices of our playwrights, "put in practice to fill the minds of an audience with terror." The terror may not be quite of the old kind, but still it does well enough.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"DOUBLES."

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The “doubling” of parts, or the allotment to an actor of more characters than one in the same representation, was an early necessity of theatrical management. The old dramatists delighted in a long catalogue of *dramatis personae*. There are some fifty “speaking parts” in Shakespeare’s “Henry V.,” for instance; and although it was usual to press even the money-takers into the service of the stage to figure as supernumerary players, there was still a necessity for the regular members of the troupe to undertake dual duties. Certain curious stage directions cited by Mr. Payne Collier from the old extemporal play of “Tamar Cam,” mentioned in Henslowe’s “Diary” under the date of October, 1602, afford evidence of an early system of doubling. In the concluding scene of the play four-and-twenty persons are required to represent the nations conquered by the hero—Tartars, Bactrians, Cattaians, Pigmies, Cannibals, &c., and to cross the stage in procession in the presence of the leading characters. The names of these performers are supplied, and it is apparent that Messrs. George, Thomas Morbeck, Parsons, W. Parr, and other members of the company, were present early in the scene as nobles and soldiers in attendance upon the conqueror, and later—sufficient time being allowed for them to change their costumes—as representatives of “the people of Bohare, a Cattaian, two Bactrians,” &c.

In proportion as the actors were few, and the *dramatis personae* numerous, so the system of doubling, and even trebling parts, more and more prevailed. Especially were the members of itinerant companies compelled to undertake increase of labour of this kind. It was to their advantage that the troupe should be limited in number, so that the money accruing from their performances should not be divided into too many shares, and, as a consequence, each man’s profit reduced too considerably. Further, it was always the strollers’ principle of action to stick at nothing: to be deterred by no difficulties in regard to paucity of numbers, deficient histrionic gifts, inadequate wardrobes, or absent scenery. They were always prepared to represent, somehow, any play that seemed to them to promise advantages to their treasury. The labours of doubling fell chiefly on the minor players, for the leading tragedian was too frequently present on the scene as the hero of the night to be able to undertake other duties. But if the player of Hamlet, for instance, was confined to that character, it was still competent for the representative of “the ghost of buried Denmark” to figure also as Laertes; or for Polonius, his death accomplished, to reappear in the guise of Osric or the First Gravedigger; to say nothing of such minor arrangements as were involved in entrusting the parts of the First Actor, Marcellus, and the Second Gravedigger to one actor. Some care had to be exercised that the doubled characters did not clash, and were not required to be simultaneously present upon the scene.

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But, indeed, the strollers did not hesitate to mangle their author when his stage directions did not accord with their convenience. The late Mr. Meadows used to relate that when in early life he was a member of the Tamworth, Stratford-upon-Avon, and Warwick company, he was cast for Orozembo, the Old Blind Man, and the Sentinel in "Pizarro," and took part in a mutilated version of Macbeth, in which King Duncan, Hecate, the First Murderer, and the Doctor were performed by one actor; the bleeding soldier, one of the apparitions, and Seyton by another; and Fleance, the Apparition of a crowned head, and the Gentlewoman by the juvenile lady of the company, the characters of Donaldbain and Siward being wholly omitted.

Harley's first theatrical engagement was with Jerrold, the manager of a company at Cranbrook. His salary was fifteen shillings a week, and in a representation of "The Honeymoon" he appeared as Jaques, Lampedo, and Lopez, accomplishing the task with the assistance of several wigs and cloaks. In "John Bull" he played Dan, John Burr, and Sir Francis Rochdale; another actor doubling the parts of Peregrine and Tom Shuffleton, while the manager's wife represented Mrs. Brulgruddery and Frank Rochdale, attiring the latter in a pair of very loose nankeen trousers and a very tight short jacket. The entire company consisted of "four white males, three females, and a negro." Certain of the parts were assigned in the playbills to a Mr. Jones. These, much to his surprise, Harley was requested by the manager to assume. "Between you and me," he whispered mysteriously to his young recruit, "there's no such person as Mr. Jones. Our company's rather thin just now, but there's no reason why the fact should be noised abroad." Other provincial managers were much less anxious to conceal the paucity of their company. A country playbill, bearing date 1807, seems indeed to vaunt the system of doubling to which the *impresario* had been driven. The comedy of "The Busy Body" was announced for performance with the following extraordinary cast:

Sir Francis Gripe and Charles	Mr. Johnston.
Sir George Airy and Whisper	Mr. Deans.
Sir Jealous Traffic and Marplot	Mr. Jones.
Miranda and Scentwell	Mrs. Deans.
Patch and Isabinda	Mrs. Jones.

Among other feats of doubling or trebling may be counted the performance, on the same night, by a Mrs. Stanley, at the Coburg Theatre, of the parts of Lady Anne, Tressell, and Richmond, in "Richard III." A Mr. W. Rede once accomplished the difficult feat of appearing as Sir Lucius O'Trigger, Fag, and Mrs. Malaprop in a representation of "The Rivals," the lady's entrance in the last scene having been preceded by the abrupt exit of Sir Lucius and the omission of the concluding passages of his part. The

characters of King Henry, Buckingham, and Richmond, in Cibber's edition of "Richard III.," have frequently been undertaken by one performer.

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Actors have often appeared in two, and sometimes in three theatres on the same evening. This may be the result of their own great popularity, or due to the fact of their serving a manager who has become lessee of more than one establishment. For twenty-eight nights in succession, Grimaldi performed the arduous duties of clown both at Sadler's Wells and Covent Garden Theatres. On one occasion he even played clown at the Surrey Theatre in addition. It is recorded that "the only refreshment he took during the whole evening was one glass of warm ale and a biscuit." A postchaise and four was waiting at the Surrey Theatre to convey him to Sadler's Wells, and thence to Covent Garden, and the postboys urged their horses to a furious speed. It is well known that while fulfilling his double engagement he one wet night missed his coach, and ran in the rain all the way from Clerkenwell to Holborn, in his clown's dress, before he could obtain a second vehicle. He was recognised as he ran by a man who shouted: "Here's Joe Grimaldi!" And forthwith the most thoroughly popular performer of his day was followed by a roaring and cheering mob of admirers, who proclaimed his name and calling, threw up their hats and caps, exhibited every evidence of delight, and agreed, as with one accord, to see him safe and sound to his journey's end. "So the coach went on, surrounded by the dirtiest bodyguard that was ever beheld; not one of whom deserted his post until Grimaldi had been safely deposited at the stage-door of Covent Garden, when, after raising a vociferous cheer, such of them as had money rushed round to the gallery doors, and making their appearance in the front just as he came on the stage, set up a boisterous shout of 'Here he is again!' and cheered him enthusiastically, to the infinite amusement of every person in the theatre who had got wind of the story."

At one time Elliston, engaged as an actor at Drury Lane, had the additional responsibility of two theatrical managements, the Surrey and the Olympic. His performers were required to serve both theatres, and thus frequently appeared upon the stage in two counties upon the same night. In 1834 the two patent theatres were ruled by one lessee, whose managerial scheme it was to work the two houses with a company and a half. The running to and from Drury Lane and Covent Garden of actors half attired, with rouged faces, and loaded with the paraphernalia of their art, of dancers in various stages of dress, of musicians bearing their instruments and their music-books, was incessant, while the interchange of mysterious terms and inquiries, such as "Who's on?" "Stage waits," "Curtain down," "Rung up," "First music," &c., was sufficiently perplexing to passers-by. At the season of Christmas, when the system of double duty was at its height, the hardships endured by the performers were severe indeed. The dancers were said to pass from one theatre to the other six times during the evening, and to undergo no fewer than eight changes of costume.

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In the same way the performances at the summer theatre, the Haymarket, at the commencement and close of its season, often came into collision with the entertainments of the winter houses, and the actor engaged by two masters, and anxious to serve both faithfully, had a very arduous time of it. How could he possibly be present at the Haymarket and yet not absent from Drury Lane or Covent Garden? As a rule the patent theatres had the preference, and the summer theatre was compelled for a few nights to be content with a very scanty company. On one occasion, however, Farley, the actor, achieved the feat of appearing both at the Haymarket and Covent Garden on the same night, and in the plays presented first at each house. The effort is deserving of particular description.

At Covent Garden the curtain rose at half-past six o'clock. In the Haymarket the representation commenced at seven. At the former theatre Farley was cast for one of the witches in "Macbeth." At the latter he was required to impersonate Sir Philip Modelove, in the comedy of "A Bold Stroke for a Wife." It was a question of fitting in his exits at Covent Garden with his entrances at the Haymarket. A hackney-coach was in attendance, provided with a dresser, lighted candles, the necessary change of costume, and the means of altering his make-up. His early duties as a witch at Covent Garden fulfilled, the actor jumped into his coach, and, with the assistance of his dresser, was promptly changed from the weird sister of the tragedy to the elderly beau of the comedy. He duly arrived at the Haymarket in time to present himself as Sir Philip, whose first entrance upon the stage is in the second act of the play. This part of his task performed, he hurried again to Covent Garden, being transformed on the road from Sir Philip back again to the weird sister. Again he left the patent theatre, and reached the Haymarket in time to appear as Sir Philip, on the second entrance of that character in the fifth act of the play. The actor acquitted himself entirely to the satisfaction of his two audiences (who were perhaps hardly aware of the extent of his labours), but with very considerable strain upon his nervous system. For to add to the difficulties of his task, his coachman, indifferent to the counsel that the more haste often signifies the worse speed, turning a corner too sharply, ran his forewheel against a post, and upset coach, actor, dresser, candles, costumes, and all. This untimely accident notwithstanding, the actor, with assistance freely rendered by a friendly crowd, secured another vehicle, and succeeded in accomplishing an exploit that can scarcely be paralleled in histrionic records.

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But if doubling was sometimes a matter of necessity, it has often been the result of choice. Actors have been much inclined to undertake dual duty with a view of manifesting their versatility, or of surprising their admirers. Benefit-nights have been especially the occasions of doubling of this kind. Thus, at a provincial theatre, then under his management, Elliston once tried the strange experiment of sustaining the characters of both Richard and Richmond in the same drama. The entrance of Richmond does not occur until the fifth act of the tragedy, when the scenes in which the king and the earl occupy the stage become alternate. On making his exit as Richard, Elliston dropped his hump from his shoulder, as though it had been a knapsack, straightened his deformed limbs, slipped on certain pieces of pasteboard armour, and, adorned with fresh head-gear, duly presented himself as the Tudor prince. The heroic lines of Richmond delivered, the actor hurried to the side-wings, to resume something of the misshapen aspect of Richard, and then re-enter as that character. In this way the play went on until the last scene, when the combatants came face to face. How was their fight to be presented to the spectators? This omission of so popular an incident as a broadsword combat could not be thought of. The armour of Richmond was forthwith shifted on to the shoulders of a supernumerary player, who was simply enjoined to “hold his tongue, and fight like the devil.” Richard slain, Richmond departed. The body of the dead king was borne from the stage, and Elliston was then enabled to reappear as Richmond, and speak the closing lines of the play.

Among more legitimate exploits in the way of doubling are to be accounted the late Mr. Charles Mathews’s assumption of the two characters of Puff and Sir Fretful Plagiary in “The Critic;” Miss Kate Terry’s performance both of Viola and Sebastian in “Twelfth Night;” Mr. Phelps’s appearance as James the First and Trapbois, in the play founded upon “The Fortunes of Nigel;” and the rendering by the same actor of the parts of the King and Justice Shallow in “The Second Part of Henry IV.” The worst that can be said for these performances is that they incline the audience to pay less heed to the play than to the frequent changes of appearance entailed upon the players. The business of the scene is apt to be overlooked, and regard wanders involuntarily to the transactions of the tiring-room and the side-wings. Will the actor be recognisable? will he really have time to alter his costume? the spectators mechanically ask themselves, and meditation is occupied with such possibilities as a tangled string or an obstinate button hindering the performer. All this is opposed to the real purpose of playing, and injurious to the actor’s art, to say nothing of the interests of the dramatist. Illusion is the special object of the theatre, and this forfeits its magic when once inquiry is directed too curiously

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to its method of contrivance. Still doubling of this kind has always been in favour both with actors and audiences, and many plays have been provided especially to give dual occupation to the performers. Certain of these have for excuse the fact that their fables hinge upon some question of mistaken identity, or strong personal resemblance. The famous “Courier of Lyons,” founded, indeed, upon a genuine *cause celebre*, was a drama of this kind. Here it was indispensable that the respectable Monsieur Lesurques and the criminal Dubosc, between whom so extraordinary a likeness existed that the one suffered death upon the scaffold for a murder committed by the other, should be both impersonated by the same performer. “The Corsican Brothers,” it need hardly be said, narrated the fortunes of the twin-born Louis and Fabian dei Franchi, reasonably supposed to be so much alike that they could not be known apart. Mademoiselle Rachel appeared with success in a drama called “Valeria,” written by Messieurs Auguste Maquet and Jules Lacroix, for the express purpose, it would seem, of rehabilitating the Empress Messalina. The actress personated Valeria, otherwise Messalina, and also Cynisca, a dancing-girl of evil character, but so closely resembling the empress that, as the dramatists argued, history had confounded the two ladies, and charged the one with the misdeeds of the other. “Like and Unlike,” an adaptation from the French, in which, some years since, Madame Celeste was wont to perform at the Adelphi, is also a drama of the same class. But, indeed, works contrived for doubling purposes are numerous enough. And in this category may be included the elaborate melodramas which deal with long lapses of years, and relate the adventures of more than one generation, and in which the hero or heroine of the earlier scenes reappears at a later stage of the performance as his or her own child. Here, however, frequent change of dress is not required; the character first personated, when once laid aside, is not resumed, but is supposed to have been effectually removed from the scene by death, generally of a violent description. It is to be added that the applause often won by the actor who doubles a part on account of his rapid changes of attire, are in truth due much less to him than to the activity of his dresser—a functionary, however, who is never seen by the public. Still, calls before the curtain have now become such common compliments, that even the dressers of the theatre may yet obtain this form of recognition of their deserts.

The services of a mute double to assist the illusion of the scene, or to spare a leading performer needless fatigue, have often been required upon the stage. Such a play as “The Corsican Brothers” could scarcely be presented without the aid of a mute player to take the place, now of Louis, now of Fabian dei Franchi, to personate now the spectre of this twin, now of that. In former days, when the deepest

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tragedy was the most highly esteemed of theatrical entertainments, funeral processions, or biers bearing the corpses of departed heroes, were among the most usual of scenic exhibitions. Plays closed with a surprising list of killed and wounded. But four of the characters in Rowe's "Fair Penitent" are left alive at the fall of the curtain, and among those survivors are included such subordinate persons as Rossano, the friend of Lothario, and Lucilla, the confidante of Calista, whom certainly it was worth no one's while to put to death. The haughty gallant, gay Lothario, is slain at the close of the fourth act, but his corpse figures prominently in the concluding scenes. The stage direction runs at the opening of the fifth act: "A room hung with black; on one side Lothario's body on a bier; on the other a table with a skull and other bones, a book and a lamp on it. Calista is discovered on a couch, in black; her hair hanging loose and disordered. Soft music plays." In this, as in similar cases, it was clearly unnecessary that the personator of the live Lothario of the first four acts should remain upon the stage to represent his dead body in the fifth. It was usual, therefore, to allow the actor's dresser to perform this doleful duty, and the dressers of the time seem to have claimed occupation of this nature as a kind of privilege, probably obtaining in such wise some title to increase of salary. The original Lothario—the tragedy being first represented in 1703—was George Powell, an esteemed actor who won applause from Addison and Steele, but who appears to have been somewhat of a toper, and was generally reputed to obscure his faculties by incessant indulgence in Nantes brandy. The fourth act of the play over, the actor was impatient to be gone, and was heard behind the scenes angrily demanding the assistance of Warren, his dresser, entirely forgetful of the fact that his attendant was employed upon the stage in personating the corpse of Lothario. Mr. Powell's wrath grew more and more intense. He threatened the absent Warren with the severest of punishments. The unhappy dresser, reclining on Lothario's bier, could not but overhear his raging master, yet for some time his fears were surmounted by his sense of dramatic propriety. He lay and shivered, longing for the fall of the curtain. At length his situation became quite unendurable. Powell was threatening to break every bone in his skin. In his dresser's opinion the actor was a man likely to keep his word. With a cry of "Here I am, master!" Warren sprang up, clothed in sable draperies which were fastened to the handles of his bier. The house roared with surprise and laughter. Encumbered by his charnel-house trappings, the dead Lothario precipitately fled from the stage. The play, of course, ended abruptly. For once the sombre tragedy of "The Fair Penitent" was permitted a mirthful conclusion.

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Whenever unusual physical exertion is required of a player, a perilous fall, or a desperate leap, a trained gymnast is usually engaged as double to accomplish this portion of the performance. When in the stage versions of “Kenilworth,” Sir Richard Varney, in lieu of Amy Robsart, is seen to descend through the treacherous trap and incur a fall of many feet, we may be sure that it is not the genuine Varney, but his double who undergoes this severe fate. The name of the double is not recorded in the playbill, however, and he wins little fame, let him acquit himself as skilfully as he may. Occasionally, however, doubles of this kind are found to emerge from obscurity and establish a reputation of their own. In 1820, a pantomime, dealing with the fairly tale of “Jack and the Beanstalk,” was produced at Drury Lane. The part of the hero was allotted to little Miss Povey, who declined, however, to undertake Jack’s feat of climbing the famous beanstalk, a formidable structure reaching from the stage to the roof of the theatre. It became necessary to secure a substitute who should present some resemblance to the small and slight figure of the young actress, and yet be sufficiently strong and courageous to undertake the task she demurred to. The matter was one of some difficulty, and for some time no competent double was forthcoming. One morning, however, Winston, the stage-manager, descried a little active boy, acting as waterman’s assistant, at the hackney-coach stand in Bedford Street, Covent Garden. He was carried to the theatre and his abilities put to the test at a rehearsal of the pantomime. His performance was pronounced satisfactory. He nightly appeared during the run of “Jack and the Beanstalk” as the climbing double of Miss Povey. Subsequently, he became one of the pupils of the clown. The boy said he believed his name was Sullivan. Years afterwards he was known to fame as Monsieur Silvain, ballet-master, and principal dancer of the Academic Royale, Paris, an artist of distinction, and a most respectable member of society.

Mrs. Mowatt, the American actress, has recorded in her Memoirs a curious instance of a double being employed in connection with a dummy to secure a theatrical illusion of a special kind. The play produced at the Olympic Theatre some twenty years ago, was an English version of the “Ariane” of Thomas Corneille. In the original, Ariadne, upon the discovery of the perfidy of Theseus, falls upon a sword and expires. This catastrophe was altered in the adaptation, and a startling effect produced by the leaping of the heroine from a rock, and her plunging into the sea, while the ship of Theseus is seen departing in the distance. It was found necessary that three Ariadnes, similarly costumed, and identical in appearance, should lend their aid to accomplish this thrilling termination. Mrs. Mowatt, as Ariadne the first, paced the shore, and received the agonising intelligence of the desertion of Theseus. A ballet-girl, as Ariadne the second, climbed the rocks of the Island of Naxos, reaching the highest peak to catch the last glimpse of the vanishing vessel. The third Ariadne was a most lifelike lay figure, which, on a given signal, was hurled from the cliff, and seen to fall into the abyss below.

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The greatest difficulty seems to have been experienced at rehearsal in persuading Ariadne the second even to walk up the steep rocks of Naxos. The poor ballet-girl had been chosen for this duty less because of her courage than on account of an accidental resemblance she bore to Mrs. Mowatt. “She stopped and shrieked halfway, protested she was dizzy, and might fall, and would not advance a step farther. After about half-an-hour’s delay, during which the poor girl was encouraged, coaxed, and scolded abundantly, she allowed the carpenter, who had planned the rocky pathway, to lead her carefully up and down the declivity, and finally rushed up alone.” At a certain cue she was required to fall upon her face, concealed from the audience by an intercepting rock, and then the lay figure took its flight through the air.

The success of the performance appears to have been complete. The substitution of the double for Ariadne, and the dummy for the double, even puzzled spectators who were provided with powerful opera-glasses. “The illusion was so perfect,” Mrs. Mowatt writes, “that on the first night of the representation, when Ariadne leaped from the rock, a man started up in the pit, exclaiming in a tone of genuine horror: ’Good God! she is killed!’” How this exclamation must have rejoiced the heart of the stage-manager! For one would rather not consider the possibility of the “man in the pit” having been placed there by that functionary with due instructions as to when and what he was to exclaim.

It is a sort of doubling when, in consequence of the illness or absence of a performer, his part is read by some other member of the company. In this way curious experiments have sometimes been made upon public patience. At Dublin, in 1743, Addison’s tragedy was announced for representation, with Sheridan, the actor, in the character of Cato. Sheridan, however, suddenly declined to appear, the costume he had usually assumed in his performance of Cato being absent from the wardrobe. In this emergency, Theophilus Cibber submitted a proposition to the audience that, in addition to appearing as Syphax in the play, he should read the part Mr. Sheridan ought to have filled. The offer was accepted, the performance ensued, and apparently excited no opposition. Sheridan was much incensed, however, and published an address to the public. Cibber replied. Sheridan issued a second address, to which Cibber again responded. Their correspondence was subsequently reprinted in a pamphlet entitled “Sock and Buskin.” But the fact remained that “Cato” had been represented with the chief part not acted, but read by a player who had other duties to fulfil in the tragedy. One is reminded of the old-established story of the play of “Hamlet” being performed with the omission of the character of the Prince of Denmark; a tradition, or a jest, which has long been attributed to Joe Miller, or some similar compiler of facetiae. It would seem, however, that even

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this absurd legend can boast some foundation of fact. At any rate, Mr. Parke, the respectable oboist of the Opera House, who published his Musical Memoirs in 1830, is found gravely recording of one Cubit, a subordinate actor and singer of Covent Garden Theatre, that once, "when during one of his summer engagements at a provincial theatre, he was announced to perform the character of Hamlet, he was seized with a sudden and serious illness in his dressing-room, just before the play was going to begin; whereupon the manager, having 'no more cats than would catch mice,' was constrained to request the audience to suffer them to go through with the play, omitting the character of Hamlet; which, being complied with, it was afterwards considered by the bulk of the audience to be a great improvement." Mr. Parke proceeds to record, by way, perhaps, of fortifying his story: "Although this may appear ridiculous and improbable, an occurrence of a similar kind took place several years afterwards at Covent Garden Theatre, when Cooke, the popular actor, having got drunk, the favourite afterpiece of 'Love a la Mode' was performed before a London audience (he being absent) without the principal character, Sir Archy MacSarcasm."

CHAPTER XXVII.

BENEFITS.

Philip Henslowe, who, late in the sixteenth century, was proprietor of the old Rose Theatre, which stood a little west of the foot of London Bridge, at Bankside, combined with his managerial duties the occupation of pawnbroker, and was employed, moreover, as a kind of commission agent, or middleman, between dramatic authors and actors. It probably seemed as natural to the manager to engage in these different employments as to require his players to "double" or "treble" parts in plays possessed of an unusually long list of *dramatis personae*. He had married Agnes Woodward, a widow, whose daughter, Joan, became the first wife of Edward Alleyn, the actor, the founder of Dulwich College. Henslowe had been the servant of Mrs. Woodward, and by his union with her he acquired considerable property. Forthwith he constituted himself "a banker of the poor"—to use the modern euphonious synonym for pawnbroker—and advanced money for all needing it who were able to deposit with him plate, rings, jewels, wearing apparel, or other chattels of value. The playwrights of the time constantly obtained loans from him, not always that he might secure their compositions for his theatre, but often to relieve their immediate wants; and it is plain that he constantly availed himself of their necessitous condition to effect bargains with them very advantageous to his own interests. Robert Daborne, the dramatist, for instance, appears to have been particularly impecunious, and he was, moreover, afflicted with a pending lawsuit; the sums he obtained for his plays from the manager were therefore very disproportionate and uncertain. His letters to Henslowe are urgent in solicitations for payment on

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account of work in hand; he was often obliged to send his manuscripts piecemeal to the manager, and on one occasion supplied a rough draft of the last scene of a play in order to obtain a few shillings in advance. The amounts paid for new plays at this time were very low. Before 1600 Henslowe never gave more than L8 for a play, but after that date there was a considerable rise in prices. In 1613 Daborne received L20 for his tragedy of "Machiavell and the Devil." In the same year, however, for another play, "The Bellman of London," he was content to take L12 and "the overplus of the second day." He had demanded L20 in the first instance, but being in great stress for money, had reduced his terms, beseeching Henslowe "to forsake him not in his extremity." Daborne's letters of entreaty indeed expose his poverty in a most pathetic manner, while occasionally they betray amusingly his vanity as an author. In one of his appeals to the manager, he writes: "I did think I deserved as much money as Mr. Massinger;" but this estimation of himself and his writings has not been confirmed by later ages.

The "overplus of the second day" was probably, as a rule, not very considerable, seeing that a payment of L20 down was regarded as a higher rate of remuneration than L12 and "the overplus," whatever it might produce, in addition. Daborne's needs, however, may have induced him to prize unduly "the bird in the hand." Still his brother-authors held similar views on the subject. They, too, disliked the overplus system, while the managers as resolutely favoured it. So that, apart from the consideration that poverty clings to certainty because it cannot afford speculation, and that, to the literary character especially, a present payment of a specified sum is always more precious than possible undefined profits in the future, we may conclude that the overplus system generally told to the advantage of the managers. In the end the labourers had to yield to the capitalists; indeed, they could make little stand against them. Authors have never manifested much faculty for harmonious combination, and a literary strike was no more conceivable then than now. In time a chance of the overplus became hardly separable from the method of paying dramatists. It was thought, perhaps, that better works would be produced by the writers who were made in some sort dependent for profit upon the success of their plays and partners in the ventures of the managers. In such wise the loss sustained from the condemnation of a play at its first representation would not fall solely upon the manager; the author would at least be a fellow-sufferer. Gradually the chance of the overplus was deferred from the second to the third performance. The system no doubt varied according to the position of the dramatist, who, if he were a successful writer, could make his own terms, so far as the selection of the overplus night was concerned. Sir John Denham, in the prologue to his tragedy, "The Sophy," acted at Blackfriars about 1642, speaks of the second *or* third day's overplus as belonging to the poet:

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Gentlemen, if you dislike the play,
Pray make no words on't till the second day
Or third be passed.

After the Restoration it became a settled practice that what was then called "the author's night" should be the third performance of his play; and the dramatist in time received further profit from subsequent representations.

Then grant 'em generous terms who dare to write,
Since now that seems as dangerous as to fight;
If we must yield yet ere the day be fixt,
Let us hold out the third, and, if we may, the sixth.

Prologue, "The Twin Rivals," Farquhar, produced 1702.

"In Dryden's time," writes Dr. Johnson, explaining that with all his diligence in play-writing the poet could not greatly improve his fortune,[2] "the drama was very far from that universal approbation which it has now obtained. The playhouse was abhorred by the Puritans, and avoided by those who desired the character of seriousness or decency. A grave lawyer would have debased his dignity, and a young trader would have impaired his credit by appearing in those mansions of dissolute licentiousness. The profits of the theatre, when so many classes of the people were deducted from the audience, were not great, and the poet had, for a long time, but a single night. The first that had two nights was Southern; and the first that had three was Rowe. There were, indeed, in those days, arts of improving a poet's profit, which Dryden forbore to practise; but a play seldom produced him more than a hundred pounds by the accumulated gain of the third night, the dedication, and the copy."

[2] He had, it was alleged, entered into a contract to furnish four plays in each year.

These "arts of improving a poet's profit" consisted in the canvassing his friends and patrons, distributing tickets, and soliciting favour in all quarters. By his address in these matters, Southern's tragedy, "The Spartan Dame," produced him L500; indeed, he is said to have profited more by his writings for the stage than any of his contemporaries. Malone states that Addison was the first to abandon the undignified custom of appealing personally to the public for support. But it has been pointed out that this is an error. Addison gave the profits of "Cato" to the managers, and was not required therefore to appeal on his own behalf to the public. Goldsmith's "Good-natured Man," it may be noted, was played ten consecutive nights, and the third, sixth, and ninth performances were advertised as "appropriated to the author." These three nights produced him L400, and he received L100 more from Griffin, the publisher, for the publication of the play—the entire receipts being immediately, with characteristic promptness, spent in the purchase of the lease of his chambers in Brick Court, Middle Temple, and in handsome

furniture, consisting of “Wilton carpets, blue moreen mahogany sofas, blue moreen curtains, chairs corresponding, chimney-glasses, Pembroke and card tables, and tasteful book-shelves.” According to Malone, one hundred guineas remained for many years, dating from 1726, the standard price paid by the publishers for a new play.

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In addition to these “authors’ nights,” performances were occasionally given for the benefit of an author suffering from adverse circumstances. Thus, in 1733, a performance was organised at the Haymarket Theatre for the benefit of Mr. Dennis, the critic and dramatist. “The Provoked Husband” was represented, and Pope so far laid aside his resentment against his old antagonist as to supply a prologue for the occasion. Nevertheless, it was noticed that the poet had not been able to resist the temptation of covertly sneering at the superannuated author, and certain of the lines in the prologue were found susceptible of a satirical application. Happily, poor Dennis, protected by his vanity or the decay of his intelligence, perceived nothing of this. Indeed, the poor old critic survived the benefit but twenty days, dying in the seventy-seventh year of his age. Other benefit performances on behalf of distressed men of letters, or their families, have frequently been given, even in quite recent times; but these are not to be confounded with the “authors’ nights,” as they were originally understood. “Authors’ nights,” strictly so called, have disappeared of late years. Modern dramatists are content to make private arrangements in regard to their works with the managers, and do not now publicly advance their personal claims upon the general consideration. They may profit by an “overplus,” or be paid by the length of a “run” of their plays, or may sell them out-right at once for a stipulated sum. The public have no knowledge of, and no concern in, the conditions of their method of transacting business. But from the old overplus system of the Elizabethan stage resulted those special performances called “benefits,” still known to the modern playgoer, though now connected in his mind almost altogether with actors, and in no degree with authors. Nevertheless, it was for authors that benefits were originally instituted, in opposition, as we have seen, to their wishes, and solely to suit the convenience and forward the interests of managers such as Mr. Henslowe.

Certainly in Shakespeare’s time the actors knew nothing of benefits. They obtained the best price they could for their services, and the risk of profit or loss upon the performance was wholly the affair of the manager. Indeed, it was long after the time when the chance of an overplus had become systematised as a means of paying authors, that it occurred to anyone that actors might also be remunerated in a similar way. In olden days the actor’s profession was not favourably regarded by the general public; his social position was particularly insecure; he was looked upon as of close kin to the rogue and the vagabond, and with degrading possibilities in connection with the stocks and whipping-post never wholly remote from his professional career. An Elizabethan player, presuming to submit his personal claims and merits to the consideration of the audience, with a view to his own individual profit, apart from the

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general company of which he was a member and the manager whom he served, would probably have been deemed guilty of a most unpardonable impertinence. Gradually, however, the status of the actor improved; people began to concede that he was not necessarily or invariably a mountebank, and that certain of the qualities and dignities of an art might attach now and then to his achievements. The famous Mrs. Barry was, according to Cibber, “the first person whose merit was distinguished by the indulgence of having an annual benefit play, which was granted to her alone,” he proceeds, “if I mistake not, first in King James II.’s time, and which became not common to others until the division of the company, after the death of King William’s Queen Mary.” However, in the preceding reign, in the year 1681, it appears by an agreement made between Davenant, Betterton, and others, that Charles Hart and Edward Kynaston were to be paid “five shillings apiece for every day there shall be any tragedies or comedies or other representations at the Duke’s Theatre, in Salisbury Court, or wherever the company shall act during the respective lives of the said Charles Hart and Edward Kynaston, excepting the days the young men or young women play for their own profit only.” Benefits would certainly seem to be here referred to, unless we are to understand the performances to be of a commonwealth kind, carried on by the players at their own risk, and independently of the managers. Still, to King James’s admiring patronage of Mrs. Barry, the benefit system, as it is at present known to us, has been generally ascribed; and clearly the monarch’s memory deserves to be cherished on this account by our players. He can ill afford to forego the smallest claim to esteem, and undoubtedly he entertained a friendly regard for the stage and its professors. Indeed, the Stuarts generally were well disposed towards the arts, and a decidedly playgoing family.

For some years, however, actors’ benefits did not extend beyond the case of Mrs. Barry. But in 1695 the patentees of the theatres were so unfortunately situated that they could not satisfy the claims of their actors, and were compelled to pay them “half in good words and half in ready money.” Under these circumstances certain of the players compounded for the arrears of salary due to them by taking the risk of benefit performances. After a season or two these benefits were found to be so advantageous to the actors that they were expressly stipulated for in their agreements with the managers. On the other hand, the managers, jealous of the advantages secured in this wise by the players, took care to charge very fully for the expenses of the house, which were of course deducted from the gross receipts of the benefit-night, and further sought to levy a percentage upon the profits obtained by the actors. In 1702 the ordinary charge for house expenses, on the occasion of a benefit at Drury Lane, was about L34. In Garrick’s time the charge rose to L64, and was

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afterwards advanced considerably. Still the actors had special sources of profit. Their admirers and patrons were not content to pay merely the ordinary prices of admission, but bought their tickets at advanced rates, and often sent presents of money in addition. Thus Betterton—whose salary, by-the-bye, was only L4 per week—took a benefit in 1709, when he received L76 for two-thirds of the receipts upon the ordinary scale—one-third being deducted by the manager for expenses—and a further sum of L450 for the extra payments and presents of his friends. The boxes and pit were “laid together,” as it was called, and half-a-guinea was charged for admission. “One lady gave him ten guineas, some two, and most one guinea. Further, he delivered tickets for more persons than the boxes, pit, and stage could hold, and it was thought that he cleared L450 at least over and above the L76.” Certainly the great actor enjoyed on this occasion of his benefit what is popularly known as “a bumper."[3]
[3] Macready, on the occasion of his taking a benefit, invariably refused to receive any payment in excess of the ordinary charges for admission to the theatre, and was wont, with a polite note of thanks, to return the balance to those who, as he judged, had overpaid him for their tickets.

The system of actors’ benefits having thus become thoroughly established, was soon extended and made applicable to other purposes, for the most part of a charitable kind. Thus, in 1711, a benefit performance was given in aid of Mrs. Betterton, the widow of the late famous tragedian, who had herself been an actress, but had for some time ceased to appear on the stage owing to age and other infirmities. The “Tatler,” after an account of Betterton’s funeral, describes feelingly the situation of his widow: “The mention I have here made of Mr. Betterton, for whom I had, as long as I have known anything, a very great esteem and gratitude, for the pleasure he gave me, can do him no good; but it may possibly be of service to the unhappy woman he has left behind him, to have it known that this great tragedian was never in a scene half so moving as the circumstances of his affairs created at his departure. His wife, after a cohabitation of forty years in the strictest amity, has long pined away with a sense of his decay, as well in his person as in his little fortune; and in proportion to that she has herself decayed both in health and reason. Her husband’s death, added to her age and infirmities, would certainly have terminated her life, but that the greatness of her distress has been her relief by her present deprivation of her senses. This absence of her reason is her best defence against age, sorrow, poverty, and sickness."[4] Indeed, Steele constantly testifies his fondness for the theatre and kindly feeling towards the players, by calling attention to the benefit performances, and bespeaking the public favour for them, adding much curious mention and humorous criticism of the comedians who were especially the objects of his admiration—Pinkethman, Bullock, Underbill, Dogget, and others.

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[4] The “Tatler,” No. 167, May 4, 1710.

Other benefits, however, less urgently laid claim to the goodwill of the public. At the theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, in the year 1726, a performance was announced “for the benefit of an author whose play is deferred till next season.” How far the efforts of this anonymous gentleman to raise money upon a sort of contingent reversion of literary distinction were encouraged by the playgoers, or whether his play ever really saw the light of the stage-lamps, can hardly now be discovered. By-and-by performances are given on behalf of objects wholly unconnected with players or playwrights. In 1742 a representation was advertised, “For the entertainment of the Grand Master of the Ancient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons—for the benefit of a brother who has had great misfortunes.” A season or two later there was a benefit at Drury Lane “for a gentleman under misfortunes,” when Othello was played by an anonymous actor, afterwards to be known to fame as Mr. Samuel Foote. In subsequent years benefits were given “for the sufferers by a late fire;” on behalf of the soldiers who had fought against the Pretender in the year ’45; for “Mrs. Elizabeth Forster, the granddaughter of Milton, and his only surviving descendant,"[5] when “Comus” was performed, and a new prologue, written by Dr. Johnson, was spoken by Garrick; for “the Lying-in Hospital in Brownlow Street;” while in the success of the production of Dr. Young’s tragedy of “The Brothers,” played at Drury Lane in 1753, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was directly concerned—the author having announced that the profits would be given in aid of that charity. Nevertheless, the receipts disappointed expectation; whereupon the author generously, out of his own resources, made up the sum of L1000. A special epilogue was written for the occasion by Mallet at Garrick’s request; but this was so coarsely worded, and so broadly delivered by Mrs. Clive, that Dr. Young took offence, and would not suffer the lines to be printed with his play.

[5] The lady is said to have been so little acquainted with diversion or gaiety, that she did not know what was intended when a benefit was offered her. Praiseworthy efforts were made in her interest, but the performance only produced L130.

Among the curiosities of benefits may be recorded a performance that took place at Drury Lane in 1744 on behalf of Dr. Clancy, the author of one or two plays, who published his memoirs in Dublin in 1750. Dr. Clancy was blind, and the playbill was headed with the line from Milton, “The day returns, but not to me returns.” The play was “Oedipus,” and the part of Tiresias, the blind prophet, was undertaken by Dr. Clancy. The advertisements expressed a hope that “as this will be the first instance of any person labouring under so heavy a deprivation performing on the stage, the novelty as well as the unhappiness of his case will engage the favour and

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protection of a British audience." The performance, which must certainly have been of a painful kind, attracted a very numerous audience: and the fact may be regarded as proof that an appetite for what is now designated "the sensational" was not wholly unknown to the playgoers of the last century. It does not appear that Dr. Clancy's representation of the blind prophet was repeated, nor is it stated that as an histrionic effort it was particularly distinguished. It was enough perhaps that the part was played by a man who was really blind, instead of by one merely simulating blindness. Ultimately Dr. Clancy's case moved the pity of George II., and he was awarded during his life a pension of L40 a year from the privy purse.

Other authors have from time to time appeared on the stage to speak prologues, or to sustain complete characters; for instance, Tom Durfey, Otway, Farquhar, Savage, Murphy, and, to jump to later days, Sheridan Knowles. Their appearances, however, cannot be simply connected with benefits. In many cases they, no doubt, contemplated the adoption of the stage as a profession, though, as a rule, it must be said success was denied them in such respect. They played on their benefit-nights, of course, but their performances were not limited to those occasions.

It is not to be supposed that a benefit could be taken by an actor, or, at an earlier date, by an author, without his incurring much trouble in regard to preliminary arrangements. The mere issue of a list of entertainments, however attractive, was by no means sufficient. He was required to call at the houses of his patrons and friends, personally to solicit their support on the occasion, and to pay his respects to them. Any failure of attention on his part in this matter he was bound to make the subject of public explanation and apology. It must be remembered that the playgoers of a century ago were rather a family than a people. They were limited in number, returned to the theatre night after night, naturally demanding that constant change of programme which so distinguished the old stage, and has been so completely omitted from modern theatrical arrangements, and were almost personally known to the actors. This, of course, only refers to the visitors to the pit and boxes; the galleries were always presumed to be occupied by footmen and apprentices, and persons of no consideration whatever, while stalls were not yet in existence. Strangers from the country were few—those from foreign parts fewer still. The theatre was regarded, as it were, from a household point of view; was in some sort supplementary to a man's home, and he therefore considered himself entitled to be heard and to take a personal interest in regard to its concerns and proceedings. Necessarily this feeling diminished as London grew in size and the audience increased in numbers, and finally became impossible. An actor knew at last his admirers only in the mass; while they lost inevitably all individual and private

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interest in his success. But long after the London players had ceased to make calls and to solicit patronage for their benefits, the practice still obtained in the provinces, and could on no account be abandoned. Thus, in early life, when a member of the country company of which her father, Roger Kemble, was manager, the great Mrs. Siddons has been seen, as a contemporary writer describes, “walking up and down both sides of a street in a provincial town, dressed in a red woollen cloak, such as was formerly worn by menial servants, and knocking at each door to deliver the playbill of her benefit.” And to come to a later instance, the reader may bear in mind that before that ornament of Mr. Crummles’s company, Miss Snevellici, took her benefit or “bespeak” at the Portsmouth Theatre, she, in company with Nicholas Nickleby, and, for propriety’s sake, the Infant Phenomenon, canvassed her patrons in the town, and sold tickets to Mr. and Mrs. Curdle, Mrs. Borum, and others.

In pursuance of this principle, we find a notice in the bill for Mr. Bickerstaff’s benefit, at Drury Lane, in May, 1723: “Bickerstaff being confined to his bed by his lameness, and his wife lying now dead, has nobody to wait on the quality and his friends for him, but hopes they’ll favour him with their appearance.” And when, just before Mr. Ryan’s benefit at Covent Garden in 1735, he had been attacked by a footpad and seriously injured—several of his teeth having been shot out, and his face and jawbone much shattered—he addressed a letter in *The Daily Post* to his friends, in which he stated the uncertainty of his being ever able to appear on the stage again, and expressed his hopes “that they would excuse his not making a personal application to them.” So again, on the occasion of Mr. Chapman’s benefit, in 1739, there appears in the playbill an announcement: “N.B.—I being in danger of losing one of my eyes, and advised to keep it from the air, therefore stir not out to attend my business at the theatre. On this melancholy occasion I hope my friends will be so indulgent as to send for tickets to my house, the corner of Bow Street, Covent Garden, which favour will be gratefully acknowledged by their obedient, humble servant, THOMAS CHAPMAN.” The excuses set forth in these announcements appear to be very sufficient, and no doubt were so regarded by the patrons in each case, while at the same time they demonstrate the conduct required ordinarily of persons anxious for public support on the occasion of their benefits. Excuses of a lighter kind, however, seem frequently to have been held adequate by the players. Mr. Sheridan, the actor, notifies in 1745 that, “as his benefit was not appointed till last Friday, he humbly hopes that such ladies and gentlemen as he shall omit to wait on will impute it rather to a want of time than to a want of respect and knowledge of his duty.” And Mr. Yates, who about the same time had migrated from the West-end stage to the humbler theatre in Goodman’s Fields,

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and announced Fielding's "Miser" for his benefit—"the part of Lovegold to be attempted by Mr. Yates after the manner of the late Mr. Griffin"—apologises "for not waiting on ladies and gentlemen, as he is not acquainted with that part of the town." Whether this somewhat lofty plea of ignorance of their neighbourhood, however, affected unfavourably the actor's claims upon the denizens of Goodman's Fields, cannot now be ascertained. In time notices of this kind disappeared altogether from the playbills. At the present day an actor, of course, does his best to conciliate patronage, and in his own immediate circle of friends some little canvassing probably takes place to promote the sale of tickets; but these matters are arranged privately, and the general public is relieved from the calls of actors and their personal appeals for support. Indeed, the old system is now in a great degree reversed, and the actor's place of abode is often stated in his advertisements in order that the public may call upon him to obtain tickets for his benefit, if they prefer that course to purchasing them in the usual way at the box-office of the theatre. In the case of actresses this plan has often been found efficacious in diminishing the exuberant ardour of certain youthful supporters of the stage, by enabling them to discover that the fair performer who had peculiarly stirred their dramatic sympathies, was hardly seen to such advantage by daylight, in the seclusion of her private dwelling, as when under the glare of gas, with distance lending enchantment to rouge and pearl-powder, and casting an accommodating veil over divers physical deficiencies and unavoidable deteriorations.

As benefits became common, and they were relegated to the close of the season, when the general appetite for theatrical entertainments may be presumed to be tolerably satiated, the actors found it very necessary to put forward performances of an unusual kind to attract patronage and stimulate the curiosity of the public. It was understood that on these occasions criticism was suspended, and great licence was permissible. A benefit came to be a kind of dramatic carnival. Any and everything was held to be lawful, and efforts of an experimental kind were almost demanded—certainly excused under the circumstances. The player who usually appeared wearing the buskin now assumed the sock, and the established comedian ventured upon a flight into the regions of tragedy. Novelty of some sort was indispensable, and the audience, if they might not wholly approve, were yet expected to forbear condemning. The comic actors especially availed themselves of their privileges, and on the strength of their popularity—the comedian always establishing more intimate and friendly relations between himself and his audience than are permitted to the tragedian—indulged in very strange vagaries. Mr. Spiller, on the occasion of his benefit at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1720, issued an advertisement: "Whereas

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I, James Spiller, of Gloucestershire, having received an invitation from Hildebrand Bullock, of Liquorpond Street, London, to exercise the usual weapons of the noble science of defence, will not fail to meet this bold invader, desiring a full stage, blunt weapons, and from him much favour." At another time the same actor announced his benefit in a kind of mock electioneering address, requesting the vote and interest of the public on the ground of his being "a person well affected to the establishment of the theatre." To recite an epilogue while seated on the back of an ass was a favourite expedient of the comedians of the early Georgian period, while the introduction of comic songs and mimicry—such as the scene of "The Drunken Man," and the song of "The Four-and-Twenty Stock-Jobbers," which Mr. Harper performed on his benefit-night in 1720—was found to be a very attractive measure. Authors who were on friendly terms with the actors, or had reason to be grateful to them, frequently gave them short pieces or wrote special epilogues for their benefits. Sheridan's farce, "St. Patrick's Day, or the Scheming Lieutenant," was a present to Clinch, the actor, and first produced on his benefit-night in 1775. Goldsmith felt himself so obliged to Quick and Lee Lewes, who had been the original Tony Lumpkin and Young Marlow in "She Stoops to Conquer," that for the one he adapted a farce from Sedley's translation of "Le Grondeur," and supplied the other with an occasional epilogue, written in his pleasantest manner. When Shuter selected "The Good-natured Man" for his benefit, the gratified author, in a fit of extravagant kindness, sent the actor ten guineas—possibly the last he had at the time—for a box ticket.

On the occasion of his first benefit in London, Garrick furnished his patrons with a remarkable proof of his versatility, for he represented extreme age in "King Lear," and extreme youth in the comedy of "The Schoolboy." At his second benefit he again contrasted his efforts in tragedy and comedy by appearing as Hastings in "Jane Shore," and Sharp in the farce of "The Lying Valet." Kean, for his benefit, danced as harlequin, gave imitations of contemporary performers, and sang the song of "Tom Tug" after the manner of Mr. Incledon. Other actors of very inferior capacity made similar experiments, the fact that the performance was "for a benefit," and "for one night only," being esteemed in every case a sufficient justification of any eccentricity.

It would be hopeless to attempt any detailed account of the many strange deeds done for the sake of benefits. Actresses have encroached upon the repertory of their male playfellows, as when Mrs. Woffington appeared as Lothario, Mrs. Abington as Scrub, Mrs. Siddons as Hamlet, and when portly Mrs. Webb attempted the character of Falstaff. Actors have laid hands on characters which usually were deemed the exclusive property of the actresses—as when Mr. Dowton resigned his favourite part of Sir Anthony Absolute and donned

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the guise of Mrs. Malaprop. The Kembles have sought to make their solemn airs and sepulchral tones available in the reckless scenes and hilarious utterances of farce—and exuberant comedians of the Keeley and Liston pattern have ventured to tincture with whimsicality the woes of tragedy. To draw a crowded house and bring money to the treasury was the only aim. Benefits, in fact, followed the argument of the old drinking song—merriment at all costs to-night, and sobriety, somehow, on the morrow—until the benefit season came round again, and then—*da capo!*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THUNDERS OF APPLAUSE.

Addison devotes a number of “The Spectator” to a description of “The Trunkmaker in the Upper Gallery”—a certain person so called, who had been observed to frequent, during some years, that portion of the theatre, and to express his approval of the transactions of the stage by loud knocks upon the benches or the wainscot, audible over the whole house. It was doubtful how he came to be called the Trunkmaker; whether from his blows, resembling those often given with a hammer in the shops of such artisans, or from a belief that he was a genuine trunkmaker, who, upon the conclusion of his day’s work, repaired to unbend and refresh his mind at the theatre, carrying in his hand one of the implements of his craft. Some, it is alleged, were foolish enough to imagine him a perturbed spirit haunting the upper gallery, and noted that he made more noise than ordinary whenever the Ghost in “Hamlet” appeared upon the scene; some reported that the trunkmaker was, in truth, dumb, and had chosen this method of expressing his content with all he saw or heard; while others maintained him to be “the playhouse thunderer,” voluntarily employing himself in the gallery when not required to discharge the duties of his office upon the roof of the building. The “Spectator,” holding that public shows and diversions lie well within his province, and that it is particularly incumbent upon him to notice everything remarkable touching the elegant entertainments of the theatre, makes it his business to obtain the best information he can in regard to this trunkmaker, and finds him to be “a large black man whom nobody knows;” who “generally leans forward on a huge oaken plant,” attending closely to all that is occurring upon the stage; who is never seen to smile, but who, upon hearing anything that pleases him, takes up his staff with both hands, and lays it upon the next piece of timber that stands in his way, with exceeding vehemence; after which, he composes himself to his former posture, till such time as something new sets him again at work. Further, it was observed of him, that his blows were so well timed as to satisfy the most judicious critics. Upon the expression of any shining thought of the poet, or the exhibition of any uncommon grace by the actor, the trunkmaker’s blow falls upon bench or wainscot. If the audience fail to concur with him, he smites a second time, when, if the audience still remain unroused, he looks round him with great wrath and administers a third blow, which never fails to produce the desired effect.

Occasionally, however, he is said to permit the audience to begin the applause of their own motion, and at the conclusion of the proceeding ratifies their conduct by a single thwack.

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It was admitted that the trunkmaker had rendered important service to the theatre, insomuch that, upon his failing to attend at his post by reason of serious illness, the manager employed a substitute to officiate in his stead, until such time as his health was restored to him. The incompetence of the deputy, however, became too manifest; though he laid about him with incredible violence, he did it in such wrong places, that the audience soon discovered he was not their old friend the real trunkmaker. With the players the trunkmaker was naturally a favourite; they not only connived at his obstreperous approbation, but cheerfully repaid such damage as his blows occasioned. That he had saved many a play from condemnation, and brought fame to many a performer, was agreed upon all hands. The audience are described as looking abashed if they find themselves betrayed into plaudits in which their friend in the upper gallery takes no part; and the actors are said to regard such favours as mere *brutum fulmen* or empty noise, when unaccompanied by "the sound of the oaken plant." Still, the trunkmaker had his enemies, who insinuated that he could be bribed in the interest of a bad poet or a vicious player; such surmises, however, the "Spectator" averred to be wholly without foundation, upholding the justice of his strokes and the reasonableness of his admonitions. "He does not deal about his blows at random, but always hits the right nail upon the head. The inexpressible force wherewith he lays them on sufficiently shows the strength of his convictions. His zeal for a good author is indeed outrageous, and breaks down every fence and partition, every board and plank, that stands within the expression of his applause."

Moreover, the "Spectator" insists upon the value and importance to an audience of a functionary thus presiding over them like the director of a concert, in order to awaken their attention and beat time to their applauses; or, "to raise my simile," Addison continues, "I have sometimes fancied the trunkmaker in the upper gallery to be, like Virgil's ruler of the winds, seated upon the top of a mountain, who, when he struck his sceptre upon the side of it, 'roused a hurricane and set the whole cavern in an uproar.'"

In conclusion, the writer, not caring to confine himself to barren speculations or to reports of pure matter of fact, without deriving therefrom something of advantage to his countrymen, takes the liberty of proposing that upon the demise of the trunkmaker, or upon his losing "the spring of his arm" by sickness, old age, infirmity, or the like, some able-bodied critic should be advanced to his post, with a competent salary, and a supply, at the public expense, of bamboos for operas, crab-tree cudgels for comedies, and oaken plants for tragedies. "And to the end that this place should be always disposed of according to merit, I would have none preferred to it who has not given convincing proofs both of a sound judgment and a strong arm, and who could not upon occasion either knock down an ox, or write a comment upon Horace's 'Art of Poetry.' In short, I would have him a due composition of Hercules and Apollo, and so rightly qualified for this important office that the trunkmaker may not be missed by our posterity."

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Addison's paper doubtless possessed an element of fact and truth, enriched by the fancifulness peculiar to the writer. It was his manner thus to embroider commonplace; to enhance the actual by large additions of the ideal. There probably existed such a personage as the trunkmaker; some visitor to the upper gallery was in the habit of expressing approval by strokes of his cudgel upon the wainscot; and his frequent presence had obtained the recognition of the other patrons of the theatre. It was an easy and a pleasant task to Addison to invest this upper-gallery visitor with special critical qualities to attribute to his "oaken plant" almost supernatural powers. In any case, the trunkmaker was a sort of foreshadowing of the *claqueur*. It was reserved for later times to organise applause and reduce success to a system. Of old, houses were sometimes "packed" by an author's friends to ensure a favourable result to the first representation of his play. When, for instance, Addison's "Cato" was first produced, Steele, as himself relates, undertook to pack an audience, and accordingly filled the pit with frequenters of the Whig coffee-houses, with students from the Inns of Court, and other zealous partisans. "This," says Pope, "had been tried for the first time in favour of 'The Distressed Mother' (by Ambrose Phillips), and was now, with more efficacy, practised for 'Cato.'" But this was only an occasional *claque*. The "band of applauders" dispersed after they had cheered their friend and achieved their utmost to secure the triumph of his play. And they were unconnected with the manager of the theatre; they were not *his* friends, still less were they his servants, receiving wages for their labours, and bound to raise their voices and clap their hands in accordance with his directions. For such are the genuine *claqueurs* of to-day.

Dr. Veron, who has left upon record a sort of secret history of his management of the Paris Opera House, has revealed many curious particulars concerning *les claqueurs*, adding a serious defence of the system of artificial applause. The artistic nature, the doctor maintains, submitting its merits to the judgment of the general public, has great need of the exhilaration afforded by evidence of hearty approval and sympathy; the singer and the dancer are thus inspired with the courage absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of their professional feats; and it is the doctor's experience that whenever a song or a dance has been redemanded by the audience, the dance has been better danced, and the song better sung, the second time of performance than the first. Hence there is nothing harmful, but rather something beneficial, in the proceedings of *les claqueurs*. Every work produced at the theatre cannot be of the first class, and legitimately rouse the enthusiasm of the public; every dramatic or lyrical artist cannot invariably, by sheer force of talent, overcome the coldness, the

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languor, or the indifference of an audience; yet the general effect of the representation would suffer much if all applause, including that of a premeditated and, indeed, purchased kind, were entirely withheld; the timid would remain timid, talent would remain unrecognised, and, therefore, almost unrevealed, if no cheering were heard to reassure, to encourage, to kindle, and excite. The suggestion that the public would supply genuine applause if only the *claqueurs* were less liberal with the spurious article, Dr. Veron rather evades than discusses.

The chief of the *claqueurs* in Dr. Veron's time was a certain M. Auguste, of Herculean form and imposing address, well suited in every respect for the important post he filled. He was inclined to costume of very decisive colours—to coats of bright green or reddish-brown—presumably that, like a general officer, his forces might perceive his presence in their midst by the peculiarity, if not the brilliance, of his method of dress. Auguste was without education—did not know a note of music; but he understood the audience of the Opera House. For long years he had attended every representation upon its stage, and experience had made him a most skilful tactician. Auguste enjoyed the complete confidence of Dr. Veron. *Claqueur* and manager attended together the rehearsals of every new work, and upon the eve of its first performance held a cabinet council upon the subject. They reviewed the whole production from the first line to the last. "I did not press upon him my opinions," says Dr. Veron; "I listened to his; he appraised, he judged all, both dance and song, according to his own personal impressions." The manager was surprised at the justice of the *claqueur's* criticism by anticipation—at his ingenious plans for apportioning and graduating the applause. It was Auguste's principle of action to begin modestly and discreetly, especially at the opera, dealing with a choice and critical public; to approve a first act but moderately, reserving all salvoes of applause for the last act and the *denoument* of the performance. Thus, in the last act he would bestow three rounds of applause upon a song, to which, had it occurred in the first act, he would have given but one. He held that towards the middle of a performance success should be quietly fostered, but never forced. For the *claqueurs* of other theatres Auguste entertained a sort of disdain. It was, as he averred, the easiest thing in the world to obtain success at the Opera Comique, or the Vaudeville. The thing was managed there not so much by applause as by laughter. There was the less need for careful management; the less risk of vexing the public by injudicious approbation. No one could take offence at a man for laughing immoderately; he was not chargeable with disingenuousness, as in the case of one applauding to excess. Occasionally cries were raised of "*A la porte les claqueurs*;" but

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such a cry as "*A la porte les rieurs*," had never been heard. At the Opera House, however, there was no occupation for laughers; in the score of an opera, or in the plot of a ballet, appeal was never made to a sense of the mirthful. Then the opera public was of a susceptible, and even irritable nature; it might be led, but it could scarcely be driven; it could be influenced by polite and gentle means; it would resent active interference, and "a scene" might ensue—even something of a disturbance. But M. Auguste implored his manager to be easy on that score. Nothing of the kind should happen; he would prove himself deserving, worthy of his employer's confidence. "Only," said M. Auguste, "those fools, the paying public, certainly give us a great deal of trouble!"

The *chef de la claque* was, of course, supplied with admission tickets by the management, and these were issued according to an established scale. If the success of a work, already represented many times, showed signs of flagging, and needed to be sustained, Auguste received some forty or fifty pit tickets; but in the case of a work highly approved by the public, and still attracting good houses, twenty, or even ten, tickets were held to be sufficient. But on the first production of an entirely new entertainment, at least a hundred tickets were handed to Auguste. There was then a meeting of the *claqueurs* at some appointed place—usually a wine-shop in the neighbourhood of the theatre—and the plan of action was arranged, the army of applauders organised and marshalled. Intelligent lieutenants, about ten in number, each in command of a detachment of the forces, were instructed how to deal with opponents, and to keep watchful eyes upon the proceedings of their chief. In addition to a money payment and their own entrance tickets, they were accorded other tickets to be given only to friends upon whose fidelity they could rely. Certain of the *claqueurs* accepted outpost duty, as it were, and acted in isolated positions; others, and these the majority, took close order, and fought, so to speak, in column. In addition to his regular forces, Auguste engaged supernumerary and irregular troops, known to him as *sous-claqueurs*, upon whose discipline and docility he could not wholly rely, though he could make them useful by enclosing them in the ranks of his seasoned soldiers. The *sous-claqueurs* were usually well-clothed frequenters and well-wishers of the Opera House, anxious to attend the first representation of the new work to be produced, and willing to pay half-price for their tickets, upon the condition that they placed their applause at the disposal of M. Auguste.

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The *claqueurs* were admitted to the theatre and took their seats some time before the entrance of the paying public. M. Auguste had thus ample opportunity of deciding upon his strategic operations, of placing his advance guard, of securing the position of his main army, and of defending its flanks and rear. The paying public thus found itself curiously intermixed and imprisoned by these hosts of *claqueurs*, and victory usually crowned the efforts of M. Auguste, who was careful to arrogate to himself the results of the evening's proceedings. "What a splendid success I have achieved!" he would say; completely ignoring the efforts of the composer, the artists of the theatre, and the manager, who were perhaps entitled to some share of the glories of the performance.

Auguste, as Dr. Veron relates, made his fortune at the opera. He was in receipt of annuities from several artists of established fame. Success could hardly be achieved without his aid. The friends, patrons, and family of a new artist, to ensure his or her success, invariably paid court and money to Auguste, the price of his services corresponding with the pretensions of the *debutant*. And then he undertook engagements of an exceptional kind, sometimes even to the prejudice of his manager. Artists required of him some times a sudden increase of their success—that, for a few nights only, an extraordinary measure of applause should reward their exertions. Their engagements were expiring or were about to be renewed; it was desirable to deceive both the public and the manager. The vital question of salary was under consideration; an increase of their emoluments was most desirable. So, for a while, the mediocre singer or dancer obtained from Auguste and his auxiliaries unusual favour, and the manager was induced to form very erroneous opinions upon the subject. Rumours, too, were artfully circulated to the effect that the performer in question had received liberal offers from England or Prussia; that his or her merits had roused the attention of rival *impresarios*; the Parisian manager was cautioned at all costs to retain in his theatre ability and promise so remarkable. But with the signing of a new engagement, at an advance of salary, came disenchantment. M. Auguste's services were now withdrawn, for the performer's object was attained; and the management for some time to come was saddled with mediocrity, purchased at a high price.

But little difficulties and deceptions of this kind notwithstanding, Dr. Veron approved the *claque* system, and constituted himself the friend and defender of Auguste. It was not only that Auguste was himself a very worthy person—an excellent father of a family, leading a steady and creditable kind of life, putting by, for the benefit of his children, a considerable portion of his large annual earnings as *chef de la claque*—but the advantages of artificial applause and simulated success seemed

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to Dr. Veron to be quite beyond question, while wholly justifiable by their results. The manager detected the *claque* system as a pervading element in almost all conditions of life. To influence large bodies or assemblies, dexterity and stratagem, he declared, were indispensably necessary. The applause exacted by Nero, when he recited his verses or played upon the lute, or Tiberius, posing himself as an orator before the senate, was the work of a *claque*, moved thereto rather by terror, however, than by pecuniary considerations. Parliamentary applause he found also to be of an artificial kind, produced by the spirit of friendship or the ties of party; and he relates how, when the *Constitutionnel* newspaper was under his direction, certain leading members attended at the printing-office to correct the proofs of their speeches, and never failed to enliven them at intervals by the addition of such terms as “Cheers,” “Loud cheers,” “Great cheering,” “Sensation,” “Excitement,” &c. These factitious plaudits, tricks, and manoeuvres of players, singers, dancers, and orators, in truth, deceive no one, he maintained; while they make very happy, nevertheless, all those who have recourse to them.

As a manager, therefore, Dr. Veron invariably opposed the efforts made to suppress the *claqueurs* in the pay of the theatre. He admits that sometimes excess of zeal on the part of these hirelings brought about public discontent and complaint; but, upon the whole, he judged that they exercised a beneficial influence, especially in the prevention of cabals or conspiracies against particular artists, and of certain scandals attached to the rivalry and jealousy of performers. And to M. Auguste he thus addressed himself: “You have a fine part to play; great duties to perform: put an end to quarrels; help the weak against the strong; never oppose the public; cease applauding on a hint of their disapproval; present an example of politeness and decorum; conciliate and pacify; above all, prevent all hostile combinations, all unjust coalitions, against the artists on the stage, or the works represented.”

Dr. Veron has said, perhaps, all that could be said for the *claque* system; but his plausible arguments and apologies will not carry conviction to every mind. There can be no doubt of the value, the necessity almost, of applause to the player; but one would much rather that the enthusiasm of an audience was wholly genuine, and not provided at so much a cheer, let us say, by the manager or the player himself. “Players, after all,” writes Hazlitt, “have little reason to complain of their hard-earned short-lived popularity. One thunder of applause from pit, boxes, and gallery is equal to a whole immortality of posthumous fame.” But if the thunder is but stage thunder? If the applause is supplied to order, through the agency of a M. Auguste? Upon another occasion Hazlitt expresses more tenderness for the ephemeral glories of the actor’s art.

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“When an author dies it is no matter, for his work remains. When a great actor dies, there is a void produced in society, a gap which requires to be filled up. The literary amateur may find employment for his time in reading old authors only, and exhaust his entire spleen in scouting new ones; but the lover of the stage cannot amuse himself in his solitary fastidiousness by sitting to witness a play got up by the departed ghosts of first-rate actors, or be contented with the perusal of a collection of old playbills; he may extol Garrick, but he must go to see Kean, and, in his own defence, must admire, or at least tolerate, what he sees, or stay away against his will.” And Cibber, in his apology, has placed on record an elaborate lament, “that the momentary beauties flowing from an harmonious elocution cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record; that the animated graces of the actor can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that presents them; or, at least, can but faintly glimmer through the memory or imperfect attestation of a few surviving spectators.”

The complete suspension of applause, genuine or factitious, must result in the exceeding depression of the player. He must feel himself deprived of his proper sustenance; and something of dismay must possess him, when he finds that all his efforts move his audience in no way; that they are not *en rapport* with him; that while he labours they are listless. Henderson committed himself to the exaggeration that no actor could perform well, unless he was systematically flattered both on and off the stage. Liston, the comedian, found applause, of whatever kind, so absolutely necessary to him that he declared he liked to see even a small dog wag his tail in approbation of his exertions. Mrs. Siddons complained of the inferior measure of applause that she obtained in the theatres of the provinces. At Drury Lane her grand bursts of passion were received with prolonged cheering and excitement, that gave her rest and breathing-time, and prepared her for increased efforts. The playgoers of York were at one time so lukewarm in their reception of popular players, that, at the instance of Woodward, Tate Wilkinson, the manager, called on the chief patrons of the theatre, and informed them that the actor was so mortified by their coolness, that he could not play nearly so well in York as in London, Dublin, and Edinburgh. The York audience benefited by the remonstrance, and on Woodward’s next appearance, greatly to his delight, awarded him extraordinary applause.

The system of calling, or recalling, a favourite performer, which now appears to be established in our theatres, is of foreign origin, and was first instituted in London at the Italian Opera House. “It is the highest ambition of the opera-singers,—like the Methodists—to have a *call*” says Parke, the oboe-player, in his “Musical Memoirs,” published in 1830; and he describes the opera season of 1824, when Rossini was director

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and composer to the King's Theatre, and his wife, Madame Colbran Rossini, appeared as *prima donna seria*; Madame Pasta and Madame Catalani being also engaged for a limited number of nights. He relates, as something remarkable, that at the fall of the curtain after the performance of Mayer's "Il Fanatico per la Musica," Madame Catalani "was *called for*, when she again presented herself, making her obeisance, amidst waving of handkerchiefs and tumultuous applause." Madame Pasta, after appearing as Desdemona, "also had a call when the curtain fell, and was brought back to receive the reward due to her distinguished talents." Two seasons later Mr. Parke says, in reference to Madame Pasta's performance of Desdemona: "At the end of the opera, by desire of the audience, she came forward once more to receive that reward which is becoming so common that it will shortly cease to be a mark of distinction." And, two seasons after that, of her appearance in "Tancredi," he writes: "She, *as usual*, delighted the audience; and was, *as usual*, enthusiastically applauded. After the curtain fell she was called for, *as usual*, to go through the ceremony of being unmercifully applauded."

In the non-operatic theatres it is probable that calls first came in vogue when epilogues went out.

The players are called simply to congratulate them on their success, and to express some sort of gratitude for their exertions. There is nothing to be urged against this method of applauding the performers when kept within reasonable bounds. Sometimes it is to be feared, however, the least discreet of the audience indulge in calls rather for their own gratification—by way of pastime during the interval between one play and another—than out of any strict consideration of the abilities of the players; and, having called on one or two deserving members of a company, proceed to require the presence before the curtain of others who have done little to merit the compliment. Certain playgoers, indeed, appear to applaud no matter what, simply for the sake of applauding. They regard the theatre as a place to be noisy in, and for the vehement expression of their own restless natures. When they cannot greet a player with acclamations, they will clamorously deride a footman, or other servant of the theatre, who appears before the foot-lights with a broom, or a watering-pot, a carpet, or other necessary of representation; or they will issue boisterous commands to the gentlemen of the orchestra to "strike up" and afford an interlude of music. To these of the audience it is almost painful that a theatre should be peaceful or a stage vacant; rather than this should happen they would prefer, if it could possibly be contrived, and they were acquainted with his name, that the call-boy or the prompter should be called for and congratulated upon the valuable aid he had furnished to the performance.

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Macready relates in his Memoirs that the practice of “calling on” the principal actor was first introduced at Covent Garden Theatre, on the occasion of his first performance of the character of Richard the Third, on October 19th, 1819. “In obedience to the impatient and persevering summons of the house I was desired by Fawcett to go before the curtain; and accordingly I announced the tragedy for repetition amidst the gratulating shouts that carried the assurance of complete success to my agitated and grateful heart.” But while loving applause, as an actor needs must, Macready had little liking for the honours of calls and recalls—heartily disapproving of them, indeed, when they seemed to him in any way to disturb the representation. Thus, of his performance of Werner at Manchester, in 1845, he writes: “Acted very fairly. Called for. *Trash!*” Under date December 23rd, 1844, he records: “Acted Virginius [in Paris] with much energy and power to a very excited audience. I was loudly called for at the end of the fourth act, but could not or would not make so absurd and empirical a sacrifice of the dignity of my poor art.” Three years later he enters in his diary: “Acted King Lear with much care and power, and was received by a most kind, and sympathetic, and enthusiastic audience. I was called on, the audience trying to make me come on after the first act, but of course I could not think of such a thing.” But these “calls” relate to the conclusion of an act, when, at any rate, the drop-scene was fallen, hiding the stage from view, and when, for a while, there is a pause in the performance, suspension of theatrical illusion. What would Macready have said to “calls” in the course of the scene, while the stage is still occupied, with certain of the characters of the drama reduced to lay figures by the conduct of their playfellows and the public? Yet in modern times Ophelias, after tripping off insane to find a watery grave, have been summoned back to the stage to acknowledge suavely enough by smiles and curtsies the excessive applause of the spectators, greatly to the perplexity of King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, and Laertes, and seriously to the injury of the poet’s design—and this is but a sample of the follies of the modern theatre in this respect.

Such calls, recalls, and imbecile compliments are indeed wholly reprehensible, and should be suppressed as strenuously as possible. The managers of the Theatre Royal at Dresden some few years since forbade the performers to accept calls before the termination of an act, as “the practice interrupted the progress of the action on the stage,” and respectfully requested the audience to abstain from such demands in future. Would that this ordinance had obtained more general obedience.

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Writing in 1830, Mr. Parke describes the custom of encoring performers as a prerogative that had been exercised by the public for more than a century; and says, with some justice, that it originated more from self-love in the audience than from gratitude to those who had afforded them pleasure. He considered, however, that encoring had done service upon the whole, by exciting emulation, and stimulating singers to extraordinary exertion; and that though, in many instances, it destroyed the illusion of the scene, it had become so fixed that, in spite even of the burlesque of encoring Lord Grizzle's dying song in Fielding's "Tom Thumb," it continued to prevail as much as ever. He notes it as curious that, "in calling for a repetition, the audiences of the French and English theatres should each have selected a word forming no part of their respective languages—the former making use of the Latin word, *bis*; and the latter the French word, *encore*." Double encores, we gather from the same authority, first occurred in England, at the Opera House, during the season of 1808, when Madame Catalani was compelled to sing three times one of her songs in the comic opera, "La Freschetana." As none of the great singers, her predecessors—Mara, Banti, Grassini, and Billington—had ever received a similar compliment, this appeared extraordinary, until the fact oozed out that Catalani, as part of her engagement, had stipulated for the privilege of sending into the house fifty orders on each night of her performance. After this discovery double encores ceased for a time at the King's Theatre; but the system reappeared at Covent Garden, by way of compliment to Braham, each time the great tenor sang the favourite polacca in the opera of "The Cabinet;" and subsequently like honours were paid to Sinclair upon his return from Italy. Until then, it would seem, Mr. Sinclair had been well satisfied with one encore, and exceedingly anxious that smaller favour should, on no account, be withheld from him. When he played the part of Don Carlos, in the opera of "The Duenna," he was disappointed with the measure of applause bestowed upon his efforts, and complained that the obbligato cadenza—which Mr. Parke had time out of mind played on the oboe in the symphony of the song, "Had I a heart for falsehood framed"—interfered with the effect of his singing, and that the applause which was obtained by the cadenza deprived him of his encore. Accordingly he requested that the cadenza might be suppressed. "Though I thought this a mean and silly application," says Mr. Parke, "I complied with it, and never interfered with his encores afterwards." It must be said for Sinclair, however, that encores had come to be regarded as tests of a singer's merits, and that a re-engagement at the theatre sometimes depended upon this demonstration of public approval. At Vauxhall Gardens, indeed, the manager—"who was not," says Mr. Parke, "a musical luminary"—formed his opinion of the capacities of his singers from

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the report of a person appointed to register the number of encores obtained by each during the season. The singers who had received the most encores were forthwith re-engaged for the next year. Upon the whole, however, the system was not found to be completely satisfactory. The inferior vocalists, stimulated by the fear of losing their engagements, took care to circulate orders judiciously among their friends, with instructions as to the songs that were to be particularly applauded; and it frequently resulted that the worst performers, if the most artful manoeuvrers, were at the head of the poll at the end of the season, and re-engaged over the heads of superior artists, and greatly to the ultimate detriment of the concern. In reference to this system of obtaining encores, Mr. Parke cautiously observes: "Without presuming to insinuate that it was surreptitiously introduced into our English theatres, I may be permitted to observe, after forty years' experience in theatrical tactics, that it would not be difficult, through a judicious distribution of determined *forcers* in various parts of a theatre, with Herculean hands and stentorian voices, to achieve that enviable distinction." Possibly the reader, bearing in mind certain great successes and double and treble encores of our own time, may confirm, from his own experience, Mr. Parke's opinions and suggestions in this direction.

It was a rule of the theatre of the last century that, although the audience were at liberty to demand the presence of an actor upon the stage, particularly with a view to his giving an explanation of any matter in which he had offended them, this privilege did not extend to the case of anyone connected with the theatre other than in a histrionic capacity. Thus, when in the year 1744 a serious riot occurred in Drury-lane Theatre, relative to the excessive charges made for admission to an old entertainment—it being understood that for new entertainments it was permissible to raise the prices—"the Manager (Mr. Fleetwood) was called for by the audience in full cry; but, not being an actor, he pleaded his privilege of being exempted from appearing on the stage before them, and sent them word by one of the performers that he was ready to confer with any persons they should depute to meet him in his own room. A deputation accordingly went from the pit, and the house patiently waited their return."

At this time, no doubt, the actor laboured under certain social disadvantages; and the manager who did not act, however insignificant a person otherwise, was generally regarded as enjoying a more dignified position than that occupied by the most eminent of performers. In time, of course, the status of the actor improved, and he outgrew the supposititious degradation attaching to his exercise of his profession. We have lived to see composers, authors, and even scene-painters summoned before the foot-lights, nothing loath, apparently, to accept this public recognition of their merits.

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But these are innovations of quite recent date. In a reputable literary and critical journal, [6] of forty years back, appears an account of the production at the English Opera House (now the Lyceum Theatre) of the opera of "Nourjahad," the work of the late Mr. E.J. Loder, of Bath, then described as the leader of the theatrical orchestra there, and the son and successor of Mr. Loder, whose talents as a musician had been long known in that city, and at the Philharmonic and other concerts. Much praise is awarded to the work, and then we find the following paragraph:

[6] *The Athenaeum.*

"The silly practice of calling for a favourite actor at the end of a play was upon this occasion, for the first time, extended to a composer; and Mr. E.J. Loder was produced upon the stage to make his bow. As the chance portion of the audience could not possibly be aware that a gentleman so little known in London was present, it would have betrayed less of the secrets of the prison-house if this bit of nonsense had not been preconcerted by injudicious and over-zealous friends. The turn of successful authors will, we suppose, come next; and, therefore, such of them as are not actors had better take a few lessons in bowing over the lamps and be ready. We know some half-dozen whom this process would cause to shake in their shoes more vehemently than even the already accumulated anxieties of a first night."

The critic was, in some sort, a seer. The turn of the authors arrived in due course, some years later, although history has not been careful to record the name of the first English dramatist who appeared before the curtain and bowed "over the lamps." How far the accomplishment of this proceeding is attended by shaking in the shoes, is preluded by lessons in the art of deportment, or adds to the anxieties of a first representation, must be left for some successful playwright to reveal.

It may be noted that this calling for the author is also of foreign origin. The first dramatist called before the curtain in France was Voltaire, after the production of "Merope;" the second was Marmontel, after the representation of his tragedy of "Dionysius." More than a century ago the author of a "Letter to Mr. Garrick" observed that it was then usual in France for the audience of a new and well-approved tragedy to summon the author before them that he might personally receive the tribute of public approbation due to his talents. "Nothing like this," he writes, "ever happened in England." "And I may say, never will," commented the author of a reply to the letter, with more confidence than correctness of prophecy. Further, he writes, "I know not how far a French audience may carry their complaisance, but, were I in the author's case, I should be unwilling to trust to the civility of an English pit or gallery.... Suppose that every play that is offered should be received, and suppose that some one of them should happen to be damned, might not an English

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audience on this occasion call for the author, not to partake of their applause, indeed, but to receive the tokens of their displeasure?" Fears of this kind have been proved groundless, however. When a play has been condemned, the actors and the manager may suffer, and be subjected sometimes to very considerable affront; but the public wrath is not visibly inflicted upon the author. He is left to the punishment of his reflections and his disappointed hopes. Certainly he incurs no bodily risk from the incivility of the pit or gallery. But the old violent method of condemning a play is nearly out of vogue. The offending work is now left to expire of inanition, as it were. Empty benches and a void treasury are found to be efficacious means of convincing a manager that he has failed in his endeavour to entertain the public.

For some time the successful author, yielding to the demand that he should appear personally before the audience, was content to "bow his acknowledgments"—for so the proceeding is generally described—from a private box. It was felt, however, that this was but a half measure. He could be seen by a portion of the audience only. From the private box to the stage was but a step, and the opinion prevailed that if he was to appear at all, he must manifest himself thoroughly, and allow the whole house a fair opportunity of viewing him. Still it should be understood that it is at the option of the dramatist to present himself publicly or to remain in private, and leave the audience to form such conjectures as may occur to them concerning the nature of his physical aspect. The public have no more real right to insist on the dramatic author's crossing the stage than to require that a successful poet, or novelist, or historian, shall remain on view at his publisher's for a specified time after the production of his latest work. It is necessary to insist on this, because a little scene that occurred a short time since in a London theatre shows some misapprehension on the subject in the minds of certain of the public. A successful play had been produced by a well-known writer, who was called for in the usual manner at the conclusion of the performance. The stage-manager explained the non-appearance of the author—he was not in the house. Thereupon an angry gentleman stood up in the pit, and demanded "Why isn't he here? He was here during the performance, because I saw him." The stage-manager could only repeat that the dramatist was not then in the theatre. "But he never appears when he's called for," cried the complainant; and he proceeded to mention instances in support of his statement, the stage-manager being detained upon the stage some time during the progress of his argument. The sympathies of the house appeared to be altogether with the expostulant, and the notion that the author had any right to please himself in the matter failed to obtain countenance. Upon a subsequent occasion, indeed, the author in question—another of

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his works having been given to the stage—thought it prudent to comply with the public demand, and, though with evident reluctance, presented himself before the foot-lights, to be inspected by his admirers and to receive their congratulations. He yielded to a tyranny he was quite justified in resisting. Other authors, though whether or not from unwillingness to appear can hardly be affirmed, have forborne to attend the first representation of their plays, and the audience have been compelled to be content with the announcement—"Mr. —— is absent from London." Sometimes particulars are supplied, and happy Mr. —— is stated to be "probably, at that precise moment, enjoying his cigar upon the esplanade at Brighton," it being added, that "intelligence of the triumphant reception of his new play shall be forthwith despatched to him by means of the electric telegraph."

If the name of the English author who first bowed over the foot-lights cannot now be ascertained, a dramatist perfectly willing to adopt that course can nevertheless be mentioned. To Talfourd the representation of his dramatic works was always a source of intense delight. He would travel almost any distance to see one of his plays upon the boards. Macready has left some curious particulars touching the first production of "Ion": "Was called for very enthusiastically by the audience, and cheered on my appearance most heartily.... Miss Ellen Tree was afterwards called forward. Talfourd came into my room and heartily shook hands with me and thanked me. He said something about Mr. Wallack, the stage-manager, wishing him *to go on the stage as they were calling; but it would not be right*. I said: *'On no account in the world.'* He shortly left me, and, as I heard, was made to go forward to the front of his box and receive the enthusiastic tribute of the house's grateful delight." How happy he must have been! In 1838, concerning the first night of Sheridan Knowles's play of "Woman's Wit," Macready writes: "Acted Walsingham in a very crude, nervous, unsatisfactory way. Avoided a call by going before the curtain to give out the play; there was very great enthusiasm. Led on Knowles in obedience to the call of the audience." But Knowles was not an author only, he was an actor also—he had trod the boards as his own Master Walter, and in other parts, although he was not included in the cast of "Woman's Wit." No doubt, from Macready's point of view, this distinguished his case clearly from that of Talfourd's.

After the calling on of authors came the calling on of scene-painters. But of late, with the help of much salutary criticism on the subject, a disposition has arisen to check this very preposterous method of acknowledging the merits of a worthy class, who should be satisfied with learning from the wings or the back of the stage the admiration excited by their achievements, and should consider themselves in such wise as sufficiently rewarded. If they are to appear between their scenes and the public, why not also the costumiers and the gas-fitters, and the numberless other contributors to theatrical success and glory? Indeed, as a rule, the applause, calls, and encores of the theatre are honours to be conferred on singers and actors only, are their rightful and peculiar

property, and should hardly be diverted from them or shared with others, upon any pretence whatever.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

REAL HORSES.

A horse in the highway is simply a horse and nothing more; but, transferred to the theatre, the noble animal becomes a *real* horse. The distinction is necessary in order that there may be no confusing the works of nature with the achievements of the property-maker. Not that this indispensable dramatic artist shrinks from competition. But he would not have ascribed to him the production of another manufactory, so to say. His business is in counterfeits; he views with some disdain a genuine article. When the famous elephant Chunee stepped upon the stage of Covent Garden, the chief performer in the pantomime of "Harlequin and Padmanaba, or the Golden Fish," the creature was but scornfully regarded by Mr. Johnson, the property-man of Drury Lane. "I should be very sorry," he cried, "if I could not make a better elephant than that!" And it would seem that he afterwards justified his pretensions, especially in the eyes of the playgoers prizing imitative skill above mere reality. We read in the parody of Coleridge, in "Rejected Addresses":

> Amid the freaks that modern fashion sanctions,
> It grieves me much to see live animals
> Brought on the stage. Grimaldi has his rabbit,
> Laurent his cat, and Bradbury his pig;
> Fie on such tricks! Johnson, the machinist,
> Of former Drury, imitated life
> Quite to the life! The elephant in Blue Beard,
> Stuffed by his hand, wound round his lithe proboscis
> As spruce as he who roared in Padmanaba.

But no doubt an artificial elephant is more easily to be fabricated than an artificial horse. We do not encounter real elephants at every turn with which to compare the counterfeit. The animal is of bulky proportions and somewhat ungainly movements. With a frame of wicker-work and a hide of painted canvas, the creature can be fairly represented. But a horse is a different matter. Horses abound, however, and have proved themselves, time out of mind, apt pupils. They can readily be trained and taught to perform all kinds of feats and antics. So the skill of the property-maker is not taxed. He stands on one side, and permits the real horse to enter upon the mimic scene.

When Don Adriano de Armado, the fantastical Spaniard of "Love's Labour's Lost," admits that he is "ill at reckoning," and cannot tell "how many is one thrice told," his page Moth observes "how easy it is to put years to the word three, and study three years in two words, the dancing horse will tell you." This is without doubt an allusion to a horse called Marocco, trained by its master, one Banks, a Scotchman, to perform various strange tricks. Marocco, a young bay nag of moderate size, was exhibited in

Shakespeare's time in the courtyard of the Belle Sauvage Inn, on Ludgate Hill, the spectators lining the galleries of the hostelry. A pamphlet, published in 1595,

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and entitled “Maroccos Exstaticus, or Bankes Bay Horse in a Traunce; a Discourse set down in a Merry Dialogue between Bankes and his Beast,” contains a wood-print of the performing animal and his proprietor. Banks’s horse must have been one of the earliest “trained steeds” ever exhibited. His tricks excited great amazement, although they would hardly now be accounted very wonderful. Marocco could walk on his hind legs, and even dance the Canaries. At the bidding of his master he would carry a glove to a specified lady or gentleman, and tell, by raps with his hoof, the numbers on the upper face of a pair of dice. He went through, indeed, much of what is now the regular “business” of the circus horse. In 1600 Banks amazed London by taking his horse up to the vane on the top of St. Paul’s Cathedral. Marocco visited Scotland and France, and in these countries his accomplishments were generally attributable to witchcraft. Banks rashly encouraged the notion that his nag was supernaturally endowed. An alarm was raised that Marocco was possessed by the Evil One. To relieve misgivings and escape reproach, Banks made his horse pay homage to the sign of the cross, and called upon all to observe that nothing satanic could have been induced to perform this act of reverence. A rumour at one time prevailed that the horse and his master had both, as “subjects of the Black Power of the world,” been burned at Rome by order of the Pope. More authentic accounts, however, show Banks as surviving to Charles I.’s time, and thriving as a vintner in Cheapside. But it is to be gathered from Douce’s “Illustrations of Shakespeare,” that of old certain performing horses suffered miserably for their skill. In a little book, “Le Diable Bossu,” Nancy, 1708, allusion is made to the burning alive at Lisbon, in 1707, of an English horse, whose master had taught him to know the cards; and Grainger, in his “Biographical History of England,” 1779, states that, within his remembrance, “a horse, which had been taught to perform several tricks, was, with its owner, put into the Inquisition.”

Marocco was but a circus horse; there is no evidence to show that he ever trod the stage or took any part in theatrical performances. It is hard to say, indeed, when horses first entered a regular theatre. Pepys chronicles, in 1668, a visit “to the King’s Playhouse, to see an old play of Shirley’s, called ‘Hide Park,’ the first day acted [revived], where horses are brought upon the stage.” He expresses no surprise at the introduction of the animals, and this may not have been their first appearance on the scene. He is content to note that “Hide Park” is “a very moderate play, only an excellent epilogue spoken by Beck Marshall.” The scene of the third and fourth acts of the comedy lies in the Park, and foot and horse races are represented. The horses probably were only required to cross the stage once or twice.

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A representation of Corneille's tragedy of "Andromeda," in 1682, occasioned great excitement in Paris, owing to the introduction of a "real horse" to play the part of Pegasus. The horse was generally regarded as a kind of Roscius of the brute creation, and achieved an extraordinary success. Adorned with wings and hoisted up by machinery, he neighed and tossed his head, pawed and pranced in mid-air after a very lively manner. It was a mystery then, but it is common enough knowledge now, that the horse's histrionic skill is founded upon his appetite. Kept without food for some time the horse becomes naturally moved at the sight of a sieve of corn in the side-wings. His feats, the picking up of gloves and handkerchiefs, even the pulling of triggers, originate but in his efforts to find oats. By-and-by his memory is exercised, and he is content to know that after the conclusion of his "business" he will be rewarded with oats behind the scenes. The postponement of his meals attends his failure to accomplish what is required of him. Of old, perhaps, some cruel use of whip and spur may have marked the education of the "trick-horse." But for a long time past the animal's fears have not been appealed to, but simply his love of food. Horses are very sagacious, and their natural timidity once appeased, they become exceedingly docile. An untrained horse has often shown himself equal to the ordinary requirements of the equestrian manager after only four days of tuition.

Pope satirised the introduction of horses in Shakespeare's "Henry VIII.," revived with great splendour in 1727, when a representation was given of the coronation of Anne Bullen, and the royal champion, duly mounted and caparisoned, proclaimed his challenge. But for many years the appearances on the stage of equine performers were only of an occasional kind. It was not until the rebuilding of Astley's, in 1803, that the equestrian drama became an established entertainment. An extensive stage was then added to the circus, and "horse spectacles," as they were called, were first presented. A grand drama called "The Blood-Red Knight," produced in 1810, resulted in a profit to the proprietors of L18,000, a handsome sum, seeing that the season at that time only extended from Easter to the end of September.

The triumphs of Astley's excited the envy of the Covent Garden managers. Colman's drama of "Blue Beard" was reproduced, with Mr. Johnson's imitation elephant and a troop of real horses. The performance was presented on forty-four nights, a long run in those days. There was, of course, much wrath excited by this degradation of the stage. A contemporary critic writes: "A novel and marked event occurred at this theatre on this evening (18th of February, 1811), which should be considered as a black epocha for ever by the loyal adherents to wit and the Muses. As the Mussulmen date their computation of years from the flight of Mahomet, so should the hordes of folly commence their

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triumphant register from the open flight of common-sense on this memorable night, when a whole troop of horses made their first appearance in character at Covent Garden." The manager was fiercely denounced for his unscrupulous endeavours "to obtain money at the expense of his official dignity." Another critic, alleging that "the dressing-rooms of the new company of comedians were under the orchestra," complained that "in the first row of the pit the stench was so abominable, one might as well have sitten in a stable." Still the "equestrian drama" delighted the town. "Blue Beard" was followed by Monk Lewis's "Timour the Tartar," in which more horses appeared. Some hissing was heard at the commencement of the new drama, and placards were exhibited in the pit condemning the horses; but in the end "Timour" triumphed over all opposition, and rivalled the run of "Blue Beard." It is to be remembered, especially by those who insist so much on the degeneracy of the modern theatre, that these "horse spectacles" were presented in a patent house during the palmy days of the drama, while the Kemble family was still in possession of the stage of Covent Garden.

These equestrian doings were satirised at the Haymarket Theatre in the following summer. "The Quadrupeds of Quedlinburgh, or the Rovers of Weimar," was produced, being an adaptation by Colman of a burlesque, attributed to Canning, in "The Anti-Jacobin." It was designed to ridicule not merely the introduction of horses upon the stage, but also the then prevailing taste for morbid German dramas of the Kotzebue school. The prologue was in part a travestie of Pope's prologue to "Cato," and contained references to the plays of "Lovers' Vows" and "The Stranger."

To lull the soul by spurious strokes of art,
To warp the genius and mislead the heart,
To make mankind revere wives gone astray,
Love pious sons who rob on the highway,
For this the foreign muses trod our stage,
Commanding German schools to be the rage.

* * * * *

Dear Johnny Bull, you boast much resolution,
With, thanks to Heaven, a glorious constitution;
Your taste, recovered half from foreign quacks,
Takes airings now on English horses' backs.
While every modern bard may raise his name,
If not on lasting praise, on stable fame.
Think that to Germans you have given no check,
Think bow each actor horsed has risked his neck;

You've shown them favour. Oh, then, once more show it
To this night's Anglo-German horse-play poet.

In the course of the play the sentimental sentinel in "Pizarro" was ridiculed, and the whole concluded with a grand battle, in which the last scene of "Timour the Tartar" was imitated and burlesqued. "Stuffed ponies and donkeys frisked about with ludicrous agility," writes a critic of the time. The play was thoroughly successful, and would seem to have retrieved the fortunes of the theatre, which had been long in a disastrous condition.

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Drury Lane also struck a blow at the “horse spectacles” of the rival house. In 1812 was produced “Quadrupeds; or, The Manager’s Last Kick.” This was only a revised version of the old burlesque of “The Tailors, a Tragedy for Warm Weather,” usually ascribed to Foote. In the last scene an army of tailors appeared, mounted on asses and mules, and much fun of a pantomimic kind ensued. Some years later, however, Drury Lane was content to derive profit from a drama in which “real horses” appeared, with the additional attraction of “real water.” This was Moncrieff’s play of “The Cataract of the Ganges.” Indeed, Drury Lane was but little entitled to vaunt its superiority in the matter. In 1803 its treasury had greatly benefited from the feats of the “real dog” in Reynolds’s melodrama “The Caravan.” “Real water,” indeed, had been brought upon the stage by Garrick himself, who owed his prosperity, not more to his genius as an actor than to his ingenuity as a purveyor of pantomime and spectacles. One of his addresses to his audience contains the lines—

> What eager transport stares from every eye,
> When pulleys rattle and our genii fly,
> When tin cascades like falling waters gleam,
> Or through the canvas bursts the real stream,
> While thirsty Islington laments in vain
> Half her New River rolled to Drury Lane.

Of late years a change has come over the equestrian drama. The circus flourishes, and quadrupeds figure now and then upon the stage, but the “horse spectacle” has almost vanished. The noble animal is to be seen occasionally on the boards, but he is cast for small parts only, is little better than a four-footed supernumerary. He comes on to aid the pageantry of the scene; even opera does not disdain his services in this respect. A richly-caparisoned charger performs certain simple duties in “Masaniello,” in “Les Huguenots,” “L’Etoile du Nord,” “Martha,” “La Juive,” and some few other operas. The late M. Jullien introduced quite a troop of cavalry in his “Pietro il Grande,” but this homage to horseflesh notwithstanding, the world did not greatly prize the work in question. The horse no longer performs “leading business.” Plays are not now written for him. He is no longer required to evince the fidelity and devotion of his nature by knocking at street-doors, rescuing a prisoned master, defending oppressed innocence, or dying in the centre of the stage to slow music. Something of a part seemed promised him when the popular drama of “Flying Scud” was first represented; at least, he supplied that work with its title. But it was speedily to be perceived that animal interests had been subordinated to human. More prominent occupation by far was assigned to the rider than to the horse. A different plan of distributing parts prevailed when “The High-mettled Racer” and kindred works adorned the stage. A horse with histrionic instincts and acquirements had something like a chance then. But now he can only lament the decline of the equestrian drama. True, the circus is still open to him; but in the eyes of a well-educated performing horse a circus must be much what a music-hall is in the opinion of a tragedian devoted to five-act plays.

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CHAPTER XXX.

THE “SUPER.”

The theatrical supernumerary—or the “super,” as he is familiarly called—is a man who in his time certainly plays many parts, and yet obtains applause in none. His exits and his entrances, his *debut* and his disappearance, alike escape criticism and record. His name is not printed in the playbills, and is for ever unknown to his audience. Even the persons he is supposed to represent upon the stage always remain anonymous. Both as a living and fictitious creature he is denied individuality, and has to be considered collectively, massed with others, and inseparable from his companion figures. He is not so much an actor, as part of the decorations, the animated furniture, so to say, of the stage. Nevertheless, “supers” have their importance and value. For how could the drama exist without its background groups: its soldiers, citizens, peasants, courtiers, nobles, guests, and attendants of all kinds? These give prominence, support, and effect to the leading characters of the theatre; and these are the “supers.”

Upon the French stage the minor assistants of the scene are comprehensively described as *les choristes*. In this way the pedigree of the “super” gains something of nobility, and may, perhaps, be traced back to the chorus of the antique drama, a body charged with most momentous duties, with symbolic mysteries of dance and song, removed from the perils and catastrophes of the play, yet required in regard to these to guide and interpret the sympathies of the spectators. In its modern application, however, this generic term has its subdivisions, and includes *les choristes* proper, who boast musical attainments, and are obedient to the rule of a *chef d’attaque*, or head chorister; *les accessoires*, performers permitted speech of a brief kind, who can be entrusted upon occasion with such simple functions as opening a door, placing a chair, or delivering a letter, and who correspond in many respects with our actors of utility; *les figurants*, the subordinate dancers led by a *coryphee*; and lastly, *les comparses*, who closely resemble our supernumeraries, and are engaged in more or less numbers, according to the exigencies of there presentation. Of these aids to performance *les comparses* only enjoy no regular salaries, are not formally enrolled among the permanent members of the establishment, but are paid simply for appearing—seventy-five centimes for the night, and fifty centimes for each rehearsal—or upon some such modest scale of remuneration. This classification would appear to afford opportunities to ambition. Here are steps in the ladder, and merit should be able to ascend. It is understood, however, that as a rule *les comparses* do not rise. They are the serfs of the stage, who never obtain manumission. They are as conscripts, from whose knapsacks the field-marshal’s *baton*

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is almost invariably omitted. They become veterans, but their length of service receives no favourable recognition. *Comparses* they live, and *comparses* they die, or disappear, not apparently discontented with their doom, however. Meantime the *figurant* cherishes sanguine hopes that he may one day rise to a prominent position in the ballet, or that he may become an *accessoire*; and the *accessoire* looks forward fervently to ranking in the future among the regular actors or *artistes* of the theatre, with the right of entering its *grand foyer*, or superior green-room. Until then he must confine himself and his aspirations to the *petit foyer* set apart for the use of players of his class.

Thus it is told of a certain *accessoire* of the Porte St. Martin, in years past, who had won a scarcely appreciable measure of fame for his adroitness in handing letters or coffee-cups upon a salver, and even for the propriety with which he announced, in the part of a footman, the guests and visitors of a drama—such as “Monsieur le Vicomte de St. Remy!” or “Madame la Marquise de Roncourt!”—that he applied to his manager for an increase of his salary on account of the special value of his services. “I do not expect,” he frankly said, “immediately to receive 25,000 francs, as Monsieur Frederic Lemaitre does; no, not yet; although I bear in mind that Monsieur Lemaitre began his career with fighting broadsword combats in Madame Saqui’s circus; but my present salary is but 600 francs a-year, and a slight increase—”

“Monsieur Fombonne,” interrupted the manager, “I acknowledge the justice of your application. I admire and esteem you. You are one of the most useful members of my company. I well know your worth; no one better.”

Monsieur Fombonne, glowing with pleasure, bowed in his best manner.

“I may venture to hope, then—”

“By all means, Monsieur Fombonne. Hope sustains us under all our afflictions. Always hope. For my part, hope is the only thing left me. Business is wretched. The treasury is empty. I cannot possibly raise your salary. But you are an artist, and therefore above pecuniary considerations. I do not—I cannot—offer you money. But I can gratify a laudable ambition. Hitherto you have ranked only as an *accessoire*; from this time forward you are an actor. I give you the right of entering the *grand foyer*. You are permitted to call Monsieur Lemaitre *mon camarade*; to *tutoyer* Mademoiselle Theodorine. I am sure, Monsieur Fombonne, that you will thoroughly appreciate the distinction I have conferred upon you.”

Monsieur Fombonne was delighted. He was subsequently to discover, however, that some disadvantages attended his new dignity; that the medal he had won had its reverse. The *accessoires* and *figurants* of the theatre always received their salaries on the first day of each month. The *artistes* were not paid until the sixth or seventh day.

Monsieur Fombonne had to live upon credit for a week as the price of his new privileges. His gain was shadowy; his loss substantial.

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With the choristers proper we are not here much concerned. They are not fairly to be classed among “supers,” and they pertain almost exclusively to the lyric stage. It is to be noted, however, that they are in some sort evidence of the connection that once existed between the Church and the Theatre; the ecclesiastical and the laical drama. At any rate, the chorus singers often undertake divided duties in this respect, and accept engagements both at the cathedral and the opera-house. And sometimes it has happened that the discharge of their dual obligations has involved them in serious difficulties. Thus, some years since, there is said to have been a Christmas spectacle in preparation at the Opera House in Paris. The entertainment was of a long and elaborate kind, and for its perfect production numberless rehearsals, early and late, dress and undress, were imperatively necessary. Now the chorus of the opera also represented the choir of Notre Dame. It was a season of the year for which the Church has appointed many celebrations. The singers were incessantly running to and fro between the Opera House and Notre Dame. Often they had not a moment to spare, and punctuality in attending their appointments was scarcely possible, while the trouble of so frequently changing their costumes was extremely irksome to them. On one occasion a dress rehearsal at the theatre, which commenced at a very late hour, after the conclusion of the ordinary performance of the evening, was so protracted that the time for the early service at the cathedral was rapidly approaching. The chorus appeared as demons at the opera, and wore the tight-fitting scaly dresses which time out of mind have been invested upon the stage with diabolical attributes. What were they to do? Was there time to undress and dress again? Scarcely. Besides, was it worth the trouble? It was very dark; bitterly cold; there was not a soul to be seen in the streets; all Paris was abed and asleep. Moreover, the door of the sacristy would be ready open to receive them, and their white stoles would be immediately obtainable. Well, the story goes that these desperate singers, accoutred as they were, ran as fast as they could to Notre Dame, veiled their satanic dresses beneath the snowy surplices of the choir, and accomplished their sacred duties without any discovery of the impropriety of their conduct. It is true they encountered in their course a patrol of the civic guard; but the representatives of law and order, forming probably their own conclusions as to the significance of the demoniac apparition, are said to have prudently taken to flight in an opposite direction.

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Upon our early English stage the “super” had frequent occupation; the Shakespearean drama, indeed, makes large demands upon the mute performers. The stage at this time was not very spacious, however, and was in part occupied by the more pretentious of the spectators, who, seated upon stools, or reclining upon the rushes which strewed the boards, were attended by their pages, and amused themselves with smoking their pipes and noisily criticising the performance. There was little room therefore for any great number of supernumeraries. But spectacles—to which the “super” has always been indispensable—had already won the favour of playgoers. Sir Henry Wotton writes in 1613 of a new play produced at the Globe Theatre, “called ‘All is True,’ representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII., which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to matting of the stage; the knights of the order with their Georges and Garter, the guards with their embroidered coats and the like; sufficient, in truth, within a while to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous.” “Supers” must surely have been employed on this occasion. It is clear, however, that the money-takers, or “gatherers,” as they were called, after the audience had assembled, and their presence was no longer needed at the doors, were accustomed to appear upon the stage as the representatives of guards, soldiers, &c. An early play refers to the combats of the scene being accomplished by “the blue-coated stage-keepers,” or attendants. And the actors were classified at this time, according to their professional standing, as “whole sharers,” “three-quarter sharers,” “half sharers,” and “hired men,” or “servitors.” The leading players were as joint proprietors in the undertaking, and divided the receipts among them according to a prearranged scale. Minor characters were sustained by the “servitors,” who were paid, as our actors are at the present time, by weekly wages, and had no other interest in the success of the theatre with which they were associated, beyond desire that its exchequer might always be equal to their claims upon it. Philip Henslowe’s “Diary” contains an entry regarding a non-sharing actor: “Hiered as a covenant servant Willyam Kendall—to give him for his said servis everi week of his playing in London ten shillings, and in the countrie five shillings, for the which he covenaunteth to be redye at all houres to play in the house of the said Philip, and in no other.” It may be noted that Shakespeare’s first connection with the Globe Theatre is shown upon fair evidence to have been originally that of a “servitor.” In that case the poet must often have been required to appear in very subordinate characters—perhaps even characters not entrusted with speech. Will it inflame too violently the ambition of our modern “supers” to suggest to them that very possibly Shakespeare himself may have preceded them in the performance of their somewhat inglorious duties?

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The hired men or servitors were under the control and in the pay of the proprietor or manager of the theatre, and their salaries constituted no charge upon the shares of the chief actors. Still these were entitled to complain, apparently, if the hired men were too few in number to give due effect to the representations. In 1614 a dispute arose between Henslowe and his sharing actors, by reason of his having suddenly reduced his expenses by dismissing "four hired men." He had previously sought to charge their stipends upon the shares, although bound by agreement to defray these expenses out of the money derived from the galleries—at this time, perhaps, a managerial perquisite. But in addition to the servitors, as the representatives of minor and mute characters, there were also available the journeymen or apprentices of the more eminent performers. If they paid no premium upon being articled, novices were at any rate bound in return for the education they received to hand their earnings, or a large part of them, to their masters. And this is precisely the case at the present time in regard to the pupils of musical professors and the teachers of singing, dancing, and feats of the circus. The services of the apprentices were transferable, and could be bought and sold. There is quite a slave-trade aspect about the following entry in Henslowe's "Diary." "Bowght my boye Jeames Brystow, of William Augusten, player, the 8th of December, 1597, for eight pounds." Augustine Phillips, the actor, one of Shakespeare's partners, who died in 1605, and who by his will bequeathed to Shakespeare "a thirty shillings peece in gould," also gave to "Samuell Gilborne, my late apprentice, the some of fortye shillings, and my mouse-coloured velvit hose, and a white taffety dublet, a blacke taffety sute, my purple cloke, sword and dagger, and my base viall." He also gave to "James Sands, my apprentice, the some of forty shillings and a citterne, a bandore, and a lute, to be paid and delivered unto him at the expiration of his terme of yeres in his indentur of apprenticehood." From his bequests of musical instruments, it has been conjectured that Phillips sometimes played in what is now called the orchestra of the theatre. A sum of forty shillings in Elizabeth's time represents the value of about ten pounds of our currency. What with its "gatherers," "servitors," and journeymen, the Shakespearean stage was obviously provided sufficiently with supernumerary assistants.

The "super" is useful, even ornamental in his way, though it behoves him always to stand aloof from the foot-lights, so that distance may lend his aspect as much enchantment as possible; but he is not highly esteemed by the general public. In truth he has been long the object of ridicule and caricature. He is charged with stupidity, and is popularly considered as a very absurd sort of creature. But he has resigned his own volition; he has but to obey. He is as a puppet whose wires are pulled

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by others. He is under the rule of a “super-master,” who is in his turn governed by the wavings of the prompter’s white flag in the wings, the prompter being controlled by the stage-manager, who is supposed to be the executant of the dramatist’s intentions. The “super’s” position upon the stage is strictly defined for him; sometimes even marked on the boards with chalk. He may not move until the word of command is given him, and then every change of station or attitude must be pursuant to previous instruction. And his duties are sometimes arduous. He may often be required to change his attire and assume a new personality in the course of one night’s performances. A member of a band of brigands in one scene, he may in another be enrolled in a troop of soldiers, sent to combat with and capture those malefactors. In the same play he may wear now the robes of a nobleman, and now the rags of a mendicant. A demon possessed of supernatural powers at the opening of a pantomime, he is certain before its close to be found among those good-natured people who saunter across the stage for the sole purpose, as it would seem, of being assaulted and battered by the clown and pantaloon. It is not surprising altogether that a certain apathy gradually steals over him, and that such intelligence as he ever possessed becomes in time somewhat numbed by the peculiar nature of his profession. Moreover, in regard to the play in which he takes part he is generally but dimly informed. Its plot and purpose are mysteries to him. He never sees it represented or rehearsed as an entirety. His own simple duties accomplished, he is hurried to the rear of the stage to be out of the way of the actors. Why he bends his knee to one performer and loads another with fetters; why there is banning in this scene and blessing in that; why the heroine in white adores the gallant in blue and abominates her suitor in red, are to him inexplicable matters. The dramas in which he figures only impress his mind in relation to the dresses he is constrained to assume during their representation, the dresses being never of his own choosing, rarely fitting him, and their significance being always outside his comprehension. To him the tragedy of “King John” is but the occasion on which he and his fellows “wore them tin-pots on our ’eads;” “Julius Caesar” the play in which “we went on in sheets.” “What are we supposed to be?” a curious “super” once inquired of a more experienced comrade. “Blessed if I know!” was the answer. “Demons, I expect.” They were clothing themselves in chain-mail, and were “supposed to be”—Crusaders.

The “super’s” dress is, indeed, his prime consideration, and out of it arises his greatest grievance. He must surrender himself unconditionally to the costumier, and obey implicitly his behests. Summer or winter he has no voice in the question; he must clothe himself warmly or scantily, just as he is bidden. “Always fleshings when there’s a frost,” a “super”

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was once heard to grumble, who conceived the classical system of dress or undress—-and for that matter, perhaps, the classical drama also—to be invented solely for his inconvenience and discomfort. But more trying than this antique garb is the demoniac mask of pantomime, which is as a diver's helmet ill provided with appliances for admitting air or permitting outlook. The group of panting "supers," with their mimic heads under their arms—their faces smeared with red or blue, in accordance with direction, not of their own choice—to be discovered behind the scenes during the performance of a Christmas piece, is an impressive portion of the spectacle, although it is withheld from the contemplation of the audience. There have been "supers" who have approached very near to death by suffocation, from the hurtful nature of their attire, rather than fail in the discharge of their duties. For there is heroism everywhere.

The stage has always been fertile in the matter of anecdotage, and of course comical stories of "supers" have abounded; for these, the poorest of players are readily available for facetious purposes. Thus, so far back as the days of Quin, there is record of a curious misapprehension on the part of the supernumeraries of the time. Quin's pronunciation was of a broad old-fashioned kind, a following of a traditional method of elocution from which Garrick did much to release the theatre. The play was Thomson's "Coriolanus," and Quin appeared as the hero. In the scene of the Roman ladies' entry in procession, to solicit the return to Rome of Coriolanus, the stage was filled with tribunes and centurions of the Volscian army, bearing fasces, their ensigns of authority. Quin, as the hero, commanded them to "lower their fasces" by way of homage to the matrons of Rome. But the representatives of the centurions understood him to mean their *faces*, and much to the amusement of the audience all reverently bowed their heads with absurd unanimity.

But it is as the performers of "guests" that the "supers" have especially moved derision in our theatres; and, indeed, on the Parisian stage *les invites* have long been established provocatives of laughter. The assumption of evening dress and something of the manners of polite society has always been severely trying to the supernumerary actor. What can he really know of balls and fashionable assemblies? Of course speech is not demanded of him, nor is his presence needed very near to the proscenium, but he is required to give animation to the background, and to be as easy and graceful as he may in his aspect and movements. The result is not satisfactory. He is more at home in less refined situations. He is prone to indulge in rather grotesque gestures, expressive of admiration of the brilliant decorations surrounding him, and profuse, even servile gratitude for the hospitality extended to him. He interchanges mute remarks, enlivened by surprising grimaces, with

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the lady of the ballet, in the shabbiest of ball dresses, who hangs affectionately upon his arm. The limited amount of his stipend naturally asserts itself in his costume, which will not bear critical investigation. His boots are of the homeliest and sometimes of the muddiest; coarse dabs of rouge appear upon his battered cheeks; his wig—for a "super" of this class almost always wears a wig—is unkempt and decayed; his white cravat has a burlesque air; and his gloves are of cotton. There are even stories extant of very economical "supers" who have gone halves in a pair of "berlins," and even expended rouge on but one side of their faces, pleading that they were required to stand only on the right or the left of the stage, as the case might be, and as they could thus be seen but in profile by the audience, these defects in their appearance could not possibly attract notice. Altogether the "super's" least effective performance is that of "a guest."

It is a real advance for a "super" when he is charged with some small theatrical task, which removes him from the ranks of his fellows. He acquires individuality, though of an inferior kind. But his promotion entails responsibilities for which he is not always prepared. Lekain, the French tragedian, playing the part of Tancred, at Bordeaux, required a supernumerary to act as his squire, and carry his helmet, lance, and shield. Lekain's personal appearance was insignificant, and his manner at rehearsal had been very subdued. The "super" thought little of the hero he was to serve, and deemed his own duties slight enough. But at night Lekain's majesty of port, and the commanding tone in which he cried, *"Suivez moi!"* to his squire, so startled and overcame that attendant that he suddenly let fall, with a great crash, the weapons and armour he was carrying. Something of the same kind has often happened upon our own stage. "You distressed me very much, sir," said a famous tragedian once to a "super," who had committed default in some important business of the scene. "Not more than you frightened me, sir," the "super" frankly said. He was forgiven his failure on account of the homage it conveyed to the tragedian's impressiveness.

M. Etienne Arago, writing some years since upon *les choristes*, calls attention to the important services rendered to the stage by its mute performers, and demands their wider recognition. He ventures to hold that as much talent is necessary to constitute a tolerable *figurant* as to make a good actor. He describes the *figurant* as a multiform actor, a dramatic chameleon, compelled by the special nature of his occupation, or rather by its lack of special nature, to appear young or old, crooked or straight, noble or base-born, savage or civilised, according to the good pleasure of the dramatist. "Thus, when Tancred declaims, *'Toi, superbe Orbassan, c'est toi que je defie!'* and flings his gauntlet upon the stage, Orbassan has but to wave his hand and an attendant advances boldly, stoops, picks up the gage of battle, and resumes his former position. That is thought to be a very simple duty. But to accomplish it without provoking the mirth of the audience is *le sublime du metier—le triomphe de l'art!*"

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The emotions of an author who for the first time sees himself in print, have often been descanted upon. The sensations of a "super," raised from the ranks, entrusted with the utterance of a few words, and enabled to read the entry of his own name in the playbills, are scarcely less entitled to sympathy. His task may be slight enough, the measure of speech permitted him most limited; the reference to him in the programmes may simply run—

CHARLES (a waiter) Mr. JONES,

or even

RAILWAY PORTER Mr. BROWN,

but the delight of the performer is infinite. His promotion is indeed of a prodigious kind. Hitherto but a lay-figure, he is now endowed with life. He has become an actor! The world is at length informed of his existence. He has emerged from the crowd, and though it may be but for a moment, can assert his individuality. He carries his part about with him everywhere—it is but a slip of paper with one line of writing running across it. He exhibits it boastfully to his friends. He reads it again and again; recites it in every tone of voice he can command—practises his elocutionary powers upon every possible occasion. A Parisian *figurant*, advanced to the position of *accessoire*, was so elated that he is said to have expressed surprise that the people he met in the streets did not bow to him; that the sentinels on guard did not present arms as he passed. His reverence for the author in whose play he is to appear is boundless; he regards him as a second Shakespeare, if not something more. His devotion to the manager, who has given him the part, for a time approaches deliriousness.

"*Our* new play will be a great go!" a promoted "super" once observed to certain of his fellows, "*I* play a policeman! I go on in the last scene, and handcuff Mr. Rant. I have to say, 'Murder's the charge! Stand back!' Won't that *fetch* the house?"

There are soldiers doomed to perish in their first battle. And there have been "supers" who have failed to justify their advancement, and, silenced for ever, have had to fall back into the ranks again. The French stage has a story of a *figurant* who ruined at once a new tragedy and his own prospects by an unhappy *lapsus linguae*, the result of undue haste and nervous excitement. He had but to cry aloud, in the crisis of the drama: "*Le roi se meurt!*" He was perfect at rehearsal; he earned the applause even of the author. A brilliant future, as he deemed, was open to him. But at night he could only utter, in broken tones: "*Le meurt se roi!*" and the tragic situation was dissolved in laughter. So, in our own theatre, there is the established legend of Delpini, the Italian clown, who, charged to exclaim at a critical moment: "Pluck them asunder!" could produce no more intelligible speech than "Massonder em plocket!" Much mirth in the house and dismay on the stage ensued. But Delpini had gained his object. He had become qualified as an actor to participate in the benefits of the Theatrical Fund. As a

mere pantomimist he was without a title. But John Kemble had kindly furthered the claim of the foreign clown by entrusting him for once with “a speaking part.” The tragedian, however, had been quite unprepared for the misadventure that was to result.

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It used to be said that at the Parisian Cirque, once famous for its battle-pieces, refractory “supers” were always punished by being required to represent “the enemy” of the evening: the Russians, Prussians, English, or Arabs, as the case might be—who were to be overcome by the victorious soldiers of France—repulsed at the point of the bayonet, trampled upon and routed in a variety of ignominious ways. The representatives of “the enemy” complained that they could not endure to be hopelessly beaten night after night. Their expostulation was unpatriotic; but it was natural. For “supers” have their feelings, moral as well as physical. At one of our own theatres a roulette-table was introduced in a scene portraying the *salon* at Homburg, or Baden-Baden. Certain of the “supers” petitioned that they should not always appear as the losing gamesters. They desired sometimes to figure among the winners. It need hardly be said that the money that changed hands upon the occasion was only of that valueless kind that has no sort of currency off the stage.

When “supers” appear as modern soldiers in action, it is found advisable to load their guns for them. They fear the “kick” of their weapons, and will, if possible, avoid firing them. Once in a military play a troop of grenadiers were required to fire a volley. Their officer waved his sword and gave the word of command superbly; but no sound followed, save only that of the snapping of locks: Not a gun had been loaded. An unfortunate unanimity had prevailed among the grenadiers. Each had forborne to load his weapon, trusting that his omission would escape notice in the general noise, and assured that a shot more or less could be of little consequence. It had occurred to no one of them that his scheme might be put into operation by others beside himself—still less that the whole band might adopt it. But this had happened. For the future their guns were given them loaded.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“GAG.”

The stage, like other professions, is in some sort to be considered as a distinct nation, possessing manners, customs, a code, and, above all, a language of its own. This, by the outside world, is designated “slang;” just as in one country the tongue of another is vulgarly described as gibberish. Now and then, however, a word escapes from the peculiar vocabulary of the players, and secures the recognition and acceptance of the general public. It may not be forthwith registered in formal dictionaries, or sanctioned by the martinets of speech and style; still, like a French sou or a Jersey halfpenny appearing amongst our copper coins, it obtains a fair degree of currency and circulation, with little question as to the legitimacy of the mint from which it originally issued.

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“Gag” is a word of this class. It belongs of right to the actors, but of its age or derivation nothing can be ascertained, Modern lexicography of the best repute does not acknowledge it, and for a long time it remained unnoticed, even by the compilers of glossaries of strange and cant terms. Thus, it is not to be found in “Grose’s Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue,” published in 1796. This is a coarse, but certainly a comprehensive work, and from its omitting to register “gag,” we may assume that the word had no ascertained existence in Grose’s time. In the “Slang Dictionary; or, The Vulgar Words, Street Phrases, and ‘Fast’ Expressions of High and Low Society,” published in 1864, “gag” is duly included, and defined to be “language introduced by an actor into his part.” Long before this, however, the word had issued from the stage-door, and its signification had become a matter of general knowledge.

And even if the word be comparatively new, the thing it represents and defines is certainly old enough, dating, probably, from the very birth of the drama. So soon as the author began to write words for the actors to deliver, so soon, be sure, did the comedians begin to interpolate speech of their own contriving. For, as a rule, gag is the privilege and the property of the comic performer. The tragedian does not gag. He may require his part to be what is called “written up” for him, and striking matter to be introduced into his scenes for his own especial advantage, but he is generally confined to the delivery of blank verse, and rhythmical utterances of that kind do not readily afford opportunities for gag. There have been Macbeths who have declined to expire upon the stage after the silent fashion prescribed by Shakespeare, and have insisted upon declaiming the last dying speech with which Garrick first enriched the character. But these are actors of the past. If Shakespeare does not often appear upon the modern stage, at any rate he is not presented in the disguised and mutilated form which won applause in what are now viewed as the “palmy days” of the drama. And the prepared speeches introduced by the tragedians, however alien they may be to the dramatist’s intentions, and independent of his creations, are not properly to be considered as gag.

It was in 1583, according to Howes’ additions to Stow’s “Chronicle,” that Queen Elizabeth, at the request of Sir Francis Walsingham, and with the advice of Mr. Edmond Tyllney, her Master of the Revels, selected twelve performers out of some of the companies of her nobility, to be her own dramatic servants, with the special title of the Queen’s Players. They duly took the oaths of office, and were allowed wages and liveries as Grooms of the Chambers. Among these actors were included Robert Wilson, described as gifted with “a quick, delicate, refined, extemporal wit;” and Richard Tarleton, of “a wondrous, plentiful, pleasant, extemporal wit.” From this it would almost seem that these comedians

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owed their fame and advancement to their skill and inventiveness in the matter of gagging. No doubt these early actors bore some relation to the jesters who were established members of noble households, and of whom impromptu jokes and witticisms were looked for upon all occasions. Moreover, at this time, as Mr. Payne Collier judges, “extemporal plays,” in the nature of the Italian *Commedie al improviso*, were often presented upon the English stage. The actors were merely furnished with a “plat,” or plot of the performance, and were required to fill in and complete the outline, as their own ingenuity might suggest. Portions of the entertainments were simply dumb show and pantomime, but it is clear that spoken dialogue was also resorted to. In such cases the “extemporal wit,” or gagging of the comic actors, was indispensably necessary. The “comedians of Ravenna,” who were not “tied to any written device,” but who, nevertheless, had “certain grounds or principles of their own,” are mentioned in Whetstone’s “Heptameron,” 1582, and references to such performers are also to be found in Kyd’s “Spanish Tragedy,” and Ben Jonson’s “Case is Altered.” In “Antony and Cleopatra” occurs the passage:

> The quick comedians
> Extemporally will stage us and present
> Our Alexandrian revels.

And Mr. Collier conjectures that when Polonius, speaking of the players, informs Hamlet that, “for the law of writ and the liberty, these are your only men,” he is to be understood as commending their excellence, both in written performances and in such as left them at liberty to invent their own discourse.

But however intelligible and excusable its origin, it is certain that by the time Shakespeare was writing, the “extemporal wit” of the theatre had come to be a very grave nuisance. There is no need to set forth here his memorable rebuke of the clowns who demonstrate their “pitiful ambition” by speaking more than their parts warrant. It is to be observed, however, that while this charge is levelled only at the clowns, or comic performers, the faults of the serious players by no means escape uncriticised. The same speech condemns alike the rant of the tragedians and the gag of the comedians. Both are regarded as unworthy means of winning the applause of the “groundlings” in one case, and the laughter of “barren spectators” in the other. Sad to say, Hamlet, in his character of reformer of stage abuses, failed to effect much good. The vices of the Elizabethan theatre are extant, and thriving in the Victorian. It is even to be feared that the interpolations of the clowns have sometimes crept into and disfigured the Shakespearean text, much to the puzzlement of the commentators. Often as Hamlet’s reforming speech has been recited, it has been generally met and nullified by someone moving “the previous question.” At the same time, while there is an inclination to decry perhaps too strenuously the condition of the modern

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stage, it is fair to credit it with a measure of amendment in regard both to rant and gag. Of late years rant has certainly declined in public favour, and the “robustious perriwig-pated fellow” tearing a passion to tatters, to very rags, is a less familiar spectacle upon our boards than formerly; albeit, this statement is obviously open to the reply that the system of “o’er doing Termagant,” and “out-Heroding Herod” has ceased to prevail, inasmuch as the tragedies and vehement plays, which gave it opportunity and excuse, have vanished from the existing dramatic repertory. And gag, except perhaps in relation to certain interpolations, which are founded upon enduring, if absurd, histrionic traditions, acknowledges stricter limitations than it once did. A gagging Polonius, Dogberry, Gobbo, or Gravedigger could scarcely expect much toleration from a modern audience; while it is true enough, that these famous personages do not often present themselves upon the scene in these times. As a rule, the gag of the present period is to be found mainly in those more frivolous and ephemeral entertainments, which are not much to be damnified by any excesses with which the comedians may be chargeable.

There is no gainsaying that in all times gag has been indulgently considered, and even encouraged by the majority of the audience. Establishing relations of a most intimate kind with his audience, the comic actor obtains from them absolute licence of speech and conduct. He becomes their “spoiled child,” his excesses are promptly applauded, and even his offences against good taste are speedily pardoned.

Of early gagging comedians, one of the most noted appears to have been Will Pinkethman, who flourished under William and Mary, and won honourable mention from Sir Richard Steele, in “The Tatler.” Cibber describes Pinkethman as an imitator of Leigh, an earlier actor of superior and more legitimate powers. Pinkethman’s inclination for “gamesome liberties” and “uncommon pleasantries” was of a most extravagant kind. Davies says of him that he “was in such full possession of the galleries that he would hold discourse with them for several minutes.” Nor could he be induced to amend his method of performance. It was in vain the managers threatened to fine him for his exuberances; he was too surely a public favourite to be severely treated. At one time he came to a “whimsical agreement” with Wilks, the actor, who suffered much from his playfellow’s eccentricities, that “whenever he was guilty of corresponding with the gods he should receive on his back three smart strokes of Bob Wilks’s cane.” But even this penalty, it would seem, Wilks was too good-natured to enforce. On one occasion, however, as Davies relates, Pinkethman so persisted in his gagging as to incur the displeasure of the audience. The comedy was Farquhar’s “Recruiting Officer;” Wilks played Captain Plume, and Pinkethman one of the recruits. The captain enlisting him inquired

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his name. Instead of giving the proper answer, Pinkethman replied: "Why, don't you know my name, Bob? I thought every fool knew that." Wilks angrily whispered to him the name of the recruit, Thomas Appleton. "Thomas Appleton?" he cried aloud. "No, no, my name's Will Pinkethman!" Then, addressing himself to the gallery, he said: "Hark ye, friends; you know my name up there, don't you?" "Yes, Master Pinkey," was the answer, "we know your name well enough." The house was now in an uproar. At first the audience enjoyed the folly of Pinkethman, and the distressed air of Wilks; but soon the joke grew tiresome, and hisses became distinctly audible. By assuming as melancholy an expression as he could, and exclaiming with a strong nasal twang: "Odds, I fear I'm wrong," Pinkethman was enabled to restore the good-humour of his patrons. It would seem that on other occasions he was compelled to make some similar apology for his misdemeanours. "I have often thought," Cibber writes, "that a good deal of the favour he met with was owing to this seeming humble way of waiving all pretences to merit, but what the town would please to allow him." A satiric poem, called "The Players," published in 1733, contains the following reference to Pinkethman:

> Quit not your theme to win the gaping rout,
> Nor aim at Pinkey's leer with "S'death, I'm out!"
> An arch dull rogue, who lets the business cool,
> To show how nicely he can play the fool,
> Who with buffoonery his dulness clokes,
> Deserves a cat-o'-nine-tails for his jokes.

At this time, Pinkethman had been dead some years, and it is explained in a note, that no "invidious reflection upon his memory" was intended, but merely a caution to others, who, less gifted, should presume to imitate conduct which had not escaped censure even in his case. With all his irregularities, Pinkethman was accounted a serviceable actor, and was often entrusted with characters of real importance, such as Dr. Caius, Feeble, Abel Drugger, Beau Clincher, Humphrey Gubbin, and Jerry Blackacre.

But an actor who outdid even Pinkethman in impertinence of speech was John Edwin, a comedian who enjoyed great popularity late in the last century. A contemporary critic describes him "as one of those extraordinary productions that would do immortal honour to the sock, if his extravasations of whim could be kept within bounds, and if the comicality of his vein could be restrained by good taste." Reynolds, the dramatist, relates that on one occasion he was sitting in the front row of the balcony-box at the Haymarket, during the performance of O'Keeffe's farce of "The Son-in-Law," Parsons being the Cranky and Edwin the Bowkitt of the night. In the scene of Cranky's refusal to bestow his daughter upon Bowkitt, on the ground of his being such an ugly fellow, Edwin coolly advanced to the foot-lights, and said: "Ugly! Now I submit, to the decision of an enlightened British public, which

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is the ugliest fellow of us three; I, old Cranky, or that gentleman in the front row of the balcony-box?" Here he pointed to Reynolds, who hastened to abandon his position. Parsons was exceedingly angry at the interruption, but the audience appear to have tolerated, and even enjoyed the gag. As Reynolds himself leniently writes: "Many performers before and since the days of Edwin have acquired the power, by private winks, irrelevant buffoonery and dialogue, to make their fellow-players laugh, and thus confound the audience and mar the scene; Edwin, disdaining this confined and distracting system, established a sort of entre-nous-ship (if I may venture to use the expression) with the audience, and made them his confidants; and though wrong in his principle, yet so neatly and skilfully did he execute it, that instead of injuring the business of the stage, he frequently enriched it."

Edwin seems, indeed, to have been an actor of some genius, notwithstanding his "extravasations of whim," and an habitual intemperance, which probably hastened the close of his professional career—for the man was a shameless sot. "I have often seen him," writes Boaden, "brought to the stage-door, senseless and motionless, lying at the bottom of a coach." Yet, if he could but be made to assume his stage-clothes, and pushed towards the lamps, he would rub his eyes for a moment, and then consciousness and extraordinary humour returned to him together, and his acting suffered in no way from the excesses which had overwhelmed him. Eccentricity was his forte, and it was usually found necessary to have characters expressly written for him; but there can be no doubt that he was very highly esteemed by the playgoers of his time, who viewed his loss to the stage as quite irreparable.

But of the comedians it may be said, that they not only "gag" themselves, but they are the cause of "gagging" in others. Their interpolations are regarded as heirlooms in the Thespian family. It is the comic actor's constant plea, when charged with adding to some famous part, that he has only been true to the traditions of previous performers. One of the most notable instances of established gag is the burlesque sermon introduced by Mawworm, in the last scene of "The Hypocrite." This was originated by Mathews, who first undertook the part at the Lyceum in 1809, and who designed a caricature of an extravagant preacher of the Whitfield school, known as Daddy Berridge, whose strange discourses at the Tabernacle in the Tottenham Court Road had grievously afflicted the actor in his youth. Mawworm's sermon met with extraordinary success; on some occasions it was even encored, and the comedy has never since been presented without this supreme effort of gag. Liston borrowed the address from Mathews, and gained for it so great an amount of fame, that the real contriver of the interpolation had reason to complain of being deprived of such credit as was due to him in the matter. The sermon is certainly irresistibly comical, and a fair outgrowth of the character of Mawworm; at the same time it must be observed that Mawworm is himself an excrescence upon the comedy, having no existence in Cibber's "Non-Juror," upon

which “The Hypocrite” is founded, or in “Tartuffe,” from whence Cibber derived the subject of his play.

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In the same way the additions made by the actors to certain of Sheridan's comedies—-such as Moses's redundant iterations of "I'll take my oath of that!" in "The School for Scandal," and Acres's misquotation of Sir Lucius's handwriting: "To prevent the trouble that might arise from our both undressing the same lady," in "The Rivals," are gags of such long standing, that they may date almost from the first production of those works. Sheridan himself supervised the rehearsals, and took great pains to perfect the representation; but, with other dramatists, he probably found himself much at the mercy of the players. He even withheld publication of "The School for Scandal," in order to prevent inadequate performance of the comedy; but this precaution was attended with the worst results. The stage long suffered from the variety of defective copies of the work that obtained circulation. The late Mr. John Bernard, the actor, in his amusing "Retrospections of the Stage," has confessed that, tempted by an addition of ten shillings a-week to his salary, he undertook to compile, in a week, an edition of "The School for Scandal" for the Exeter Theatre, upon the express understanding that the manuscript should be destroyed at the end of the season. Bernard had three parts in his possession, for upon various occasions he had appeared as Sir Peter, as Charles, and as Sir Benjamin. Two members of the Exeter company were acquainted with the speeches of Old Rowley, Lady Teazle, and Mrs. Candour, while actors at a distance, upon his request, sent him by post the parts of Joseph and Sir Oliver. With these materials, assisted by his general knowledge of the play, obtained from his having appeared many times in authentic versions of it, the compiler prepared a fictitious and piratical edition of "The School for Scandal," which fully served the purpose of the manager, and drew good houses for the remainder of the season.

Altogether, while few writers have done so much for the stage as Sheridan, few have met with less reverent treatment at the hands of the actors. "The Critic" has long been known in the theatre as a "gag-piece;" that is, a play which the performers consider themselves entitled to treat with the most merciless licence. In this respect "The Critic" has followed the fate of an earlier work to which it owes much of its origin—"The Rehearsal," by the Duke of Buckingham. It is curious how completely Sheridan's own satire has escaped its due application. "This is always the way at the theatre," says Puff; "give these fellows a good thing and they never know when to have done with it." "The Critic" is not very often played nowadays; but every occasion of its revival is disfigured by the freedoms and buffoonery of its representatives. Modern costume is usually worn by Mr. Puff and his friends; and the anachronism has its excuse, perhaps, in the fact that the satire of the dramatist is as sound and relevant now as it was in the last century.

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And some modification of the original text might be reasonably permitted. For instance, the reference by name to the long-since departed actors, King, Dodd, and Palmer, and the once famous scene-painter, Mr. De Loutherbourg, must necessarily now escape the comprehension of a general audience. But the idiotic interpolations, and the gross tomfoolery the actors occasionally permit themselves in the later scenes of the play, should not be tolerated by the audience upon any plea or pretext whatever.

One kind of gag is attributable to failure of memory or deficiency of study on the part of the player. “I haven’t got my words; I must gag it,” is a confession not unfrequently to be overheard in the theatre. Incledon, the singer, who had been in early life a sailor before the mast, in the royal navy, was notorious for his frequent loss of memory upon the stage. In his time the word “vamp” seems to have prevailed as the synonym of gag. A contemporary critic writes of him: “He could never vamp, to use a theatrical technical which implies the substitution of your own words and ideas when the author’s are forgotten. Vamping requires some tact, if not talent; and Incledon’s former occupation had imparted to his manners that genuine salt-water simplicity to which the artifices of acting were insurmountable difficulties.” Incledon had, however, a never-failing resource when difficulty of this kind occurred to him, and loss of memory, and therefore of speech, interrupted his performances. He forthwith commenced a verse of one of his most popular ballads! The amazement of his fellow-actors at this proceeding was, on its first adoption, very great indeed. “The truth is, I forgot my part, sir,” Incledon frankly explained to the perplexed manager, “and I could not catch the cue. I assure you, sir, that my agitation was so great, that I was compelled to introduce a verse of ‘Black-eyed Susan,’ in order to gain time and recover myself.” Long afterwards, when the occupants of the green-room could hear Incledon’s exquisite voice upon the stage, they were wont to ask each other, laughingly: “Is he singing his music, or is he merely recollecting his words?”

That excellent comedian, the late Drinkwater Meadows, used to relate a curious gagging experience of his early life as a strolling player. It was at Warwick, during the race week. He was to play Henry Moreland, in “The Heir-at-Law,” a part he had never previously performed, and of which, indeed, he knew little or nothing. There was no rehearsal, the company was “on pleasure bound,” and desired to attend the races with the rest of Warwickshire. No book of the play was obtainable. A study of the prompt-book had been promised; but the prompter was not to be found; he was probably at the races, and his book with him. The representative of Henry Moreland could only consult with the actor who was to play Steadfast—for upon Steadfast’s co-operation Moreland’s scenes chiefly depend.

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“Don’t bother about it,” said Steadfast. “Never mind the book. I’ll come down early to the house, and as we’re not wanted till the third act we can easily go over our scenes quietly together before we go on. We shall be all right, never fear. It’s a race-night; the house will be full and noisy. Little of the play will be heard, and we need not be over and above particular as to the syls” (syllables).

But Steadfast came down to the theatre very late, instead of early, and troubled with a thickness of speech and an unsteadiness of gait that closely resembled the symptoms of intoxication. “Sober!” he said, in reply to some insinuation of his comrade, “I’m sober as a judge. I’ve been running to get here in time, and that’s agitated me. I shall be all right when I’m on. Take care of yourself, and don’t fret about me.”

The curtain was up, and they had to face the foot-lights. Moreland waited for Steadfast to begin. Steadfast was gazing vacantly about him, silent save for irrepressible hiccups. The audience grew impatient, hisses became audible, and an apple or two was hurled upon the stage. Moreland, who had gathered something of the subject of the scene, found it absolutely necessary to say something, and began to gag:

“Well, Steadfast” (*aside to him*, “Stand still, can’t you?"), “here we are in England, nay, more, in London, its metropolis, where industry flourishes and idleness is punished.” (A pause for thought and reply; with little result.) “Proud London, what wealth!” (Another pause, and a hiccup from Steadfast.) “What constant bustle, what activity in thy streets!” (No remark could be extracted from Steadfast. It was necessary to proceed.) “And now, Steadfast, my inestimable friend, that I may find my father and my Caroline well and happy, is the dearest, the sole aspiration of my heart!” Steadfast stared and staggered, then suddenly exclaiming gutturally, “Amen!” reeled from the stage, quickly followed by Henry Moreland, amid the derision and hisses of the spectators. “Treat you cruelly!” said Steadfast, incoherently in the wings. “Nothing of the sort. You quite confounded me with your correctness. You told me you didn’t know your words, and I’ll be hanged if you were not ‘letter perfect.’ It went off capitally, my dear boy, so now let’s go over our next scene.” But the manager deemed it advisable to omit from the play all further reference to Moreland and Steadfast.

To performers who gag either wantonly, or by reason of imperfect recollection of their parts, few things are more distressing than a knowledge that someone among the audience is in possession of a book of the play to be represented. Even the conscientious and thoroughly-prepared actor is apt to be disconcerted when he hears the flutter of leaves being turned over in the theatre, and discovers that his speeches are being followed, line for line and word for word, by critics armed with the author’s text. On

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such occasions his memory is much inclined to play him false, and a sudden nervousness will often mar his best efforts. But, to the gagging player, a sense that his sins and failings are in this way liable to strict note and discovery, is grievously depressing. Some years ago a strolling company visited Andover, and courageously undertook to represent an admired comedy, with which they could boast but the very faintest acquaintance. Scarcely an actor, indeed, knew a syllable of his part. It was agreed that gag must be the order of the night, and that the performance must be "got through" anyhow. But the manager, eyeing and counting his house through the usual peephole in the curtain, perceived a gentleman in the boxes holding in his hands a printed copy of the play. The alarm of the company became extreme. A panic afflicted them, and their powers of gag were paralysed. They refused to confront the foot-lights. The audience grew impatient; the fiddlers were weary of repeating their tunes. Still the curtain did not rise. At length the manager presented himself with a doleful apologetic face. "Owing to an unfortunate accident," he said, "the company had left behind them the prompt-book of the play. The performance they had announced could not, therefore, be presented; unless," and here the speech was especially pointed to the gentleman in the boxes, "anyone among the audience, by a happy chance, happened to have brought to the theatre a copy of the comedy." The gentleman rose and said his book was much at the service of the manager, and it was accordingly handed to him. The players forthwith recovered their spirits; exposure of their deficiencies was no longer possible; and the performance passed off to the satisfaction of all concerned.

It has been suggested that gag is leniently, and even favourably considered by audiences; and it should be added that dramatists often connive at the interpolations of the theatre. For popular actors characters are prepared in outline, as it were, with full room for the embellishments to be added in representation. "Only tell me the situations; never mind about the 'cackle,'" an established comedian will observe to his author: "I'll 'fill it out,'" or "I shall be able to 'jerk it in,' and make something of the part." It is to be feared, indeed, that gag has secured a hold upon the stage, such as neither time nor teaching can loosen. More than a century ago, in the epilogue as supplied to Murphy's comedy, Garrick wrote:

> Ye actors who act what our writers have writ,
> Pray stick to your parts and spare your own wit;
> For when with your own you unbridle your tongue,
> I'll hold ten to one you are "all in the wrong!"

But this, with other cautioning of like effect, has availed but little. The really popular actor gains a height above the reach of censure. He has secured a verdict that is scarcely to be impeached or influenced by exceptional criticism. Still it may be worth while to urge upon him the importance of moderation, not so much for his own art's sake—on that head over-indulgence may have made him obdurate—but in regard to his

playfellows of inferior standing. He is their exemplar; his sins are their excuses; and the licence of one thus vitiates the general system of representation.

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The French stage is far more hedged round with restrictions than is our own, and cultivates histrionic art with more scrupulous care. In its better works gag is not tolerated, although free range is accorded it in productions of the opera bouffe and vaudeville class. Here the wildest liberty prevails, and the gagging actor is recognised as exercising his privileges and his wit within lawful bounds. The Parisian theatres may, indeed, be divided into the establishments wherein gag is applauded, and those wherein it is abominated. By way of a concluding note upon the subject, let an authentic story of successful French gag be briefly narrated.

Potier, the famous comedian, was playing the leading part in a certain vaudeville, and was required, in the course of the performance, to sit at the table of a cheap cafe and consume a bottle of beer. The beer was brought him by a *figurant*, or mute performer, in the character of a waiter, charged with the simple duty of drawing the cork from the bottle and filling the glass of the customer. Potier was struck with the man's neat performance of his task, and especially with a curious comical gravity which distinguished his manner, and often bestowed upon the humble actor an encouraging smile or a nod of approval. The man at length urged a request that he might, as he poured out the beer, be permitted to say a few words. Potier sanctioned the gag. It moved the laughter of the audience. Potier gagged in reply: and there was more laughter. During later representations the waiter was allowed further speeches, relieved by the additional gag of Potier, until at the end of a week it was found that an entirely new scene had been added to the vaudeville, and eventually the conversation between Potier and the *garcon*—not a line of which had been invented or contemplated by the dramatist—became the chief attraction of the piece. It was the triumph of gag. The *figurant*, from this modest and accidental beginning of his career as an actor, speedily rose to be famous. He was afterwards known to the world as ARNAL, one of the most admirable of Parisian *farceurs*.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BALLETS AND BALLET-DANCERS.

Dr. Barten Holyday, in the notes to his translation of "Juvenal," published at Oxford in 1673, describes the Roman plays as being followed by an exodium "of the nature of a *jig* after a play, the more cheerfully to dismiss the spectators"—the word "jig" signifying in the doctor's time something almost of a *ballet divertissement*, with an infusion of rhyming songs or speeches delivered by the clown of the theatre to the accompaniment of pipe and tabor. Jigs of this kind commonly terminated the performances upon the Elizabethan stage, which otherwise consisted of one dramatic piece only. Mr. Payne Collier holds that these supplemental exhibitions probably originated with, and certainly depended mainly

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upon, the actors who supported the characters of fools and clowns in the regular dramatic representations. He points out that Tarleton, one of Queen Elizabeth's players, much famed for his comicality, obtained great success by his efforts in jigs, and that, upon the showing of the tract entitled Tarleton's "News from Purgatory," jigs usually lasted for an hour. The precise nature of these entertainments cannot now be ascertained; for although each jig had what may be called its *libretto*, which was duly printed and published when the popularity of the work so required, yet no specimen of any such performance is now extant. The Stationers' registers, however, contain entries in 1595 of two jigs described respectively as Phillips's "Jig of the Slippers," and Kempe's "Jig of the Kitchen-stuff Woman." Other jigs referred to by contemporary writers are "The Jig of the Ship" and "The Jig of Garlick." It may be assumed, therefore, that each jig possessed special characteristics in the nature of distinct plot and characters; but in what respects "The Jig of the Kitchen-stuff Woman," let us say, differed from "The Jig of Garlick," or what was the precise story either was supposed to narrate, we must now be content to leave to the conjecture of the curious.

Probably dancing, as a dramatic entertainment, first came upon our stage in the form of these jigs. Of course, as a means of recreation among all ranks of people, it had thriven since a very remote period. Into the question of the state of dancing prior to the invention of any method of denoting by signs or characters the length or duration of sounds, we need scarcely enter. Doubtless music was felt and appreciated by a sort of instinct long before it was understood scientifically, or duly measured out and written down upon a recognised system. If dancing is to be viewed as dependent upon its correspondence with mensurable music, it must date simply from the invention of the Cantus Mensurabilis, attributed by some writers to Franco, the scholastic of Liege, who flourished in the eleventh century; and by others to Johannes de Muris, doctor of Sorbonne and a native of England, at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

There were dances of the court and dances of the people. The Morris dance, which seems to have been an invention of the Moors, had firmly established itself in England in the sixteenth century. The country dance was even of earlier date. The old Roundel or Roundelay has been described by ancient authorities as an air appropriate to dancing, and would indicate little more than a circular dance with the hands joined. Among the nobler and statelier dances in vogue at the court of the Tudors, were the Pavan (from *pavo*, a peacock), with the Galliard (a lighter measure, which was probably to the Pavan what in later years the Gavotte was to the Minuet), the Passamezzo, the Courant, and the Saraband. Sir John Elyot, who published in 1531 his book called "The Governor,"

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wherein he avers that dancing by persons of both sexes is a mystical representation of matrimony, mentions other dances, such as Bargenettes and Turgyons, concerning which no explanation can be offered, except perhaps that the former may be derived from Berger, and be something of a shepherd's dance. There was also an esteemed dance called the Braule, in which several persons joining hands danced together in a ring, which was no doubt identical with the Branle or Brantle mentioned by Mr. Pepys in his description of a grand ball at Whitehall: "By-and-by comes the king and queen, the duke and duchess, and all the great ones; and after seating themselves the king takes out the Duchess of York, and the Duke the Duchess of Buckingham; the Duke of Monmouth my Lady Castlemaine; and so other lords other ladies; and they danced the Brantle. After that the king led a lady a single Coranto; and then the rest of the lords, one after another, other ladies. Very noble it was and great pleasure to see. Then to country dances; the king leading the first, which he called for.... The manner was, when the king dances, all the ladies in the room, and the queen herself, stand up; and indeed he dances rarely and much better than the Duke of York."

Dancing, however, had degenerated in King Charles's time. In his "Table Talk," Selden writes of the matter in very quaint terms: "The court of England is much altered. At a solemn dancing, first you had the grave measures, then the Corantoes and the Galliards, and this kept with ceremony; and at length to Trenchmore and the cushion-dance; then all the company dances, lord and groom, lady and kitchen-maid, no distinction. So in our court in Queen Elizabeth's time gravity and state were kept up. In King James's time things were pretty well. But in King Charles's time there has been nothing but Trenchmore and the cushion-dance, *omnium gatherum*, tolly polly, hoite cum toite." The Trenchmore was a lively dance, mention of which may be found in "The Pilgrim" and "Island Princess" of Beaumont and Fletcher, and in "The Rehearsal" of the Duke of Buckingham. The last editor of Selden, it may be noted, by altering the word to "Frenchmore," has considerably obscured the author's meaning.

In former times men of the gravest profession did not disdain to dance. Even the judges, in compliance with ancient custom, long continued to dance annually on Candlemas Day in the hall of Serjeants' Inn, Chancery Lane. Lincoln's Inn, too, had its revels—four in each year—with a master duly elected of the society to direct the pastimes. Nor were these "exercises of dancing," as Dugdale calls them, merely tolerated; they were held to be "very necessary, and much conducing to the making of gentlemen more fit for their books at other times." Indeed, it appears that, by an order made in James I.'s time, the junior bar was severely dealt with for declining to dance: "the under barristers were by decimation put out of commons for example's sake, because the whole bar offended by not dancing on Candlemas Day preceding, according to the ancient order of this society, when the judges were present; with this, that if the like fault were committed afterwards they should be fined or disbarred."

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Gradually jigs disappeared from the stage. Even in 1632, when Shirley wrote his comedy of “Changes, or Love in a Maze,” jigs had been discontinued at Salisbury Court Theatre, and probably at other private playhouses. Shirley complains that, instead of a jig at the end, a dance in the middle of the piece was now required by the spectators. Possibly that dance of all the *dramatis personae* with which so many of the old comedies conclude is due to the earlier fashion of terminating theatrical performances by a jig.

With Sir William Davenant as patentee and manager of the Duke’s Theatre, stage dancing and singing acquired a more distinguished position among theatrical entertainments. It was Davenant’s object, by submitting attractions of this nature to the public, to check the superiority enjoyed by Killigrew, the patentee of the Theatre Royal, and the comedians privileged to call themselves “His Majesty’s Servants.” Davenant, indeed, first brought upon the English stage what were then called “dramatic operas,” but what we should now rather designate “spectacles,” including Dryden’s version of “The Tempest,” the “Psyche” of Shadwell, and the “Circe” of Charles Davenant, “all set off,” as Cibber writes of them, “with the most expensive decorations of scenes and habits, with the best voices and dancers.” Sir John Hawkins describes these productions as “musical dramas,” or “tragedies with interludes set to music.”

But as yet the ballet, or rather the ballet of action—which may be defined to be a ballet with a plot or story of some kind told by means of dancing dumb motions, and musical accompaniments—was not known upon our stage; and when an entertainment of this kind did make its appearance it was promptly designated a pantomime, and so has become confused with the distinct kind of performances still presented under that name at our larger theatres at Christmas time. “When one company is too hard for another,” writes Cibber, “the lower in reputation has always been forced to exhibit some new-fangled foppery to draw the multitude after them;” which is, however, only a way of saying that managers need the stimulus of opposition to induce them to provide new entertainments. In 1721 there was great rivalry between Drury Lane—Cibber being one of its managers—and the theatre then newly erected in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Of the “new-fangled foppery,” which it now became necessary for the one theatre to resort to as a weapon of offence against its rival, singing and dancing had been effectual instances. But singing was not to be thought of under the circumstances; as Cibber writes: “At the time I am speaking of, our English music had been so discountenanced since the taste of Italian operas prevailed, that it was to no purpose to pretend to it. Dancing, therefore, was now the only weight in the opposite scale, and as the new theatres sometimes found their account in it, it could not be safe for us wholly to neglect it. To give even dancing, therefore,

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some improvement, and to make it something more than motion without meaning, the fable of Mars and Venus was formed into a connected presentation of dances in character, wherein the passions were so happily expressed, and the whole story so intelligibly told by a mute narrative of gesture only, that even thinking spectators allowed it both a pleasing and a rational entertainment." This was certainly a ballet of action, and it is remarkable that the production involved but a small outlay; the managers, distrusting its reception, did not venture "to decorate it with any extraordinary expense of scenes or habits." Great success, however, attended the performance, and from it is to be dated the establishment both of ballet and pantomime upon our stage. "From this original hint, then, but every way unequal to it, sprang forth that succession of monstrous medleys that have so long infested the stage, and which arose upon one another alternately at both houses, outvying in expense, like contending bribes on both sides at an election, to secure a majority of the multitude." Cibber indeed waxes very wrath over the matter, and appears to desire that lawful authority should "interpose to put down these poetical drams, these gin-shops of the stage, that intoxicate its auditors and dishonour their understanding with a levity for which I want a name." But Cibber's anger is in truth very much that of a manager vying with the liberal outlay of a rival, and in such wise forced to expend large sums in costly entertainments.

At an earlier date ballet-dancers had been imported from France. Some time about 1704 the great Mr. Betterton and his company, suffering from insufficient patronage at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, had been reduced to resort to "foreign novelties." Three of the most famous dancers of the French Opera, L'Abbee, Balon, and Mademoiselle Subligny, were at several times brought over at extraordinary rates to revive that sickly appetite which plain sense and nature had satiated. In Paris, indeed, the ballet was very securely instituted. The Academie Royale de Musique et de Danse had been founded in 1669, and from that date the ballet, as an entertainment of dancing only, may be said to have come into being. There had been earlier ballets, but these were of the nature of old English masques, and consisted of songs and spoken dialogues in addition to dances; the term *ballet*, it need hardly be explained, being derived from the Italian *ballata*, the parent of our own *ballad*. At first the French Opera or Academy suffered from the smallness of its troop; vocalists could be obtained from the church choirs, but for the ballet it was hard to find recruits; and sometimes young boys were pressed into the service, and constrained to personate nymphs, dryads, and shepherdesses—"*danseurs*," writes a French historian of the Opera, "*qui sous un masque et des vetements feminins, les formes arrondies par l'art et le coton, n'excitaient*

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qu'un enthousiasme modere." At court there was no lack of dancers of the gentler sex, however, and at court the ballet prospered greatly. A ballet performed in 1681 was at any rate strongly cast, since there appeared among the dancers Madame la Dauphine, the Princesse de Conti, and Mdlle. de Nantes, supported by the Dauphin, the Prince de Conti, and the Duc de Vermandois; but these distinguished personages probably sang more than they danced. Louis XIV. frequently figured in ballets, one of his favourite characters being the Sun in "Flora," said to be the eighteenth ballet in which he had played a part. Lulli, the composer, director of the Opera, paid great attention to the ballet, occasionally appearing as a dancer; as a singer and comic actor he had already acquired fame. To Lulli has been attributed the introduction of rapid dancing, in opposition to the solemn and deliberate steps favoured by the court during the early part of the reign of Louis XIV. It may be added, that the king held out a measure of encouragement to such of his nobility and courtiers as were disposed to follow his example and exhibit upon the scene. "It is our pleasure," he says in the patent granted to the Abbe Perrin, the first director of the French Opera, 1669, "that all gentlemen and ladies may sing in the said pieces and representations of our Royal Academy, without being considered on that account to derogate from their letters of nobility or from their privileges, rights, and immunities." The dramatic ballet, or ballet of action, is said to have been invented by the Duchesse du Maine, whose theatrical entertainments at Sceaux rivalled the festivities of Versailles, and obtained the preference of many nobles of the court. The lady, however, unfortunately meddled with the Spanish conspiracy—-she should have confined herself to the plots of ballets—and forthwith the establishment at Sceaux was broken up. In this way Mouret, her musical director, who also composed several operas and ballets for the Academy, suffered severe loss; eventually he went mad and died in the lunatic asylum at Charenton.

Mademoiselle de Subligny came to England armed with letters of introduction from Thiriot and the Abbe Dubois to John Locke of all people! Locke probably was not very sympathetic in regard to the lady's art, yet respect for his friends led him to bestow upon her due civility and attention; according to Fontenelle, he constituted himself her *homme d'affaires*. Another dancer, Mademoiselle Salle, whose charms and graces Voltaire had celebrated in verse, appeared in London with letters of introduction from Fontenelle to Montesquieu, then ambassador at the court of St. James's. It is clear that the ballet-dancers were becoming personages of real importance.

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Mdlle. Salle, it seems, achieved extraordinary success in the year 1734 at Covent Garden Theatre, which a French journal of that date describes curiously as the *Theatre du Commun Jardin*. The lady was an admirable dancer, and brought with her complete dramatic ballets, the characters in which were appropriately dressed according to the time and place of the story they related; for Mdlle. Salle was a reformer in the matter of stage costumes. She discarded paniers and hoops and false hair. As Galatea in a ballet upon the story of Pygmalion, she wore nothing, we are told, "in addition to her bodice and under petticoats, but a simple robe of muslin draped after the manner of a Greek statue." She won great applause, too, by her performance of Ariadne in a ballet called "Bacchus and Ariadne," the beauty of her dances, attitudes, and gestures, and her skill in depicting by movements without words, grief, anger, love, and despair, obtaining the warmest approval. She was patronised by the king, queen, and the royal family, and her benefit produced an "overflow" and something more; tickets were sold at most exorbitant prices, and the people fought for places both with swords and fists. There are stories, too, of purses full of gold being flung upon the stage, with showers of bonbons—not ordinary sugar-plums, but rouleaux of guineas tightly wrapped up in bank-notes. The dancer is said to have profited by her benefit to the extent of some L10,000. It must be owned, however, that the story of Mdlle. Salle's success is of a very highly-coloured description, and can only be credited absolutely by persons largely endowed with credulity.

Satire, of course, found occupation in the successes of the ballet-dancers. In 1742 Hogarth published his "Charmers of the Age," a caricature of the aspects and attitudes of M. Desnoyer and the Signora Barberina, then performing at Drury Lane Theatre. A grotesque air was given to these artists, popularly regarded as personifications of grace and elegance, and a measured line was added to the drawing that their leaps and bounds might be fairly estimated.

It was in France, however, that the *ballerina* secured her greatest triumph, and the *ballet d'action* attained its fullest vitality. The dancer became a power in the State, influencing princes, ministers, and people. Poets were her slaves, and oftentimes philosophers were caught in her toils. From Mdlle. la Fontaine of two centuries since, "*la premiere des premieres danseuses*," who received the title of "La Reine de la Danse," there being at the time, however, but three other professional dancers in Paris, through a long line of most distinguished artists, the *ballerina* of to-day may trace her descent. But now, however, there is pause in her success, a cloud over her career. Indeed, it must be said, that for a generation almost there has been no new triumph registered of the ballet and its artists. Here the "opera-dancers,"

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as they were once called, have certainly ceased to be. Once standing, as it were, on the tips of their toes, they supported opera upon their shoulders. But now there are no dancers at the opera. Euterpe has dispensed with the aid of Terpsichore; the ballet has fled from the boards of our lyric theatres. It has been said, indeed, that the *ballet d'action* has never been really naturalised in this country; that although it has thrived for a while, it was but an exotic, needing careful watching and tending. Still it was for many years a most prosperous entertainment, especially at our Italian opera-house; and it is to be noted that its decline has not been confined to this country. Even in France, its natural home and headquarters, ballet is by no means what it once was. It lives, perhaps, but in a fallen state. There is no *danseuse* now really of the first class. Has the ballet declined on this account, or is this to be ascribed to the decline of the ballet? Or can it be that the dances of the streets have overcome and ousted from their due position the dances of the stage?

After Mdlle. la Fontaine came Mdlles. Roland and Prevost; the famous Camargo and her rival Salle, of whom some mention has already been made; Mdlle. Marie Madeleine Guimard, exquisitely graceful and fascinating, but of such slender proportions that she obtained the surname of "*le squelette des Graces*," while witty but malicious, perhaps jealous, Sophie Arnould described her as "the spider;" Mafleuroy, who married Boeldieu, and Mercandotti, who married Mr. Ball Hughes, otherwise "Golden Ball," the greatest gambler of his time, which is saying a good deal; Noblet and the Ellslers; Pauline Leroux, who became the wife of Lafont, the most elegant actor of the modern theatre; Duvernay and Taglioni—to name no more, for we have now come to surviving artists—-these are among the more famous of the "Reines de la Danse" who have ruled absolutely at the Academie Royale of Paris and elsewhere.

In England ballet has enjoyed many triumphs, while it has nevertheless experienced sundry disasters. There was great trouble, for instance, at Drury-lane Theatre in 1755, when Mr. Garrick's "Chinese Festival" with its French dancers was sternly, even savagely, condemned by the audience. The manager was over-fond of spangles and spectacles, or inclined to over-estimate his public's regard for such matters, and a sharp but necessary lesson was read to him upon that occasion. Then he was very obstinate, and in such wise roused the British lion inordinately. He would not withdraw the play from his stage; promptly the audience determined that no stage should be left him upon which to represent either the "Chinese Festival" or anything else. Of course he had to yield at last, as managers must when playgoers are resolute; he had to live by pleasing, not displeasing. But he did not give way until there had been some six nights of uproar and riot. In vain did various noble lords and

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gentlemen, friends of the management, and supporters of spectacle and the ballet, draw their swords, endeavouring to awe malcontents, to restore order, and to defend the theatre from outrage. The mob would have its way. The benches were torn up, the decorations torn down, chandeliers smashed, even scenes and properties were ruthlessly destroyed. There was, indeed, a wild proposition rife at one time to fire the house and burn it to the ground. Garrick could but strike his flag, and yield up his "Chinese Festival." Still it was agreed that he had hesitated too long. The mob therefore repaired to Southampton Street, and smashed his window-panes, doing other mischief to his property there. He began even to tremble for his life, and from his friends in power obtained a guard of soldiery to protect him. Strange to say, on two of the nights of riot the king was present—a fact that did not in the least hinder or mitigate the violent demonstrations of the audience.

But it was not so much the ballet that gave offence as the ballet-dancers whom Garrick had brought from Paris. They were chiefly Swiss, but the audience believed them to be French, and at that time a very strong anti-Gallican feeling prevailed in the land. The relations between England and France were of an unfriendly kind; the two countries were, indeed, on the eve of war. The French, by their conduct in America, had incurred the bitterest English enmity. It is true that Garrick had projected his spectacle months before this feeling had arisen. He was careful so to inform the public, and further to state that his ballet-master, M. Noverre, and his sisters were Swiss and of a Protestant family; his wife and her sister, Germans; and that of the whole *corps de ballet*, sixty in number, forty were English. But this availed not. The pit would not regard it, holding fast to their opinion that no management should bring over parley-voos and frog-eaters to take the bread out of English mouths. Peace was at length restored in Drury Lane, and the dancers sent back. The management lost L4000; Garrick purchasing knowledge of his public at rather a high rate.

And in England the ballet had other enemies than those who concerned themselves in regard to the nationality of its professors. It was held by many to be, if an art at all—-why, then, an art of a shocking kind; they could see nothing in it but gross impropriety and unseemliness. Now, of course, the ballet has its vulnerable side—it almost needs, at any rate it has always assumed, a scantier style of dress than is otherwise in ordinary use. And then the movements of the dancer of necessity involve greater display of the human form than is required by the simpler acts of riding, walking, or sitting. In dancing it is inevitable that there should be swaying and bending of the figure, possibly waving to and fro of the arms, certainly some standing upon the toes, and raising of the nether limbs more or less

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high in the air. Bereft of these measures dancing could not be; still here were matters upon which moralists, or persons who so styled themselves, were able greatly to enlarge, and concerning which Pharisees, who did not so style themselves, but were such nevertheless, had much to say. Now just at the close of the last century the world was in very sad case; society had gone on from bad to worse: low life was of course lower than it had ever before been known to be, and high life was not nearly so high as it should have been. There was profligacy in very exalted places, and, indeed, dissoluteness and immorality everywhere. Thereupon, in 1798, a certain Bishop of Durham made a speech from his place in Parliament in regard to the wickedness of the period; and especially he drew attention to the dancers of the opera-house. The excuse for the prelate's speech was a divorce bill; for in those days the peers spiritual and temporal were much occupied in discussing and passing divorce bills—an employment of which they have only been deprived during quite recent years. His Grace took occasion to complain of the frequency of such bills, and, being a true patriot, charged the French Government with the despatch of agents to this country especially to corrupt our manners. "He considered it a consequence of the gross immoralities imported of late years into this country from France, the Directory of which country, finding that they were not able to subdue us by their arms, appeared as if they were determined to gain their ends by destroying our morals; they had sent over persons to this country who made the most improper exhibitions in our theatres." Now it was true that the manager of the opera-house at this time relied greatly upon the attractions of his ballet; operas and opera-singers having for a while lost favour with the impresario's subscribers and supporters. A leading dancer at this time, however, was an Englishwoman—an exception to the rule that makes every *premiere danseuse* of French origin—Miss Rose, reported to be of plain features, but of exquisite figure, and gifted with singular ease and grace of movement. It is possible that Miss Rose had adopted a scantier and lighter method of attire than had prevailed with preceding dancers. She had been caricatured, yet not very unkindly, by Gillray, the drawing bearing the motto, "No flower that blows is like the Rose." The bishop's speech was not without effect. Indeed, he had announced his intention upon some future day to move an address to the king praying that all opera-dancers might be ordered out of the kingdom, as people likely to destroy our morality and religion, and as very probably in the pay of France. The manager of the opera-house deemed it advisable to postpone his ballet of "Bacchus and Ariadne" until new and improved dresses could be prepared for it. Upon the entertainment being reproduced, it was found that there had been enlargement and elongation of the skirts of the performers,

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with the substitution of inoffensive white silk stockings for the reprehensible hose of flesh-colour that had originally been assumed. Of course much talk followed upon this, with great laughter and ridicule; caricatures of the spiritual peers and the opera-dancers abounded. In a drawing by Gillray, Miss Rose, with other *danseuses*, is depicted performing what is called "*La Danse a l'Eveque*;" the ladies have assumed, out of excessive regard for decorousness and the bishop's arguments, that apron of black silk which has long been thought peculiar to prelates. Another satirical illustration bore the title of "Ecclesiastical Scrutiny; or, The Durham Inquest on Duty." Bishops were represented as attending in the dressing department of the opera-house; one is seen to be measuring the dancers' skirts with a tailor's yard; another arranges their stockings in an ungraceful fashion; while a third inspects their corsets, decreeing some change in the form of those articles of attire. The Bishop of Durham was further portrayed in another broadsheet as armed with his pastoral staff, and sturdily contesting hand to hand with the Spirit of Evil arrayed in ballet costume. In short, this subject of the bishops and the ballet-girls occupied and amused the public very considerably, and doubtless proved profitable, as an advertisement of his wares, to the manager of the opera-house.

Still the bishops kept a watchful eye upon the proceedings of the theatre. In 1805 there is record of a riot at the opera-house, "some reforming bishops having warned the managers that if the performances were not regularly brought to a close before twelve o'clock on Saturday evenings, prosecutions would be commenced." Accordingly, the performances were shortened by the omission of an act of the ballet of "Ossian," greatly to the dissatisfaction of the audience, who assaulted Mr. Kelly, the manager, commenced an attack upon the chandeliers, benches, musical instruments, &c., and indeed threatened to demolish the theatre. The curtain had fallen at half-past eleven, which the audience thought much too early. Of a certain prelate it was recorded that he frequently attended the Saturday-night performances at the opera-house, and that upon the approach of midnight he was wont to stand up in his box holding out his watch at arm's length, by way of intimating to the spectators that it was time for them to depart and for the theatre to close. Of course this bishop could hardly have avoided seeing the ballet; but for whatever distress he may have endured on that account, a sense of his efforts to benefit his species, including of course the opera-dancers, no doubt afforded him a sufficient measure of compensation.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CORRECT COSTUMES.

The question of dress has always been of the gravest importance to the theatrical profession. It was a charge brought against the actors of Elizabeth's time, that they

walked about the town in gaudy and expensive attire. The author of “The Return from Parnassus,” first published in 1606, but held to have been written at an earlier date, specially refers to the prosperity, and the consequent arrogance of the players. He is believed to have had in view Alleyn or even Shakespeare:

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Vile world that lifts them up to high degree,
And treads us down in grovelling misery!
England affords these glorious vagabonds,
That carried erst their fardels on their backs,
Coursers to ride on through the gazing streets,
Sweeping it in their glaring satin suits,
And pages to attend their masterships.

But it is clear that these “glorious vagabonds” were regardful that their dress should be splendid merely. There was no thought then as to the costumes of the stage being appropriate to the characters represented, or in harmony with the periods dealt with by the dramatists. Nor did the spectators find fault with this arrangement. It did not disturb them in the least to find Brutus and Cassius, for instance, wearing much the same kind of clothes as Bacon and Raleigh. And in this way anachronisms of other kinds readily obtained pardon, if indeed they ever moved attention at all. Certainly the hero of an early Roman story should not have spoken of gunpowder, much less have produced a pistol from his belt; but his conduct in this wise became almost reasonable, seeing that he did not wear a toga, but doublet and hose—the dress indeed of a gallant of Elizabeth’s time.

It is only in quite recent times that the correctness of stage costumes has undergone systematic consideration, and been treated as a matter of real urgency, although occasional experiments in the direction of reform are to be found recorded in early accounts of the drama. Mr. Pepys describes his visit to the theatre in 1664, to see “Heraclius, or the Emperor of the East,” Carlell’s translation of Corneille, and notes, “the garments like Romans very well ... at the beginning, at the drawing up of the curtain, there was the finest scene of the emperor and his people about him, standing in their fixed and different postures, in their Roman habits, above all that I ever saw at any of the theatres.” But attempts to be accurate in this way were only of an intermittent kind; any enduring amendment can hardly be found until we approach a period that is within the recollection of living playgoers. Mr. Donne, lately the Examiner of Plays, writes in one of his essays on the drama: “We have seen ‘The Rivals’ performed in a sort of chance-medley costume—a century intervening between the respective attires of Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute;” and he adds, “we have seen the same comedy dressed with scrupulous attention to the date of the wigs and hoops; but we doubt whether in any essential respect that excellent play was a gainer by the increased care and expenditure of the manager.” Sir Walter Scott had previously written: “We have seen ‘Jane Shore’ acted with Richard in the old English cloak, Lord Hastings in a full court dress, with his white rod like a Lord Chamberlain of the last reign, and Jane Shore and Alicia in stays and hoops. We have seen Miss Young act Zara, incased in whalebone, to an Osman dressed properly enough as a Turk, while Nerestan, a Christian knight, in the time of the Crusades, strutted in the white uniform of the old French guards!”

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Even as late as 1842 a writer in a critical journal, reviewing a performance of “She Stoops to Conquer” at the Haymarket Theatre, reminds the representatives of Young Marlow and Hastings that the costumes they wear being “of the year 1842 accord but ill with those of 1772, assumed by the other characters.” “The effect of the scene is marred by it,” writes the critic. And ten years before Leigh Hunt had admitted into the columns of his *Tatler* many letters dwelling upon the defects of stage costume in regard to incongruousness and general lack of accuracy. One correspondent complains of a performance of “The Merry Wives of Windsor” at Covent Garden, in which Bartley had played Falstaff “in a dress belonging to the age of the first Charles;” Caius had appeared as “a doctor of the reign of William and Mary, with a flowing periwig, cocked hat, large cuffs, and ruffles;” while John Rugby’s costume was that “of a countryman servant of the present day.” Another remonstrant describes Kean as dressing Othello “more in the garb of an Albanian Greek than a Moor; Richard goes through the battle without armour, while Richmond is armed *cap-a-pie*; and Young plays Macbeth in a green and gilded velvet jacket, and carries a shield until he begins to fight, and then throws it away.” A third correspondent draws attention to “The School for Scandal” and Mr. Farren’s performance of Sir Peter Teazle in a costume appropriate to the date of the comedy, the other players wearing dresses of the newest vogue. “Even Sir Oliver,” it is added, “appeared in a fashionable modern drab greatcoat.” In a note Leigh Hunt records his opinion that Mr. Farren was right, and that it was “the business of all the other performers to dress up to his costume, not for him to *wrong* himself into theirs,” and adds, “there is one way of settling the matter which puts an end to all questions except that of immediate convenience and economy; and this is to do as the French do, who rigidly adhere to the costume of the period in which the scene is supposed to take place. Something of immediate sympathy is lost, perhaps, by this system, for we can hardly admire a young beauty so much in the dress of our grandmothers as in such as we see our own charmers in; but this defect is compensated by a sense of truth and propriety, by the very quaintness and novelty of the ancient aspect, and even by the information it conveys to us.”

The condition of the Parisian stage in regard to its improved and splendid scenery, decorations, and accessories owed much to the special intervention and patronage of Louis XIV. Sir Walter Scott ascribes to Voltaire “the sole merit of introducing natural and correct costumes. Before his time the actors, whether Romans or Scythians, appeared in the full dress of the French court; and Augustus himself was represented in a huge full-bottomed wig surmounted by a crown of laurel.” Marmontel, however, claims to have had some share in this innovation, and also in

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the reform of the stage method of declamation, which had previously been of a very pompous kind. Following his counsels, Mdlle. Clairon, the famous tragic actress, had ventured to play Roxana, in the Court Theatre at Versailles, “dressed in the habit of a Sultana, without hoop, her arms half naked, and in the truth of Oriental costume.” With this attire she adopted a simpler kind of elocution. Her success was most complete. Marmontel was profuse in his congratulations. “But it will ruin me,” said the actress. “Natural declamation requires correctness of costume. My wardrobe is from this moment useless to me; I lose twelve hundred guineas’ worth of dresses! However, the sacrifice is made. Within a week you shall see me play Electra after nature, as I have just played Roxana.” Marmontel writes: “From that time all the actors were obliged to abandon their fringed gloves, their voluminous wigs, their feathered hats, and all the fantastic paraphernalia that had so long shocked the sight of all men of taste. Lekain himself followed the example of Mdlle. Clairon, and, from that moment, their talents thus perfected, excited mutual emulation and were worthy rivals of each other.”

Upon the English stage reform in this matter was certainly a matter of slow growth. A German gentleman, Christian Augustus Gottlieb Goede by name, who published, in 1821, a long account of a visit he had recently made to England, expresses in strong terms his opinions on certain peculiarities of its theatre. “You will never behold,” he writes, “foreign actors dressed in such an absurd style as upon the London stage. The English, of all other nations the most superstitious worshippers of fashion, are, nevertheless, accustomed to manifest a strange indulgence for the incivilities which this goddess encounters from their performers. I have seen Mr. Cooke personating the character of Sir Pertinax McSycophant in ‘The Man of the World,’ in a buff coat of antique cut, and an embroidered waistcoat which might have figured in the court of Charles II.; though this play is of modern date and the actor must of course have been familiar with the current costume. In ‘The Way to Keep Him,’ Mr. C. Kemble acted the part of Sir Brilliant Fashion, a name which ought to have suggested to him a proper style of dress, in a frock absolutely threadbare, an obsolete doublet, long pantaloons, a prodigious watch-chain of steel, and a huge *incroyable* under his arm. This last article, indeed, was an appendage of 1802, but all the rest presented a genuine portrait of an indigent and coxcombical journeyman tailor. He must have known that pantaloons and an *incroyable* rumpled and folded together are incongruous articles of apparel—that no gentleman, much less Sir Brilliant Fashion, would make his appearance in a threadbare coat; and that steel watch-chains, as the chronicles of the Birmingham manufactories plainly evince, have been out of date these fourscore years. Neither would he, I am perfectly convinced, parade in such a costume off the boards of the theatre. Why then should he choose to exhibit such a whimsical figure upon them? May I venture to offer my own conjecture on the subject? The real cause probably is that an absurd costume is perfectly fashionable upon the English stage!”

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In reply to these and similar strictures there is nothing much to be said, unless it be that actors and audience alike were content with things as they were, and that now and then reforms had been attempted, without however resulting in any particular success. Garrick had rendered the theatre invaluable services both as actor and as stage-manager, but he had been unable to effect any very beneficial change in the matter of dress. Indeed, it seems probable that his attempt to appear as Othello had failed chiefly because he had followed Foote's example and attired the character after a Moorish fashion, discarding the modern military uniforms in which Quin and Barry had been wont to play the part. The actor's short stature, black face, and Oriental dress had reminded the audience of the turbaned negro pages in attendance upon ladies of quality at that period: "Pompey with the teakettle," as Quin had said, having possibly a plate of Hogarth's present in his mind; and the innovation, which was certainly commendable enough, was unfavourably received, even to incurring some contempt. Garrick's dress as Hotspur, "a laced frock and a Ramilies wig," was objected to, not for the good reason that it was inappropriate, but on the strange ground that it was "too insignificant for the character." A critic writing in 1759, while timidly advocating the amendment of stage dress, proceeds to doubt whether the reform would be "well received by audiences who have been so long habituated to such glaring impropriety and negligence in the other direction." Clearly alteration was a matter of some difficulty, and not to be lightly undertaken.

It is well known that Garrick, in the part of Macbeth, wore a court suit of scarlet and gold lace, with, in the latter scenes of the tragedy, "a wig," as Lee Lewes the actor says in his Memoirs, "as large as any now worn by the gravest of our Barons of the Exchequer"—a similar costume being adopted by other Macbeths of that time—Smith and Barry for instance. When the veteran actor Macklin first played Macbeth in 1774, however, he assumed a "Caledonian habit," and although it is said the audience, when they saw "a clumsy old man, who looked more like a Scotch piper than a general and a prince of the blood, stumping down the stage at the head of an army, were generally inclined to laugh," still the attempt at reform won considerable approbation. At that time it was held to be unquestionable that the correct costume of Macbeth should be that of the Highlander of the snuff-shop; but in later days it was discovered that even the tartan was an anachronism in such case, and that Macbeth and his associates must be clad in stripes, or plain colours. Even the bonnet with the eagle's feather, which Sir Walter Scott induced Kemble to substitute for his "shuttlecock" headdress of ostrich plumes, was held to be inadmissible: the Macbeth of the antiquaries wore a conical iron helmet, and was otherwise arrayed in barbaric armour. But

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when Garrick first played Macbeth there were good reasons why the reform to be introduced by Macklin at a later date could not be attempted. Mr. Jackson, the actor from Edinburgh, who wrote a history of the Scottish stage, records that, being engaged at Drury Lane, he had resolved to make his first appearance in the part of Young Norval, in the tragedy of "Douglas." He writes: "I had provided for the purpose, before I left Edinburgh, a Highland dress, accoutred *cap-a-pie* with a broadsword, shield, and dirk, found upon the field of Culloden. But here, as usual, fresh impediment arose Lord Bute's administration, from causes unnecessary here to enter upon, was become so unpleasing to the multitude, that anything confessedly Scotch awakened the embers of discussion, and fed the flame of party. Mr. Garrick therefore put a direct negative at once upon my appearance in 'Douglas;' 'Oroonoko' was substituted in its place; for even to have performed the play of 'Douglas' would have been hazardous, and to have exhibited the Highland dress upon the stage, imprudence in the extreme. Could I have supposed, at that period," asks Mr. Jackson—his book bears date 1793—"that I should live to see the tartan plaid universally worn in the politest circles, and its colours the predominating fashion among all ranks of the people in the metropolis?" What with the predisposition of the audience in favour of the conventional court suit, and afterwards their prejudice against the Scotch, on account of the '45 and Lord Bute, Garrick could hardly have assumed tartan in "Macbeth." A picture by Dawes represents him in the battle-scenes of the play as wearing a sort of Spanish dress—slashed trunks, a breastplate, and a high-crowned hat!

Macbeth, indeed, was never "dressed" agreeably to the taste of antiquarian critics, until the ornate revivals of the tragedy by Mr. Phelps, at Sadler's Wells, in 1847, and by Mr. Charles Kean, at the Princess's Theatre, some five years later. The costumes were of the eleventh century on each of these occasions, Mr. Phelps's version of the play being so strictly textual, that the musical embellishments, usually attributed to Locke, but in truth supplied by Leveridge, were discarded for the first time for very many years. Lady Macduff was restored to the list of *dramatis personae*, from which she had so long been banished, and the old stage direction in the last scene—"enter Macduff with Macbeth's head upon a pole," was implicitly followed. But these revivals were a consequence of earlier reproductions of Shakespeare, with rigid regard to accuracy of costume, and general completeness of decoration. John Kemble had taken certain important steps in this direction, and his example had been bettered by his brother Charles, under whose management of Covent Garden, "King John" was produced, the costumes being supervised by Mr. Planche, and every detail of the representation receiving most attentive study. Great success

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attended this experiment, although, in the first instance, there had prevailed a strong inclination to deride as “stewpans” the flat-topped helmets worn by King John and his barons. After this, accuracy of costume, especially in relation to the plays of Shakespeare, became the favourite pursuit of managers. Mr. Macready ventured upon various revivals, archaic and decorative, at Covent Garden and Drury Lane; Mr. Phelps followed suit at Sadler’s Wells, and Mr. Charles Kean at the Princess’s, until it seemed that correctness of attire, and splendour of scenery and appointments, could no further be carried; indeed, alarm arose lest the drama should perish altogether under the weight of upholstery and wardrobe it was doomed to bear. Already the art of acting, in its more heroic aspects, had undergone decline; there was danger of the player sinking to the level of a mere dummy or lay-figure for the exhibition of costly raiment.

Still, these luxurious illustrated editions of Shakespeare were attractive and popular, although it is probable that the audience esteemed them less for their archaeological merits than on account of their charms as spectacles. Indeed, few in the theatre could really be supposed to prize the cut of a tunic, or the shape of a headdress, or to possess such minute information as enabled them to appraise the worth, in that respect, of the entertainment set before them. However, pages from the history of costume were displayed, indisputable in their correctness, and those who listed might certainly gather instruction. Here was to be seen King John in his habit as he lived; here appeared the second and third Richards, King Henry, Queen Katherine, and Wolsey; now was presented London, with its inhabitants in the Middle Ages; now, the Venice of Shylock; and, anon, the Bithynia of the days of King Leontes. The spectators applauded the finery and the skill of the embellishments; and their favourable verdict upon these counts carried with it, presumably, approval of the players, and, perhaps, a measure of homage to Shakespeare.

The passion for extreme decoration, in relation both to scenery and dresses, has not known abatement of late years, though it has sought other subjects than those supplied by Shakespeare—most unwittingly; for never could the poet have even dreamed of such a thing as “a correct and superb” revival. But the question, as to the benefit done to histrionic art by these representations, remains much where it was. To revert to the shortcomings of the Elizabethan stage would be, of course, impossible; the imaginations of the audience would now steadily refuse to be taxed to meet the absence of scenery, the incongruity of costumes, and the other deficiencies of the early theatre. Some degree of accuracy our modern playgoers would demand, if they disdained or disregarded minute correctness. Certainly, there would be dissatisfaction if a player, assuming the part of King Henry VIII., for instance, neglected to present some resemblance

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to the familiar portraits of the king by Holbein. Yet the same audience would be wholly undisturbed by anachronisms touching the introduction of silken stockings, or velvet robes, the pattern of plate armour, or the fashion of weapons. After all, what is chiefly needed to preserve theatrical illusion is a certain harmony of arrangement, which shall be so undemonstratively complete as to escape consideration; no false notes must be struck to divert attention from the designs of the dramatist and from his interpreters, the players; and to these the help derived from scenery and dresses should always be subordinated. Yet, when has the theatre been thus ordered, or have audiences been so disciplined? Beaumont, probably, had good reason for writing to Fletcher, concerning a performance of his "Faithful Shepherdess"—

> Nor want they those who as the boy doth dance
> Between the acts, will censure the whole play;
> Some like if the wax lights be new that day;
> But multitudes there are whose judgment goes
> Headlong according to the actors' clothes.

The playgoers of Garrick's time, and long afterwards, were habituated to the defective system of theatrical costume—had grown up with it. To them it was part of the stage as they had always known it, and they saw no reason for fault-finding. And it is conceivable that many plays were little affected by the circumstance that the actors wore court suits. It was but a shifting of the period of the story represented, a change of venue; and Romeo, in hair-powder, interested just as much as though he had assumed an auburn wig. The characters were, doubtless, very well played, and the actors appeared, at any rate, as "persons of quality." In historical plays one would think the objection to anachronism much more obvious; for there distinct events and personages and settled dates were dealt with. But there was an understanding that stage costume was purely a conventional matter—and so came to be tolerated most heterogeneous dressing: the mixing together of the clothes of almost all centuries and all countries, in a haphazard way, just as they might be discovered heaped up in a theatrical wardrobe. It was not a case of simple anachronism; it was compound and conflicting. Still, little objection was offered.

And even a critic above quoted, writing in 1759, and proposing greater accuracy in the costumes of historical plays, refrains from suggesting that comedy should be as strictly treated. He even advances the opinion that the system of dress in vogue at the date of the play's production should be disregarded according to "the fluctuations of fashion." "What should we think," he demanded, "of a Lord Foppington now dressed with a large full-bottomed wig, laced cravat, buttons as large as apples, or a Millament with a headdress four storeys high?" And there is something to be said for this view. The writer of comedy pictures manners, and these do

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not change immediately. His portraits remain recognisable for a generation, probably. Lord Foppington had descendants, and his likeness, with certain changes of dress, might fairly pass for theirs for some time. But, of course, the day must arrive when the comedy loses value as a reflection of manners; it is interesting as a transcript of the past, but not of the present. It is doubtless difficult to fix this date with preciseness; but when that has been accomplished the opportunity of the antiquarian costumier has arrived.

Macklin, who reformed the costume of Macbeth, also, it should be recorded, was the first actor who "dressed Iago properly." It seems that formerly the part was so attired, or "made up," that Iago's evil nature was "known at first sight; but it is unnatural to suppose that an artful villain like him would choose a dress which would stigmatise him to everyone. I think," adds the critic, "that as Cassio and he belong to one regiment they should both retain the same regimentals." By way of final note on the subject is subjoined the opinion of the author of "Vivian Grey," recorded in that work touching the dress that should be worn by Othello. "In England we are accustomed to deck this adventurous Moor in the costume of his native country—but is this correct? The Grand Duke of Reisenberg thought not. Othello was an adventurer; at an early age he entered, as many foreigners did, into the service of Venice. In that service he rose to the highest dignities—became general of her armies and of her fleets; and finally the viceroy of her favourite kingdom. Is it natural to suppose that such a man should have retained, during his successful career, the manners and dress of his original country? Ought we not rather to admit that, had he done so, his career would in fact not have been successful? In all probability he imitated to affectation the manners of the country which he had adopted. It is not probable that in such, or in any age, the turbaned Moor would have been treated with great deference by the common Christian soldier of Venice—or, indeed, that the scandal of a heathen leading the armies of one of the most powerful of European states, would have been tolerated for an instant by indignant Christendom.... Such were the sentiments of the Grand Duke of Reisenberg on this subject, a subject interesting to Englishmen; and I confess I think they are worthy of attention. In accordance with his opinion, the actor who performed Othello appeared in the full dress of a Venetian magnifico of the Middle Ages: a fit companion for Cornaro, or Grimani, or Barberigo, or Foscari."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HARLEQUIN AND CO.

What is called the "legitimate drama" has always found in pantomime just such a rival and a relative as Gloucester's lawfully-begotten son Edgar was troubled with in the person of his base-born brother Edmund. The authentic professor of histrionic art may

even have been addressed occasionally by his illicit opponent in something like Edmund's very words:

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Why bastard? wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base? with baseness? with bastardy? base, base?
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land;
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to the legitimate: fine word "legitimate."

The antagonism between the two forms of entertainment is by no means of to-day merely. Shakespeare noted with an air of regret that "inexplicable dumb shows and noise" enjoyed public admiration in his day, and, centuries before, the audiences of the ancient actors underwent reduction by reason of the rival performances of the dancers, mimes, and mountebanks of the period. The Roman people began in time to care less for the comedians than for the mimes. Some of these had the art to represent an entire play, such as the "Hercules Furens," to the delight and astonishment of the spectators. Augustus is said to have reconciled the Romans to many severe imposts by recalling their favourite mime and dancer, Pylades, who had been banished for pointing with his finger at a spectator who had offended him. The "dumb shows" referred to by Hamlet, however, were not so much distinct entertainments as excrescences upon the regular performances of the theatre, interpolations to win the applause of the groundlings. Pantomime proper was a development of ballet; the result of an endeavour to connect one dance with another by means of a slight string of story. In England systematised entertainments of dancing and singing were brought upon the English stage by Davenant, "to check," we are told, "the superiority enjoyed by the royal comedians in their exhibition of the regular drama." English singing, however, had declined in public favour when the taste for Italian opera arose here about the close of the seventeenth century, and dancing became then the only feasible counter-attraction to the regular drama. The first ballets were produced at small cost; but by-and-by the managers increased more and more their expenditure on account of the dancers, until the rival theatres were compared to candidates at an election, competing in bribery to secure "a majority of the multitude." Cibber, while defending himself against Pope's attack upon him in "The Dunciad," admitted that he had not virtue enough to starve by opposing the public, and pleaded guilty to the charge of having as a manager produced very costly ballets and spectacles. At the same time he condemned the taste of the vulgar, avowed himself as really on the side of truth and justice, and compared himself to Henry IV. of France changing his religion in compliance with the wishes of his people!

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Hitherto the ballets had dealt exclusively with mythological subjects, and nothing of the Italian element comprised in modern pantomime had been apparent in our stage performances. It is probable that even upon their first introduction to our theatre the real significance of the characters of ancient Italian comedy was never wholly comprehended by the audience. Few could have then cared to learn that types of national or provincial peculiarity, representatives of Venice, Bologna, Naples, and Bergamo, respectively, were intended by the characters of Pantaloon, the Doctor, Scapin, and Harlequin. Yet, in the first instance, the old Italian comedy was brought upon the English stage with some regard for its original integrity, and the characters were personated by regular actors rather than by mimes. So far back as 1687 Mrs. Behn's three-act farce of "The Emperor of the Moon" was produced, and in this appeared the characters of Harlequin and Scaramouch, who play off many tricks and antics, while there are parts in the play corresponding with the pantaloon, the lover, and the columbine of more modern pantomime. But at this date, and for some years, harlequin was not merely the sentimentalist, attitudiniser, and dancer he has since become. He was true to his Italian origin, and very much the kind of harlequin encountered on his native soil and described by Addison: "Harlequin's part is made up of blunders and absurdities; he is to mistake one name for another, to forget his errands, and to run his head against every post that appears in his way." Marmontel describing, however, the harlequin of the French stage, writes: "His character is a mixture of ignorance, simplicity, cleverness, stupidity, and grace; he is a kind of sketch of a man, a tall child, yet with gleams of reason and wit, and all whose mistakes and follies have something arch about them. The true mode of representing him is to give him suppleness, agility, the playfulness of a kitten, with a certain grossness of appearance, which renders his conduct more absurd; his part is that of a patient, faithful valet, always in love, always in hot water, either on his master's or his own account, troubled and consoled as easily as a child, and whose grief is as entertaining as his joy."

It will be observed that the character thus described more nearly resembles the modern clown than the modern harlequin, and the early harlequins of the English stage were therefore naturally played by the low comedians of the time. The harlequin of Mrs. Behn's farce was personated by an actor named Jevon, who was followed in the part by Pinkethman, a comedian much commended by Steele in "The Tatler." Pinkethman was found so amusing in his motley coat, and what Cibber calls "that useless unmeaning mask of a black cat," that certain of his admirers fancied that much of the drollery and spirit of his grimace must be lost by the concealment of his face. Yielding to their request, therefore, he played one

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night without his mask. But the result was disappointing. “Pinkethman,” it is recorded, “could not take to himself the shame of the character without being concealed; he was no more harlequin; his humour was quite disconcerted; his conscience could not with the same effrontery declare against nature without the cover of that unchanging face. Without that armour his courage could not come up to the bold strokes that were necessary to get the better of common-sense.”

Early in the eighteenth century the characters of the Italian comedy were introduced into ballets. Harlequin ceased to speak, and assumed by degrees a more romantic, a less comic air, and the peculiarities of modern pantomime were gradually approached. Rich, the manager of the theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields and afterwards of Covent Garden—-the “immortal Rich” of “The Dunciad”—became famous for his pantomimes, and under the name of Lun acquired great distinction as a harlequin. Pope handles severely the taste of the town in regard to pantomimes, and the excessive expenditure incurred on account of them. “Persons of the first quality in England” were accused of attending at these representations twenty and thirty times in a season. The line “Lo! one vast egg produces human race,” had reference to the trick, introduced by Rich, of hatching harlequin out of a large egg. This was regarded as a masterpiece of dumb show, and is described in glowing terms by a contemporary writer. “From the first clipping of the egg, his receiving motion, his feeling the ground, his standing upright, to his quick harlequin trip round the empty shell, through the whole progression, every limb had its tongue and every motion a voice.” Rich was also famed for his “catching a butterfly” and his “statue scene;” his “taking leave of columbine” was described as “graceful and affecting;” his trick of scratching his ear with his foot like a dog was greatly admired; while in a certain dance he was said to execute 300 steps in a rapid advance of three yards only. A writer in *The World* (1753) ironically recommended the managers to dispense entirely with tragedy and comedy, and to entertain the town solely with pantomime, people of taste and fashion having given sufficient proof that they thought it the highest entertainment the stage was capable of affording—“the most innocent we are sure it is, for where nothing is said and nothing meant very little harm can be done.” Garrick, it was fancied, might start a few objections to this proposal; “but,” it was added, “with those universal talents which he so happily possesses, it is not to be doubted but he will in time be able to handle the wooden sword with as much dignity and dexterity as his brother Lun.”

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Possibly harlequin became a mute, in the first instance, to suit the limited capacity in the matter of elocution of some such performer as Rich; or the original dumbness of the harlequinade figures may be attributable to the strictness with which of old the theatres, unprotected by patents, were prohibited from giving *spoken* entertainments. What were then called the "burletta houses" were permitted performances of dancing, singing, tumbling, juggling—anything, indeed, but *speech* unaccompanied by music. The popularity of these performances was beyond question, however, and, in time, the mute drove the speaking harlequin from the stage: the great theatres probably copying the form of pantomimes of the minor houses, as they were by-and-by also induced to follow the smaller stages in the matter of their melodramas and burlettas.

The comic "openings" known to modern times had no place in Rich's pantomimes. These were divided into two parts, the first being devoted to scenic surprises and magical transformations of a serious nature, and the last to all kinds of comic antics, tumbling and dancing. No allusions to passing events or the follies of the day were, however, introduced.

Harlequin lost his place as the chief member of the pantomime troop, when the part of clown was entrusted to the famous Grimaldi, "the Garrick of clowns," as Theodore Hook called him. This great comic artist devised the eccentric costume still worn by clowns—the original whiteness of the Pierrot's dress being used as a groundwork upon which to paint variegated spots, stars, and patches; and nearly all the "comic business" of modern harlequinades is of his invention. The present dress of the harlequin dates from the beginning of the century only. Until then the costume had been the loosely fitting parti-coloured jacket and trousers to be seen worn by the figures in Watteau's masquerade subjects. In the pantomime of "Harlequin Amulet; or, The Magic of Mona," produced at Drury Lane in 1800, Mr. James Byrne, the ballet-master, the father of the late Mr. Oscar Byrne, appeared as harlequin in "a white silk shape, fitting without a wrinkle," into which the coloured silk patches were woven, the whole being profusely covered with spangles, and presenting a very sparkling appearance. The innovation was not resisted, but was greatly applauded, and Mr. Byrne's improved attire is worn by all modern harlequins.

Some eighty years ago John Kemble, addressing his scene-painter in reference to a forthcoming pantomime, wrote: "It must be *very short, very laughable*, and *very cheap*." If the great manager-actor's requirements were fairly met, it is certain that the entertainment in question was of a kind very different to the pantomime of our day—a production that is invariably very long, rarely laughable, and always of exceeding costliness. Leigh Hunt complained in 1831 that pantomimes were not what they had been, and that the

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opening, “which used to form merely a brief excuse for putting the harlequinade in motion,” had come to be a considerable part of the performance. In modern pantomime it may be said that the opening is everything, and that the harlequinade is deferred as long as possible. “Now the fun begins,” used to be the old formula of the playbills announcing the commencement of the harlequinade, or what is still known in the language of the theatre as the “comic business.” Perhaps experience proved that in point of fact “the fun” did not set in at the time stated; at any rate the appearance of harlequin and clown is now regarded by many of the spectators as a signal for the certain commencement of dreariness, and as a notice to quit their seats. The pantomime Kemble had in contemplation, however, was of the fashion Leigh Hunt looked back upon regretfully. Harlequin was to enter almost in the first scene. “I have hit on nothing I can think of better,” writes Kemble, “than the story of King Arthur and Merlin, and the Saxon Wizards. The pantomime might open with the Saxon witches lamenting Merlin’s power over them, and forming an incantation by which they create a harlequin, who is supposed to be able to counteract Merlin in all his designs for the good of King Arthur. If the Saxons came on in a dreadful storm, as they proceeded in their magical rites, the sky might brighten and a rainbow sweep across the horizon, which, when the ceremonies are completed, should contract itself from either end and form the figure of harlequin in the heavens; the wizards may fetch him down how they will, and the sooner he is set to work the better. If this idea for producing a harlequin is not new do not adopt it.”

The main difficulty of pantomime-writers at this time seems to have been the contriving of some new method of bringing harlequin upon the scene. Now he was conjured up from a well, now from a lake, out of a bower, a furnace, &c.; but it was always held desirable to introduce him to the spectators as early as might be. In Tom Dibdin’s pantomime of “Harlequin in his Element; or, Fire, Water, Earth, and Air,” produced at Covent Garden in 1807, the first scene represents “a beautiful garden, with terraces, arcades, fountains,” &c. The curtain “rises to a soft symphony.” Aurino, the Genius of Air, descends on a light cloud; Aquina, the Spirit of Water, rises from a fountain; Terrena, the Spirit of Earth, springs up a trap; and Ignoso, the Genius of Fire, descends amid thunder from the skies. These characters interchange a little rhymed dialogue, and discuss which of them is the most powerful. Ignoso is very angry, and threatens his associates. Terrena demands:

Fire, why so hot? Your bolts distress not me,
  But injure the fair mistress of these bowers,
Whose sordid guardian would her husband be,
For lucre, not for love.
  Rather than quarrel, let us use our powers,
And gift with magic aid some active sprite,
To foil the guardian and the girl to right.

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The proposition is agreed to, and thereupon, according to stage direction, “Harlequin is produced from a bed of parti-coloured flowers, and the magic sword is given to him.” He is addressed by each of the spirits in turn. Then we read: “Ignoso sinks. Aquina strikes the fountains; they begin playing. Terrena strikes the ground; a bed of roses appears. Harlequin surveys everything, and runs round the stage. Earth sinks in the bed of roses, and Water in the fountains. Air ascends in the car. Columbine enters dancing; is amazed at the sight of Harlequin, who retires from her with equal surprise; they follow each other round the fountain in a *pas de deux*. They are surprised by the entrance of Columbine’s guardian, who comes in preceded by servants in rich liveries. Clown, as his running footman, enters with a lap-dog. Old man takes snuff; views himself in a pocket-glass. Clown imitates him; old man sees Harlequin and Columbine, and pursues them round the fountains, but the lovers go off, followed by Sir Amoroso and servants.” The lovers are pursued through some sixteen scenes, till the fairies unite them in the Temple of the Elements. At this time, it is to be noted, the last scene held that place as a spectacle which is now enjoyed by the transformation scene. Throughout the pantomime the relations of Clown and Pantaloon, or Sir Amoroso, the guardian (he is called by these titles indifferently), as master and servant are carefully preserved.

Although in “Harlequin in his Element” there appears little answering to the modern “opening,” and no “transformation” of the characters, yet both these peculiarities are to be discovered in the famous pantomime of “Mother Goose,” which was presented to the town a year sooner, and was the work of the same author. In “Mother Goose” there are four opening scenes and fifteen of harlequinade—the pantomime of to-day generally reversing this arrangement of figures. Colin, a young peasant, is changed to Harlequin; Collinette, his mistress, to Columbine; Squire Bugle to Clown; and Avaro, an old miser, to Pantaloon. In the harlequinade are scenes of Vauxhall Gardens, and the exterior of St. Dunstan’s Church, Fleet Street, with a crowd assembled to see the figures strike the bell (these figures were subsequently removed to the Marquis of Hertford’s villa, in the Regent’s Park), a grocer’s shop and post-office, an inn, a farm-yard, &c.; while many of the tricks are identical with those still delighting holiday audiences; but the allusions to political events and current topics, so dear to modern purveyors of burlesque and pantomime, have no place in the entertainment. The doggerel and songs of the opening are without puns or pretensions of a comic kind, and must certainly be described as rather dull reading.

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Without doubt the modern pantomime opening owes much of its form to modern burlesque and extravaganza, of which the late Mr. Planche may be regarded as the inventor. Mr. Planche's first burlesque was produced at Drury Lane in 1818, and was called "Amoroso, King of Little Britain." "The *author*!" wrote a fierce critic in "Blackwood"—"but even the shoeblacks of Paris call themselves *marchands de cirage*!" Mr. Planche had compensation, however. His burlesque was quoted in a leading article in *The Times*; the King of Little Britain's address to his courtiers, "My lords and gentlemen—get out!" was alluded to in relation to a royal speech dissolving Parliament. "Amoroso" was a following of "Bombastes Furioso." But, by-and-by, Mr. Planche was to proceed to "Pandora," "Olympic Revels," "Riquet with the Tuft," and other productions, the manner and character of which have become identified with his name. Gradually he created a school of burlesque-writers indeed; but his scholars at last rebelled against him and "barred him out," a fate to which schoolmasters have been often liable. Still burlesque of the worthy Planche form, and of the spuriously imitative kind, which copied, and at the same time degraded him, grew and throve, and at last invaded the domains of pantomime. "Openings" fell into the hands of burlesque-writers, their share in the pantomime work ceasing with the transformation scene; punning rhymes and parodies, and comic dances, delayed the entrance of clown and harlequin, till at last their significance and occupation seem almost to have gone from them. The old language of gesture, with perhaps the occasional resort to a placard to supplement and interpret the "dumb motions" of the performers (a concession to, or an evasion of the old prohibition of speech in the "burletta houses"), vanished from the stage. The harlequinade characters ceased to take part in the opening, and that joy to youthful cunning of detecting the players of the later scenes in the disguises of their earlier presentment—harlequin, by the accidental revelation of parti-colour and spangles, and clown by the chance display of his motley trunk and hose—was gone for ever. Smart young ladies in the blonde wigs, the very curt tunics, the fleshings and the high heels of burlesque, appeared in lieu of these; and the spectacle of the characters in the opening loosening tapes and easing buttons in good time to obey the behest of the chief fairy, and transform themselves for harlequinade purposes, became an obsolete and withdrawn delight.

Yet what were called "speaking pantomimes," that is, pantomimes supplied to an unusual extent with spoken matter, were occasionally produced in times not long past. Hazlitt mentions, only to condemn however, an entertainment answering to this description. It was called "Shakespeare *versus* Harlequin," and was played in 1820. It would seem to have been a revival of a production of David Garrick's. "It is called

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a speaking pantomime," writes Hazlitt; "we had rather it had said nothing. It is better to act folly than to talk it. The essence of pantomime is practical absurdity keeping the wits in constant chase, coming upon one by surprise, and starting off again before you can arrest the fleeting 'phantom:' the essence of this piece was prosing stupidity remaining like a mawkish picture on the stage, and overcoming your impatience by the force of *ennui*. A speaking pantomime such as this one is not unlike a flying waggon," &c. &c.

"Harlequin *versus* Shakespeare" was generally voted dreary and a failure. Of another "speaking pantomime," called "Harlequin Pat and Harlequin Bat; or, The Giant's Causeway," produced at Covent Garden in 1830, Leigh Hunt writes: "A speaking pantomime is a contradiction in terms. It is a little too Irish. It is as much as to say: 'Here you have all dumb-show talking.' This, to be sure, is what made Grimaldi's talking so good. It was so rare and seasonable that it only proved the rule by the exception. The clowns of late speak too much. To keep on saying at every turn, 'Hallo!' or 'Don't!' or 'What do you mean?' only makes one think that the piece is partly written and not written well." We may note that Mr. Tyrone Power, the famous Irish comedian, appeared as harlequin in this pantomime, assisted by a skilled "double" to accomplish the indispensable attitudinising, dancing, and jumping through holes in the wall. Power abandoned his share in the performance after a few nights, however, and the part was then undertaken by Mr. Keeley, and subsequently by Mr. F. Matthews.

Gradually, speaking was to be heard more and more in pantomimes; and some forty years ago an attempt was made to invest this form of theatrical entertainment with peculiar literary distinction. In 1842 the staff of *Punch*, at that time very strong in talent, provided Covent Garden with a pantomime upon the subject of King John and Magna Charta. The result, however, disappointed public expectation. *Punch* was not seen to advantage in his endeavour to assume the guise of harlequin. At a later date, Mr. Keeley, at the Lyceum, produced a fairy extravaganza of the Planche pattern, called "The Butterfly's Ball," and tacked on to it several "comic scenes" for clown and pantaloon. The experiment was not wholly successful in the first instance; but by degrees the burlesque leaven affected the pantomimic constitution, and pantomimes came to be what we find them at present. The custom of interrupting the harlequinade by the exhibition of dioramic views, at one time contrived annually by Clarkson Stanfield, expired about thirty years ago; as a substitute for these came the gorgeous transformation scenes, traceable to the grand displays which were wont to conclude Mr. Planche's extravaganzas at the Lyceum Theatre, when under the management of Madame Vestris. Mr. Planche has himself described how the scene-painter

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came by degrees to take the dramatist's place in the theatre. "Year after year Mr. Beverley's powers were taxed to outdo his former outdoings. The last scene became the first in the estimation of the management. The most complicated machinery, the most costly materials were annually put into requisition, until their bacon was so buttered it was impossible to save it. As to me, I was positively painted out. Nothing was considered brilliant but the last scene. Dutch metal was in the ascendant." This was some years ago. But any change that may have occurred in the situation has hardly been for the better. The author ousted the mute; and now the author, in his turn, is overcome by the scene-painter, the machinist, and the upholsterer.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"GOOSE."

The bird which saved the Capitol has ruined many a play. "Goose," "to be goosed," "to get the big-bird," signifies to be hissed, says the "Slang Dictionary." This theatrical cant term is of ancient date. In the induction to Marston's comedy of "What You Will," 1607, it is asked if the poet's resolve shall be "struck through with the blirt of a goose breath?" Shakespeare makes no mention of goose in this sense, but he refers now and then to hissing as the playgoers' method of indicating disapproval. "Mistress Page, remember you your cue," says Ford's wife in "The Merry Wives of Windsor." "I warrant thee," replies Mistress Page, "if I do not act it, hiss me!" In the Roman theatres it is well known that the spectators pronounced judgment upon the efforts of the gladiators and combatants of the arena by silently turning their thumbs up or down, decreeing death in the one case and life in the other. Hissing, however, even at this time, was the usual method of condemning the public speaker of distasteful opinions. In one of Cicero's letters there is record of the orator Hortensius, "who attained old age without once incurring the disgrace of being hissed." The prologues of Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher frequently deprecate the hissing of the audience.

But theatrical censure, not content with imitating the goose, condescended to borrow from another of the inferior animals—the cat. Addison devoted one of his papers in "The Spectator" to a Dissertation upon Catcalls. In order to make himself master of his subject, he professed to have purchased one of these instruments, though not without great difficulty, "being informed at two or three toy-shops that the players had lately bought them all up." He found that antiquaries were much divided in opinion as to the origin of the catcall. A fellow of the Royal Society had concluded, from the simplicity of its make and the uniformity of its sound, that it was older than any of the inventions of Jubal. "He observes very well that musical instruments took their first rise from the notes of birds and other melodious animals, 'and what,' says he, 'was more natural than for the first

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ages of mankind to imitate the voice of a cat that lived under the same roof with them?' He added that the cat had contributed more to harmony than any other animal; as we are not only beholden to her for this wind instrument, but for our string music in general." The essayist, however, is disposed to hold that the catcall is originally a piece of English music. "Its resemblance to the voice of some of our British songsters, as well as the use of it, which is peculiar to our nation, confirms me in this opinion." He mentions that the catcall has quite a contrary effect to the martial instrument then in use; and instead of stimulating courage and heroism, sinks the spirits, shakes the nerves, curdles the blood, and inspires despair and consternation at a surprising rate. "The catcall has struck a damp into generals, and frightened heroes off the stage. At the first sound of it I have seen a crowned head tremble, and a princess fall into fits." He concludes with mention of an ingenious artist who teaches to play on it by book, and to express by it the whole art of dramatic criticism. "He has his bass and his treble catcall: the former for tragedy, the latter for comedy; only in tragi-comedies they may both play together in concert. He has a particular squeak to denote the violation of each of the unities, and has different sounds to show whether he aims at the poet or the player," &c.

The conveyance of a catcall to the theatre evidences a predisposition to uproarious censure. Hissing may be, in the nature of impromptu criticism, suddenly provoked by something held to be offensive in the representation; but a playgoer could scarcely have armed himself with a catcall without a desire and an intention of performing upon his instrument in any case. Of old, audiences would seem to have delighted in disturbance upon very light grounds. Theatrical rioting was of common occurrence. The rioters were in some sort a disciplined body, and proceeded systematically. Their plan of action had been previously agreed upon. It was a rule that the ladies should be politely handed out of the theatre before the commencement of any violent acts of hostility; and this disappearance of the ladies from among the audience was always viewed by the management as rather an alarming hint of what might be expected. Then wine was sent for into the pit, the candles were thrown down, and the gentlemen drew their swords. They prepared to climb over the partitions of the orchestra and to carry the stage by assault. Now and then they made havoc of the decorations of the house, and cut and slashed the curtains, hangings, and scenery. At Drury Lane, in 1740, when a riot took place in consequence of the non-appearance of Madame Chateauneuf, a favourite French dancer, a noble marquis deliberately proposed that the theatre should be fired, and a pile of rubbish was forthwith heaped upon the stage in order to carry into effect this atrocious suggestion. At the Haymarket Theatre, in 1749, the audience, enraged

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at the famous Bottle Conjurer hoax, were incited by the Culloden Duke of Cumberland to pull down the house! The royal prince stood up in his box waving his drawn sword, which someone, however, ventured to wrest from his grasp. The interior fittings of the theatre were completely destroyed; the furniture and hangings being carried into the street and made a bonfire of, the curtain surmounting the flaming heap like a gigantic flag. A riot at the Lincoln's Inn Fields, in 1721, led to George I.'s order that in future a guard should attend the performances. This was the origin of the custom that long prevailed of stationing sentries on either side of the proscenium during representations at the patent theatres. Of late years the guards have been relegated to the outside of the buildings. On the occasion of state visits of royalty to the theatre, however—-although these are now, perhaps, to be counted among things of the past—Beefeaters upon the stage form an impressive part of the ceremonial.

Theatrical rioting has greatly declined in violence, as well it might, since the O.P. saturnalia of disturbance, which lasted some sixty-six nights at Covent Garden Theatre in 1809. Swords were no longer worn, but the rioters made free use of their fists, called in professional pugilists as their allies, and in addition to catcalls, armed themselves with bells, post-horns, whistles, and watchmen's rattles. The O.P. riots may be said to have abolished the catcall, but they established "goose." Captures of the rioters were occasionally made by Brandon, the courageous box-office keeper, and they were charged at Bow Street Police Court with persistent hissing, with noisily crying "Silence!" and with "unnatural coughing." The charges were not proceeded with, but one of the accused, Mr. Clifford, a barrister, brought an action against Brandon for false imprisonment. In this case the Court of King's Bench decided that, although the audience in a public theatre have a right to express the feelings excited at the moment by the performance, and in this manner to applaud or hiss any piece which is represented, or any performer; yet if a number of persons, having come to the theatre with a predetermined purpose of interrupting the performance, for this end make a great noise so as to render the actors inaudible, though without offering personal violence or doing injury to the house, they are in law guilty of a riot. Serjeant Best, the counsel for the plaintiff, urged that, as plays and players might be hissed, managers should be liable to their share; they should be controlled by public opinion; Garrick and others had yielded cheerfully to the jurisdiction of the pit without a thought of appealing to Westminster Hall. "Bells and rattles," added the serjeant, "may be new to the pit; but catcalls, which are equally stunning, are as old as the English drama." Apparently, however, the catcall, its claim to antiquity notwithstanding, was not favourably viewed by the

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court. In summing up, Chief Justice Mansfield observed: "I cannot tell on what grounds many people think they have a right, at a theatre, to make such a prodigious noise as to prevent others hearing what is going forward on the stage. Theatres are not absolute necessaries of life, and any person may stay away who does not approve of the manner in which they are managed. If the prices of admission are unreasonable, the evil will cure itself. People will not go, and the proprietors will be ruined, unless they lower their demand. If the proprietors have acted contrary to the conditions of the patent, the patent itself may be set aside by a writ of *scire facias* in the Court of Chancery." To the great majority of playgoers it probably occurred that hissing was a simpler and more summary remedy of their grievances and relief to their feelings than any the Court of Chancery was likely to afford. In due time, however, came free trade in the drama and the abolition of the special privileges and monopolies too long enjoyed by the patent theatres.

After the failure of his luckless farce, "Mr. H.," Charles Lamb wrote to Wordsworth: "A hundred hisses (hang the word! I wrote it like *kisses*—how different!), a hundred hisses outweigh a thousand claps. The former come more directly from the heart." The reception of the little play had been of a disastrous kind, and Lamb, sitting in the front row of the pit, is said to have joined in condemning his own work, and to have hissed and hooted as loudly as any of his neighbours. "I had many fears; the subject was not substantial enough. John Bull must have solider fare than a letter. We are pretty stout about it; have had plenty of condoling friends; but, after all, we had rather it should have succeeded. You will see the prologue in most of the morning papers. It was received with such shouts as I never witnessed to a prologue. It was attempted to be encored.... The quantity of friends we had in the house—my brother and I being in public offices, &c.—was astonishing, but they yielded at last to a few hisses." "Mr. H." could probably in no case have achieved any great success, but it may be that its failure was precipitated by the indiscreet cordiality of its author's "quantity of friends." They were too eager to express approbation, and distributed their applause injudiciously. The pace at which they started could not be sustained. As Monsieur Auguste, the famous *chef des claqueurs* at the Paris Opera House, explained to Doctor Veron, the manager, "*Il ne fallait pas trop chauffer le premier acte; qu'on devait, au contraire, reserver son courage et ses forces pour enlever le dernier acte et le denoument*." He admitted that he should not hesitate to award three rounds of applause to a song in the last act, to which, if it had occurred earlier in the representation, he should have given one round only. Lamb's friends knew nothing of this sound theory of systematised

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applause. They expended their ammunition at the commencement of the struggle, and when they were, so to say, out of range. It was one of Monsieur Auguste's principles of action that public opinion should never be outraged or affronted; it might be led and encouraged, but there should be no attempt to drive it. "Above all things, respect the public," he said to his subordinates. Nothing so much stimulates the disapprobation of the unbiassed as extravagant applause. Reaction certainly ensues; men begin to hiss by way of self-assertion, and out of self-respect. They resent an attempt to coerce their opinion, and to compel a favourable verdict in spite of themselves. The attempt to encore the prologue to "Mr. H." was most unwise. It was a strong prologue, but the play was weak. The former might have been left to the good sense of the general public; it was the latter that especially demanded the watchful support of the author's friends. The infirm need crutches, not the robust. The playbills announced, "The new farce of 'Mr. H.,' performed for the first time last night, was received by an overflowing audience with universal applause, and will be repeated for the second time to-morrow." Such are playbills. "Mr. H." never that morrow saw. "'Tis withdrawn, and there's an end of it," wrote Lamb to Wordsworth.

Hissing is no doubt a dreadful sound—a word of fear unpleasing to the ear of both playwright and player. For there is no revoking, no arguing down, no remedying a hiss; it has simply to be endured. Playgoers have a giant's strength in this respect; but it must be said for them, that of late years at any rate, they have rarely used it tyrannously, like a giant. Of all the dramatists, perhaps Fielding treated hissing with the greatest indifference. In 1743, his comedy of "The Wedding Day" was produced. Garrick had in vain implored him to suppress a scene which he urged would certainly endanger the success of the piece. "If the scene is not a good one, let them find it out," said Fielding. As had been foreseen, an uproar ensued in the theatre. The actor hastened to the green-room, where the author was cheering his spirits with a bottle of champagne. Surveying Garrick's rueful countenance, Fielding inquired: "What's the matter? Are they hissing me now?" "Yes, the very passage I wanted you to retrench. I knew it wouldn't do. And they've so horribly frightened me I shall not be right again the whole night." "Oh," cried the author, "I did not give them credit for it. So they have found it out, have they?" Upon the failure of his farce of "Eurydice," he produced an occasional piece entitled "Eurydice Hissed," in which Mrs. Charke, the daughter of Colley Cibber, sustained the part of Pillage, a dramatic author. Pillage is about to produce a new play, and one of his friends volunteers to "clap every good thing till I bring the house down." "That won't do," Pillage sagaciously replies; "the town of its own accord will applaud what they like; you must stand by me when they dislike. I don't desire any of you to clap unless when you hear a hiss. Let that be your cue for clapping." Later in the play three gentlemen enter, and in Shakespearean fashion discuss in blank verse the fate of Pillage's production.

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THIRD GENTLEMAN. Oh friends, all's lost! Eurydice is damned.

SECOND GENTLEMAN. Ha! damned! A few short moments past I came
From the pit door and heard a loud applause.

THIRD GENTLEMAN. 'Tis true at first the pit seemed greatly pleased,
And loud applauses through the benches rang;
But as the plot began to open more
(A shallow plot) the claps less frequent grew,
Till by degrees a gentle hiss arose;
This by a catcall from the gallery
Was quickly seconded: then followed claps;
And 'twixt long claps and hisses did succeed
A stern contention; victory being dubious.
So hangs the conscience, doubtful to determine
When honesty pleads here, and there a bribe.

* * * * *

But it was mighty pleasant to behold
When the damnation of the farce was sure,
How all those friends who had begun the claps
With greatest vigour strove who first should hiss
And show disapprobation.

Surely no dramatist ever jested more over his own discomfiture. In publishing "Eurydice" he described it as "a farce, as it was d—d at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane." This was a following of Ben Jonson's example, who, publishing his "New Inn," makes mention of it as a comedy "never acted, but most negligently played by some of the king's servants, and more squeamishly beheld and censured by others the king's subjects, 1629; and now, at last, set at liberty to the readers, his majesty's servants and subjects, to be judged of, 1631."

There is something pathetic in the way Southerne, the veteran dramatist, in 1726, bore the condemnation of his comedy of "Money the Mistress," at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. The audience hissed unmercifully. Rich, the manager, asked the old man, as he stood in the wings, "if he heard what they were doing?" "No, sir," said Southerne calmly, "I'm very deaf." On the first representation of "She Stoops to Conquer," a solitary hiss was heard during the fifth act at the improbability of Mrs. Hardcastle, in her own garden, supposing herself forty miles off on Crackskull Common. "What's that?" cried Goldsmith, not a little alarmed at the sound. "Psha! doctor," replied Colman, "don't be afraid of a squib when we have been sitting these two hours on a barrel of gunpowder." Goldsmith is said never to have forgiven Colman his ill-timed pleasantry. The hiss seems to have been really a solitary and exceptional one. It was ascribed by

one journal to Cumberland, by another to Hugh Kelly, and by a third, in a parody on "Ossian," to Macpherson, who was known to be hostilely inclined towards Johnson and all his friends. The disapprobation excited by the capital scene of the bailiffs in Goldsmith's earlier comedy, "The Good-natured Man," had been of a more general and alarming kind, however, and was only appeased by the omission of this portion

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of the work. Goldsmith suffered exquisite distress. Before his friends, at the club in Gerrard Street, he exerted him greatly to hide the fact of his discomfiture; chatted gaily and noisily, and even sang his favourite comic song with which he was wont to oblige the company only on special occasions. But alone with Johnson he fairly broke down, confessed the anguish of his heart, burst into tears, and swore he would never write more. The condemnation incurred by "The Rivals," on its first performance, led to its being withdrawn for revision and amendment. In his preface to the published play Sheridan wrote: "I see no reason why an author should not regard a first-night's audience as a candid and judicious friend attending, in behalf of the public, at his last rehearsal. If he can dispense with flattery, he is sure at least of sincerity, and even though the annotation be rude, he may rely upon the justness of the comment." This is calm and complacent enough, but he proceeds with some warmth: "As for the little puny critics who scatter their peevish strictures in private circles, and scribble at every author who has the eminence of being unconnected with them, as they are usually spleen-swoln from a vain idea of increasing their consequence, there will always be found a petulance and illiberality in their remarks, which should place them as far beneath the notice of a gentleman, as their original dulness had sunk them from the level of the most unsuccessful author." This reads like a sentence from "The School for Scandal."

In truth, hissing is very hard to endure. Lamb treated the misfortune of "Mr. H." as lightly as he could, yet it is plain he took his failure much to heart. In his letter signed Semel-Damnatus, upon "Hissing at the Theatres," he is alternately merry and sad over his defeat as a dramatist. "Is it not a pity," he asks, "that the sweet human voice which was given man to speak with, to sing with, to whisper tones of love in, to express compliance, to convey a favour, or to grant a suit—that voice, which in a Siddons or a Braham rouses us, in a siren Catalani charms and captivates us—that the musical expressive human voice should be converted into a rival of the noises of silly geese and irrational venomous snakes? I never shall forget the sounds on my night!" He urges that the venial mistake of the poor author, "who thought to please in the act of filling his pockets, for the sum of his demerits amounts to no more than that," is too severely punished; and he adds, "the provocations to which a dramatic genius is exposed from the public are so much the more vexatious as they are removed from any possibility of retaliation, the hope of which sweetens most other injuries; for the public never writes itself." He concludes with an account, written in an Addisonian vein, of a club to which he had the honour to belong. "There are fourteen of us, who are all authors that have been once in our lives what is called 'damned.'

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We meet on the anniversaries of our respective nights, and make ourselves merry at the expense of the public.... To keep up the memory of the cause in which we suffered, as the ancients sacrificed a goat, a supposed unhealthy animal, to AEsculapius, on our feast-nights we cut up a goose, an animal typical of the popular voice, to the deities of Candour and Patient Hearing. A zealous member of the society once proposed that we should revive the obsolete luxury of viper-broth; but, the stomachs of some of the company rising at the proposition, we lost the benefit of that highly salutary and antidotal dish."

It is to be observed that when a play is hissed there is this consolation at the service of those concerned: they can shift the burden of reproach. The author is at liberty to say: "It was the fault of the actors. Read my play, you will see that it did not deserve the cruel treatment it experienced." And the actor can assert: "I was not to blame. I did but speak the words that were set down for me. My fate is hard—I have to bear the burden of another's sins." And in each case these are reasonably valid pleas. In the hour of triumph, however, it is certain that the author is apt to be forgotten, and that the lion's share of success is popularly awarded to the players. For the dramatist is a vague, impalpable, invisible personage; whereas the actor is a vital presence upon the scene; he can be beheld, noted, and listened to; it is difficult to disconnect him from the humours he exhibits, from the pathos he displays, from the speeches he utters. Much may be due to his own merit; but still his debt to the dramatist is not to be wholly ignored. The author is applauded or hissed, as the case may be, by proxy. But altogether it is perhaps not surprising that the proxy should oftentimes forget his real position, and arrogate wholly to himself the applause due to his principal.

High and low, from Garrick to the "super," it is probably the actor's doom, for more or less reasons, at some time or another, to be hissed. He is, as Members of Parliament are fond of saying, "in the hands of the house," and may be ill-considered by it. Anyone can hiss, and one goose makes many. Lamb relates how he once saw Elliston, sitting in state, in the tarnished green-room of the Olympic Theatre, while before him was brought for judgment, on complaint of prompter, "one of those little tawdry things that flirt at the tails of choruses—the pertest little drab—a dirty fringe and appendage of the lamp's smoke—who, it seems, on some disapprobation expressed by a 'highly respectable' audience, had precipitately quitted her station on the boards and withdrawn her small talents in disgust. 'And how dare you,' said the manager, 'how dare you, madam, without a notice, withdraw yourself from your theatrical duties?' 'I was hissed, sir.' 'And you have the presumption to decide upon the taste of the town?' 'I don't know that, sir, but I will never stand to be hissed,' was the rejoinder of Young Confidence. Then, gathering up his features into one significant mass of wonder, pity, and expostulatory indignation—in a lesson never to have been lost upon a creature less forward than she who stood before him—his words were these: 'They have hissed ME!'"

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It is understood that this argument failed in its effect, for, after all, a hiss is not to be in such wise excused or explained away; its application is far too direct and personal. “Ladies and gentlemen, it was not I that shot the arrow!” said Braham to his audience, when some bungling occurred in the course of his performance of William Tell, and the famous apple remained uninjured upon the head of the hero’s son. If derision was moved by this bungling, still more did the singer’s address and confession excite the mirth of the spectators. To another singer, failure, or the dread of failure, was fraught with more tragic consequence. For some sixteen years Adolphe Nourritt had been the chief tenor of the Paris Opera House. He had “created” the leading characters in “Robert,” “Les Huguenots,” “La Juive,” “Gustave,” and “Masaniello.” He resigned his position precipitately upon the advent of Duprez. The younger singer afflicted the elder with a kind of panic. The news that Duprez was among his audience was sufficient to paralyse his powers, to extinguish his voice. He left France for Italy. His success was unquestionable, but he had lost confidence in himself; a deep dejection settled upon him, his apprehension of failure approached delirium. At last he persuaded himself that the applause he won from a Neapolitan audience was purely ironical, was but scoffing ill-disguised. At five in the morning, on the 8th of March, 1839, he flung himself from the window of an upper floor, and was picked up in the street quite dead. Poor Nourrit! he was a man of genius in his way; but for him there would have been no grand duet in the fourth act of “Les Huguenots,” no cavatina for Eleazar in “La Juive;” and to his inventiveness is to be ascribed the ballet of “La Sylphide,” which Taglioni made so famous.

It is odd to hear of an actor anxious for “goose,” and disappointed at not obtaining it. Yet something like this happened once during the O.P. riots. Making sure that there would be a disturbance in the theatre, Mr. Murray, one of John Kemble’s company, thought it needless to commit his part to memory; he was so certain that he should not be listened to. But the uproar suddenly ceased; there was a lull in the storm. The actor bowed, stammered, stared, and was what is called in the language of the theatre “dead stuck.” However, his mind was soon at ease; to do him justice the audience soon hissed him to his heart’s content, and perhaps even in excess of that measure. Subsequently he resolved, riot or no riot, to learn something of his part.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

EPILOGUES.

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Epilogues went out of fashion with pigtails, the public having at last decided that neither of these appendages was really necessary or particularly ornamental; but a considerable time elapsed before this opinion was definitively arrived at. The old English moralities or moral plays usually concluded, as Mr. Payne Collier notes, with an epilogue in which prayers were offered up by the actors for the king, queen, clergy, and sometimes for the commons; the latest instance of this practice being the epilogue to a play of 1619, "Two Wise Men and All the Rest Fools." "It resteth now," says the "epiloguiser," "that we render you very humble and hearty thanks, and that all our hearts pray for the king and his family's enduring happiness, and our country's perpetual welfare. *Si placet, plaudite.*" So also the dancer entrusted with the delivery of the epilogue to Shakespeare's "Second Part of King Henry IV." may be understood as referring to this matter, in the concluding words of his address: "My tongue is weary; when my legs are too, I will bid you good-night: and so kneel down before you—but, indeed, to pray for the queen." And to this old custom of loyal prayer for the reigning sovereign has been traced the addition of the words, "Vivat rex," or "Vivat regina," which were wont to appear in the playbills, until quite recent times, when our programmes became the advertising *media* of the perfumers.

The main object of the epilogue, however, was as Massinger has expressed it in the concluding address of his comedy, "Believe as you List"—

> The end of epilogues is to inquire
> The censure of the play, or to desire
> Pardon for what's amiss;

and as Theseus states the matter in "The Midsummer Night's Dream:" "No epilogue, I pray you, for your play needs no excuse." Sometimes a sort of bluntness of speech was affected, as in the epilogue to one of Beaumont and Fletcher's comedies:

> Why there should be an epilogue to a play
> I know no cause. The old and usual way
> For which they were made was to entreat the grace
> Of such as were spectators. In this place
> And time, 'tis to no purpose; for I know,
> What you resolve already to bestow
> Will not be altered, whatsoe'er I say
> In the behalf of us, and of the play;
> Only to quit our doubts, if you think fit,
> You may or cry it up or silence it.

It was in order, no doubt, the more to conciliate the audience that epilogues assumed, oftentimes, a playfulness of tone that would scarcely have been tolerated in the case of prologues. The delivery of an epilogue by a woman (i.e. by a boy playing the part of a woman) was clearly unusual at the time of the first performance of "As You Like It." "It is

not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue," says Rosalind; "but it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue. If it be true that good wine needs no bush, 'tis true that

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a good play needs no epilogue. Yet to good wine they do use good bushes; and good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues." There can be little doubt that all Shakespeare's plays were originally followed by epilogues, although but very few of these have been preserved. The only one that seems deficient in dignity, and therefore appropriateness, is that above quoted, spoken by the dancer, at the conclusion of "The Second Part of King Henry IV." In no case is direct appeal made, on the author's behalf, to the tender mercies of the audience, although the epilogue to "King Henry VIII." seems to entertain misgivings as to the fate of the play:

> 'Tis ten to one this play can never please
> All that are here. Some come to take their ease,
> An act or two; but those we fear,
> We have frighted with our trumpets; so, 'tis clear
> They'll say, 'tis naught: others to hear the city
> Abused extremely and to cry—*that's witty!*
> Which we have not done neither; that, I fear,
> All the expected good we're like to hear
> For this play at this time is only in
> The merciful construction of good women:
> For such a one we showed them.

Prospero delivers the epilogue to "The Tempest;" and the concluding lines of "The Midsummer Night's Dream," and of "All's Well that Ends Well"—which are not described as epilogues, and should, perhaps, rather be viewed as "tags"—are spoken by Puck and the King. The epilogues to "King Henry V." and "Pericles" are of course spoken by the Chorus and Gower, respectively, who, throughout those plays, have favoured the spectators with much discourse and explanation. "Twelfth Night" terminates with the clown's nonsense song, which may be an addition due less to the dramatist than to the comic actor who first played the part.

The epilogues of the Elizabethan stage, so far as they have come down to us, are, as a rule, brief and discreet enough; but, after the Restoration, epilogues acquired greater length and much more impudence, to say the least of it, while they clearly had gained importance in the consideration of the audience. And now it became the custom to follow up a harrowing tragedy with a most broadly comic epilogue. The heroine of the night—for the delivering of epilogues now devolved frequently upon the actresses—-who, but a few moments before, had fallen a most miserable victim to the dagger or the bowl, as the case might be, suddenly reappeared upon the stage, laughing, alive, and, it may be said, kicking, and favoured the audience with an address designed expressly, it would seem, so to make their cheeks burn with blushes that their recent tears might the sooner be dried up. It is difficult to conceive now that certain of the prologues and epilogues of Dryden and his contemporaries could ever have been delivered, at any

time, upon any stage. Yet they were assuredly spoken, and often by women, apparently to the complete satisfaction

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of the playgoers of the time. But, concerning the scandalous condition of the stage of the Restoration, there is no need to say anything further. The ludicrous epilogue, which has been described as the unnatural tacking of a comic tale to a tragical head, was certainly popular, however, and long continued so. It was urged, “that the minds of the audience must be refreshed, and gentlemen and ladies not sent away to their own homes with too dismal and melancholy thoughts about them.” Certain numbers of “The Spectator” were expressly devoted to the discussion of this subject, in the interest, it is now apparent, of Ambrose Philips, who had brought upon the stage an adaptation of Racine’s “Andromaque,” and who enjoyed the zealous friendship of Addison and Steele. To the tragedy of “The Distressed Mother,” as it was called, which can hardly have been seen in the theatre since the late Mr. Macready, as Orestes, made his first bow to a London audience in 1816, an epilogue had been added which had the good fortune to be accounted the most admirable production of its class. Steele, under the signature of “Physibulus,” wrote to describe his visit to Drury Lane, in company with his friend Sir Roger, to witness the new performance. “You must know, sir, that it is always my custom, when I have been well entertained at a new tragedy, to make my retreat before the facetious epilogue enters; not but that these pieces are often very well written, but, having paid down my half-crown, and made a fair purchase of as much of the pleasing melancholy as the poet’s art can afford me, or my own nature admit of, I am willing to carry some of it home with me, and cannot endure to be at once tricked out of all, though by the wittiest dexterity in the world.” He describes Sir Roger as entering with equal pleasure into both parts, and as much satisfied with Mrs. Oldfield’s gaiety as he had been before with Andromache’s greatness; and continues: “Whether this were no more than an effect of the knight’s peculiar humanity, pleased to find that, at last, after all the tragical doings, everything was safe and well, I do not know; but, for my own part, I must confess I was so dissatisfied, that I was sorry the poet had saved Andromache, and could heartily have wished that he had left her stone dead upon the stage. I found my soul, during the action, gradually worked up to the highest pitch, and felt the exalted passion which all generous minds conceive at the sight of virtue in distress.... But the ludicrous epilogue in the close extinguished all my ardour, and made me look upon all such achievements as downright silly and romantic.” To this letter a reply, signed “Philomedes,” appeared in “The Spectator” a few days later, expressing, in the first place, amazement at the attack upon the epilogue, and calling attention to its extraordinary success. “The audience would not permit Mrs. Oldfield to go off the stage the first night till she had repeated it twice; the second night, the

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noise of the *ancoras* was as loud as before, and she was obliged again to speak it twice; the third night it was still called for a second time, and, in short, contrary to all other epilogues, which are dropped after the third representation of the play, this has already been repeated nine times." "Philomedes" then points out that, although the prologue and epilogue were real parts of ancient tragedy, they are on the English stage distinct performances, entirely detached from the play, and in no way essential to it. "The moment the play ends," he argues, "Mrs. Oldfield is no more Andromache, but Mrs. Oldfield; and though the poet had left Andromache 'stone dead upon the stage' ... Mrs. Oldfield might still have spoken a merry epilogue;" and he refers to the well-known instance of Nell Gwynne, in the epilogue to Dryden's tragedy of "Tyrannic Love," "where there is not only a death but a martyrdom," rising from the stage upon which she was supposed to be lying stone dead—an attempt having been made to remove her by those gentlemen "whose business it is to carry off the slain in our English tragedies"—-and breaking out "into that abrupt beginning of what was a very ludicrous but at the same time thought a very good epilogue:

> "Hold! are you mad? you damned confounded dog,
> I am to rise and speak the epilogue!"

"This diverting manner," "Philomedes" proceeds, "was always practised by Mr. Dryden, who, if he was not the best writer of tragedies in his time, was allowed by everyone to have the happiest turn for a prologue or an epilogue." And he further cites the example of a comic epilogue known to be written by Prior, to the tragedy of "Phaedra and Hippolita," Addison having supplied the work with a prologue ridiculing the Italian operas. He refers also to the French stage: "Since everyone knows that nation, who are generally esteemed to have as polite a taste as any in Europe, always close their tragic entertainment with what they call a *petite piece*, which is purposely designed to raise mirth and send away the audience well pleased. The same person who has supported the chief character in the tragedy very often plays the principal part in the *petite piece*; so that I have myself seen at Paris Orestes and Lubin acted the same night by the same man."

This famous epilogue to "The Distressed Mother" is spoken by Andromache, and opens with the following lines, which are certainly flippant enough:

> I hope you'll own that with becoming art
> I've played my game and topped the widow's part!
> My spouse, poor man, could not live out the play,
> But died commodiously on his wedding-day;
> While I, his relict, made, at one bold fling,
> Myself a princess, and young Sty a king.

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Of this address the reputed author was Eustace Budgell, of the Inner Temple, whose name is usually found printed in connection with it—“the worthless Budgell,” as Johnson calls him—“the man who calls me cousin,” as Addison used contemptuously to describe him. In Johnson’s Life of Ambrose Philips, however, it is stated that Addison was himself the real author of the epilogue, but that “when it had been at first printed with his name he came early in the morning, before the copies were distributed, and ordered it to be given to Budgell, that it might add weight to the solicitation which he was then making for a place.” It is probable, moreover, that Addison was not particularly anxious to own a production which, after all, was but a following of an example so questionable as Prior’s epilogue to “Phaedra,” above mentioned. The controversy in “The Spectator” was, without doubt, a matter of pre-arrangement between Addison and Steele, for the entertainment of the public and the increase of the fame of Philips; and the letter of “Philomedes,” which with the epilogue in question has been often ascribed to Budgell, was probably also the work of Addison. For all the rather unaccountable zeal of Addison and Steele on behalf of their friend, however, the reputation of Philips has not thriven; he is chiefly remembered now by the nickname of Namby-Pamby, bestowed on him by Pope, who had always vehemently contested his claims to distinction. As Johnson states the case: “Men sometimes suffer by injudicious kindness; Philips became ridiculous, without his own fault, by the absurd admiration of his friends, who decorated him with honorary garlands which the first breath of contradiction blasted.” Johnson, by-the-way, had at the age of nineteen written a new epilogue to “The Distressed Mother,” for some young ladies who designed an amateur performance of that still-admired tragedy. The epilogue was intended to be delivered by “a lady who was to personate the ghost of Hermione.”

But although protests were now and then, as in the case of “The Distressed Mother,” raised against the absurdity of the custom, comic epilogues to tragic plays long remained in favour with the patrons of the stage. Pointed reference to this fact is contained in the epilogue spoken by the beautiful Mrs. Hartley to Murphy’s tragedy of “Alzuma,” produced at Covent Garden in 1773:

Our play is o’er; now swells each throbbing breast
With expectation of the coming jest.
By Fashion’s law, whene’er the Tragic Muse
With sympathetic tears each eye bedews;
When some bright Virtue at her call appears.
Waked from the dead repose of rolling years;
When sacred worthies she bids breathe anew,
That men may be what she displays to view;
By fashion’s law with light fantastic mien
The Comic Sister trips it o’er the scene;
Armed at all points with wit and wanton wiles,
Plays off her airs, and calls forth all her smiles;

Till each fine feeling of the heart be o’er,
And the gay wonder how they wept before!

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To Murphy's more famous tragedy of "The Grecian Daughter," Garrick supplied an epilogue, which commences:

The Grecian Daughter's compliments to all;
Begs that for Epilogue you will not call;
For leering, giggling, would be out of season,
And hopes by me you'll hear a little reason, &c.

The epilogue to Home's tragedy of "Douglas" is simply a remonstrance against the employment of "comic wit" on such an occasion:

An Epilogue I asked; but not one word
Our bard will write. He vows 'tis most absurd
With comic wit to contradict the strain
Of tragedy, and make your sorrows vain.
Sadly he says that pity is the best
And noblest passion of the human breast;
For when its sacred streams the heart o'erflow
In gushes pleasure with the tide of woe;
And when its waves retire, like those of Nile,
They leave behind them such a golden soil
That there the virtues without culture grow,
There the sweet blossoms of affection blow.
These were his words; void of delusive art
I felt them; for he spoke them from his heart.
Nor will I now attempt with witty folly
To chase away celestial melancholy.

Apart from the epilogues that pertained to particular plays, and could hardly be detached from them, were the "occasional epilogues," written with no special relevancy to any dramatic work, but rather designed to be recitations or monologue entertainments, that could be delivered at any time, as managers, players, and public might decide. Garrick, who highly esteemed addresses of the class, was wont, in the character of "a drunken sailor," to recite a much-admired "occasional epilogue." Early comedians, such as Joe Haines and Pinkethman, now and then entered upon the scene, "seated upon an ass," to deliver "an occasional epilogue," with more mirthful effect. Extravagances of this kind have usually been reserved for benefit-nights, however. In Tom Brown's works, 1730, there is a print of Haines, mounted on an ass, appearing in front of the stage, with a view of the side boxes and pit. An "occasional epilogue" was delivered in 1710, by Powell and Mrs. Spiller, "on the hardships suffered by lawyers and players in the Long Vacation."

For some years before their extinction, epilogues had greatly declined in worth, although their loss of public favour was less apparent. They were in many cases

wretched doggerel, full of slang terms and of impertinence that was both coarse and dull. With a once famous epilogue-writer—Miles Peter Andrews, who was also a dramatist, although, happily, his writings for the stage have now vanished completely—-Gifford deals severely in his “Baviad.” “Such is the reputation this gentleman has obtained for epilogue writing, that the minor poets of the day, despairing of emulating, are now only solicitous of assisting him—happy if they can obtain admission for a couplet or two into the body of his immortal works, and thus secure to themselves a small portion of that popular applause so lavishly and so justly bestowed on everything that bears the signature of Miles Andrews!” A few lines make havoc of quite a covey of “bards” of that period:

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Too much the applause of fashion I despise;
For mark to what 'tis given and then declare,
Mean though I am, if it be worth my care.
Is it not given to Este's unmeaning dash,
To Topham's fustian, Colman's flippant trash,
To Andrews' doggerel, when three wits combine,
To Morton's catchword, Greathead's idiot line,
And Holcroft's Shug Lane cant, and Merry's Moorfields whine, &c.

Criticism was not mealy-mouthed in Gifford's day.

The "tag" appears to be following the epilogue to oblivion; for though it is difficult to differentiate them, the tag must not be confused with the epilogue, or viewed as merely an abbreviated form of it. As a rule, the epilogue was divided from the play by the fall of the curtain, although this could hardly have been the case in regard to the epilogue mentioned above, delivered by "Mrs. Ellen," as Dryden calls her, after the tragedy of "Tyrannic Love." But the tag is usually the few parting words addressed by the leading character in a play, before the curtain descends upon it, to "our kind friends in front," entreating their applause. The final *couplets* of a French vaudeville, it may be noted, usually contained an appeal of this kind; otherwise, tags, and epilogues are alike eschewed upon the French stage. But this "coming forward" of the player, to deliver his tag, is a practice of old date. The concluding speech in Massinger's "New Way to Pay Old Debts," addressed to the audience, and commencing—

Nothing wants then
But your allowance—and in that our all
Is comprehended—

is, according to the old stage direction, to be spoken by Wellborn "coming forward." So also Cozimo is directed to "come forward," to address to the audience the last lines of "The Great Duke of Florence."

Epilogues have rarely been employed as supplementary acts, continuing and completing the action of a play, as prologues in modern times have been converted into introductory chapters, explanatory of events to be presently exhibited upon the scene. Yet the interminable drama of "Marie Antoinette," by Signor Paolo Giacometti, in which Madame Ristori was wont to perform, presents an instance of this kind. "Marie Antoinette" is in five acts, with a prologue exhibiting the queen's life at Versailles, in 1786, and an epilogue showing her imprisonment in the Conciergerie, and her march to the guillotine in the custody of Samson the executioner.

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The epilogue spoken, the entertainments are indeed terminated. The audience move from their seats towards the portals of the playhouse. The lights are being extinguished; the boxes are about to be covered over with brown-holland draperies; the prompter has closed his book and is thinking of moving homewards.

It remains for us only to interchange “Good-byes”—and to separate.

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THE END.