THE LIFE AND ENTERPRISES OF ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON, COMEDIAN.

BY GEORGE RAYMOND,

AUTHOR OF "DRAFTS FOR ACCEPTANCE," ETC. ETC.

"Joyousest of once embodied spirits!"
"I judged him, with no after-repentance, to be a person with whom it would be a felicity to be more acquainted."—CHARLES LAMB: *Elliston.*

Illustrated by George Cruikshank and "Phiz."

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PREFACE.

THE mere circumstantial account of an actor's professional career, however celebrated he might have been, would scarcely be deemed a subject of general interest, at this precise moment. The social world is less occupied in the matter of plays, and has less sympathy with players, than in past days, and the drama forms not so distinct and leading a feature in popular enjoyment as it once did.

True it is, playhouses are open and frequented; but this is not altogether our question. The drama, in its nobler form, is neither studied nor represented, nor have modern Societies any honours in store for dramatic distinction. How strange and out of date would now appear the expression of Sir Richard Steele: "Nothing makes a man so popular," says he, "as the authorship of a new play;" —few things, in our day, attract so little notice.

The slight which attaches to the inventive claim must in equal degree await the ministers of its effects. The graces of the actor are cramped in the shrunken measure of degenerate taste, and he must be content to take only such rewards as an unsupported school of art may offer him.

The "old times" were at least "good," in this respect, by so far differing from our own, and to such an extent do we eagerly hope in their return; when "to see a good

play, will be to keep the best company," and when the sayings and doings of the stage professor may secure a place in our regard, consequent on the intellectual delight derived from exhibitions of his art.

From these observations, it will be inferred that a mere history of a professional life is not the entire purpose of these Memoirs. The material we have to deal with offers pleasanter promise; for the history of Robert William Elliston was verily a mingled yarn, in which, though the "actor" might have been the main fibre, yet the twistings were of such divers hues and quality; a career of so much variety in adventure,—so much eccentricity in purpose,—so much was there in it of the "Rover or the Strolling Gentleman," on the very stage of life itself, that we would fain believe some general account of him would form no unacceptable addition to the "harmless stock of public amusement."

Diversified in his employments, sudden in his operations, we find him, at one time, flying off at a "*Tangent*," to become the centre of some circulating-library, and at another, the vertex of some Academic Institute. "He carried with him," says Lamb, "pit, boxes and gallery, and set up his portable playhouse at the corner of streets." By the turn of his magic ring, he will transport himself from place to place, at the suggestion of a moment, and with the wand of harlequin, erect ballrooms, fill shops with merchandise, and string playhouses together like beads upon a thread! In fact, he was a perpetual showman of the extra-ordinary in manners, which, with his perception of the humorous and love of adventure, constituted him an attractive feature in the round of life, and gained him greater applause, perhaps, for the moment, than that acquired by others who were moving more

steadily in the orbit of decorum. Never shall we find Elliston in repose: his lamp is perpetually exhausting; his imagination constantly under the blow-pipe: "*Urit fulgore suo*," and the result—early extinction.

It has been said of Mrs. Mattocks, that had she been educated a nun, it would have required no great penetration to perceive she was born for an actress: had Elliston been cradled in Paraguay, it would have been equally clear he must have found his way to Drury Lane.

Suited to the adventurous days of Killigrew and Sidney, the name of Elliston would have glittered with no inconsiderable effect on the pages of Count Hamilton, or have occupied a liberal space in the delightful records of Cibber. He who would have been a feature in those days, has some claim to be striking in ours; and as certain frailties will necessarily be glanced at, which in that earlier age were the fashion of the time, it is yet hoped sufficient eccentricities will be offered to amuse, without dwelling on outrages which might offend.

One little anecdote, highly characteristic of the man, we beg here to insert, on the authority of the late Sir John M'Mahon. In 1821, the King wished to give some directions respecting his own box at Drury Lane Theatre, and Elliston was commanded to be in attendance at Carlton House. His Majesty having expressed his desires on the subject, the manager was about to retire, when the King, condescendingly, added his wishes for the lessee's success in his theatrical government; on which Elliston, by one of those strange impulses so peculiar to him, replied: "If *you*, sir, are *loyal*, I must obtain a triumph." This was the regal style which Lamb so delightfully commemorated in him.

Truly may we say, Elliston was born a full century too late. The same qualities which in his own time lost him frequently the respect of the humble, would in that day have won him the admiration of the great; with the advantage of being chronicled as a wit, rather than remembered as a dupe. As a citizen of modern times, his reputation must suffer; but as an actor on the mimic scene, there was perhaps no period, since the first dawn of comedy in England, in which he would not have been accounted accomplished; justifying the whole attribute of the Muse, "*Imitatio vitæ, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis.*"

In person, Elliston was of the middle size and well proportioned: his countenance the very Mirror of Comedy. His face was round, his features small yet highly expressive;—laughter lay cradled in his eye; and there was a noticeable play of lip so pregnant of meaning, as frequently to leave the words that followed but little to explain. He displayed the art of tenderness and persuasion more strikingly than any actor of his time. There was a warmth—a glow of colouring in all his impersonations which constantly pleased. Nothing crude or unripe was of his gathering; all was mature and yielding—sometimes eccentric, but never exaggerated.

His assumption of filial piety or conjugal devotion was most touching: in the latter there was no "confessing and avoiding," as though half in awe of the very sentiment committed to him; but earnest and ardent, his advances admitted of no appeal—whilst his accents, as Cibber has declared of Montford—

> "Like flakes of feathered snow,
> They melted as they fell."

His quality in art was not in the possession of any one faculty pre-eminently, but rather in the participation of all, in harmonious proportion. "The elements so mixed in him," that he shared, in a great measure, the sprightliness of Garrick, the melody of Barry, the polish of O'Brien, and the manly bearing of the younger Kemble. He had attained, indeed, that high elevation in art which takes captive at once the ear, the eye, and the understanding.

The greater part of the material from which the present volume is composed (which might be termed, rather, *Anecdote* Memoirs, than a complete Life), was supplied by the late Mr. Winston, a faithful friend to Elliston, and for many years so entirely in his confidence that, in fact, nothing was concealed from him.

The letters and correspondence in connection with Elliston's earlier life, had been preserved by himself, and so passed into the hands of his representatives; while in respect of documents relative to his latter days, we are indebted to the industry and research of Mr. Winston,—a kind of Theatrical "Rushworth"—always collecting, and especially in any particular relative to the acts and doings of the Manager of Drury Lane Theatre.

Some anecdotes will be found inserted on the sole authority of popular report; in which, if the genuineness cannot be entirely proved, the *vraisemblance*, will at least be admitted.

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LIFE

OF

ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON.

"If to inflame
The noble youth with an ambitious heat,
T'endure the frosts of danger and of death,
By glorious undertakings, may deserve
Reward or favour from the commonwealth,—
ACTORS may put in for as large a share
As all the sects of the philosophers."

MASSINGER—"*The Roman Actor.*"

PERIOD THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON was born on the 7th of April, 1774, in Orange Street, Bloomsbury, where his father, Robert Elliston, resided and carried on the mystery of a watchmaker.

He (the father) was the *youngest* son of a respectable farmer of Gedgrave, near Orford, on the Suffolk coast.

The *elder* brother was in the navy, and had attained the rank of commander when he died. He shared, we are informed, in the glory of the action of August, 1759, at that time a lieutenant, when Admiral Boscawen defeated the French fleet off Gibraltar.

The *eldest* brother, William, was a member of St. John's College, Cambridge; he received his degree in 1754, with the distinction of fourth Wrangler, and was elected master of Sidney College in 1760.

Their sister, aunt to the subject of these Memoirs, was married to the Rev. Thomas Martyn, also of Sidney College, who succeeded the Rev. John Martyn in the professor's chair of botany, in 1761.

It may not be uninteresting to notice another venerable member of the family stock—Robert Elliston, of Monk's Ileigh, or Ely, in the county of Suffolk; great-uncle to the subject of these Memoirs. He had resided, his whole life, namely, eighty-six years, like *Edward Ballard*, of Little Britain, in the same house in which he was born; a fine, hale, hearty old yeoman, whose death

was at last the result of accident—a severe fall. This event was rendered the more remarkable, as the old gentleman had been in the habit of saying, he had been told by a "cunning man" that accidental death alone would balk him of a century.

Robert, the watchmaker, appears to have been the least interesting personage in the whole family group, except, indeed, in being the sire of our future hero. He was a man of indolent habits and low pursuits; so that whatever little skill he might have acquired in the management of clocks, he sadly wanted a regulator to his own conduct. From extravagance he passed to niggardness; that *sera in fumdo parsimonia*, displacing one vice by another.

Dr. Elliston having for some time noticed with much anxiety, the state of affairs in Orange-street, and remarked on various occasions early indications of quickness and intelligence in the youth, his nephew, determined to take his education altogether into his own hands, an offer which it is not to be supposed met with any opposition on the part of the irregular watchmaker, and certainly acknowledged with much gratitude by the boy himself.

In pursuance of this, young Elliston was in a short time entered at St. Paul's School, and his father removing about the same period to Charles-street, Covent-garden, afforded the son more suitable means of domestic comfort; for during the school months the boy still lodged with his parents, his uncle being on no account desirous of alienating filial respect from the breast of his pupil, and more particularly as the mother was a quiet and well-conditioned woman.

The holidays, however, the young gentleman passed with either his uncle Elliston or Martyn—generally the former; in winter at Cambridge, and during the summer in his company on any excursion the Doctor might be making in the long vacation. The youth thus became so great a favourite at Sidney Lodge, that the master never parted with him on his return to St. Paul's without a secret wish he might be too late for the coach.

It was the intention of the Doctor to enter his nephew a member of his own college, with a view that he might ultimately take holy orders. He perceived him daily to

give further demonstrations of ability and intelligence, and amongst his humbler accomplishments, that of reading impressively. On many occasions, but invariably on the Sunday evening, the Doctor would assemble his household to hear his nephew deliver some selected discourse : Barrow, was the great author,—and the consciousness of excelling in this particular, was perhaps not the least delight the young man experienced in these spiritual exercises.

It is a custom at our public schools to observe certain anniversaries, by speeches delivered by the upper boys before their assembled friends.

At Westminster the plays of Terence are acted ; bu in most other public schools, this "speech day" is but a dull, monotonous, antiquated piece of business. Some classic oration, committed laboriously to memory, mistily understood, and mechanically recited, is the *coup d'essai* of the eventful year, and the intellectual treat to some three or four hundred well-dressed persons after a long and dusty journey.

It is, however, beyond all doubt, that the first time our young friend became animated with a sense of his own powers, on oratorical grounds, was on one of these anniversaries at St. Paul's, when, to the confusion of the presiding master, Dr. Roberts, he presumed to win some genuine tokens of applause, by mixing a little of the Drury Lane ingredient.

It would be scarcely fair to fix on this trifling incident the great sin of that change which soon passed over the spirit of the schoolboy's dream ; but it was not long from this event that our young declaimer was seized with an inordinate desire for theatrical pursuits—a disease which is seldom taken mildly, but when once contracted, has no remedy but to run its course.

In the upper part of a pastrycook's house, in the Strand, resided a Madame Cotterillc, who conducted there an "Evening Academy"—a lady enjoying great respect amongst the world of mothers in the parishes of St. Martin and St. Anne.

It was here young Elliston passed many of his half-

holidays, receiving parenthetically Madame's instruction in the French language. It was here, also, he first met the inimitable Charles Mathews, son of a bookseller of that neighbourhood; an occurrence which eventually turned out greatly to their mutual congratulation; for, independently of their emulation in the tongue of Wanostrocht's grammar, far more extensive parts of speech were now opened to their ambition, under the same roof and patronage.

Madame Cotterille, by way of improving her scholars in the *French* language, allowed them, once or twice in the year, to enact *English* plays,—a philological compromise very quietly assented to by her auditors, who were composed of the mothers, aunts, and guardians of her pupils. Young Elliston was now invaluable. Generously did he liquidate his debt to Wanostrocht by the funds of Otway; nor did he hesitate paying a still severer penalty, by undergoing a frequent flogging at St. Paul's, for a protracted rehearsal in the Strand.

In December of the same year, he and his co-disciple Matthews made their first appearance before a closely-packed audience over the pastrycook's shop.

The play was the "Distrest Mother"—Elliston sustaining the part of *Pyrrhus*—Matthews, *Phœnix;* and we are bound to confess, "by the kind permission of Mr. Mathews" himself, that the hero of our Memoir was the undeniable hero of that night—a report which might otherwise have been deemed a *puff*, recollecting the place whence it proceeded. But such, indeed, was the result; the evening passing off with unbounded satisfaction, in which ices, jellies, lemonade, and raspberry-tarts, by no means played an inconsiderable part.

After some months, another *jam* took place at the pastrycook's, when the tragedy of the "Orphan" was represented to fresh raptures of the old party. Elliston on this occasion played *Chamont*, and his friend Mathews the part of the *Chaplain*. The cook's house was verily an oven. Robert William was now twice a hero, reaping in the contest "whole fields of laurel" Caressed by the elderly ladies, and in special favour with the young, this

enfant gaté abandoned himself entirely to the flattering bondage he had so closely courted. All other pursuits were neglected, and nearly all other ties forgotten. With the enraptured *Nell* he exclaimed, "I dreamt last night I went to heaven, and this is it!"

Elliston was now in the nightly habit of attending theatres, and witnessing the best efforts of acting. His ambition by this time, had grown too bulky for the first-floor of the pastrycook's; and though he ever recollected with rapture the scenic glories he had there participated, and the softer dalliance he had perhaps wholly engrossed, yet was he naturally desirous of showing his quality before a more enlightened auditory than the rusty relatives of Madame Cotterille's scholars.

He consequently took part in sundry private representations at the Lyceum Rooms, where he at once became the leading tragedian. *Young Norval* and *Pierre*, characters which he frequently repeated before some of the leading wits of the town, placed him at the head of all unprofessional aspirants.

Our youthful adventurer now began to stand in awe of the very fame he had been so sedulously acquiring. These proceedings could neither be concealed from the Master of St. Paul's, nor the Master of Sidney, who had hitherto fondly persuaded themselves a far different part had been the object of the boy's study, and academic applause the only approbation he had been pursuing.

The resolution Elliston had now positively taken of adopting the stage as a profession was not unattended by mental distress. He thought on the disappointment he was laying up for his two best friends—his relatives at Cambridge. In his uncle, the master of Sidney, he had enjoyed both the love and protection of a parent, without the natural claim. His debt was heavier than even a long course of diligence could expect wholly to satisfy, and yet he was about to repay it with the base coin of ingratitude.

The youth's conduct became like that of most persons under similar delinquencies. The holidays were anticipated with less anxiety and delight; his letters to Cam-

bridge were brief and vague, and might have become equally rare, but his constant demands for money altogether prevented their falling under that imputation.

As it is necessary that all your heroes who would recommend themselves hereafter, should run away in the first instance, and commence vagabond, that they may finish better with the gentleman; no sooner had Master Robert determined one point than he resolved on the other, which was to quit his home clandestinely, and throw himself on a far wider theatre than had hitherto been his fortune to encounter.

He was not long in planning the direction of his flight. A boon acquaintance, who had frequently acted under the management of our young fugitive at the Lyceum, was at this time living at Bath, and was a friend, moreover, of Mr. Dimond, the theatrical manager in that city. Our adventurer thought he could not do better than fix on this place as a point of present refuge and future expectation.

It was in pursuance of this, that on a black, chilly morning, in the very early part of spring, 1791, light in baggage as the *Hon. Mr. Dowlas* himself, with but little in his pocket and still less in his stomach, Robert William slipped from the street-door of his father's house, punctually at half-past four by the paternal chronometer, and made the best of his way to the coach-office in Piccadilly.

In the year 1791, the English stage-coach wore as different an aspect to the vehicle of the present time, as the gold-laced hat and silver shoe-buckles differ from the costume of modern use. There was "*the heavy Falmouth*," the weighty York "Highflier," and the lengthy "Caterpillar;" and a journey of a hundred miles was an undertaking of time, privation, and endurance.

Fain would our hero have retraced his steps on finding, at reaching the coach-office, the "long body" completely full, and all persons so occupied on their own affairs as to afford him no assistance under this dilemma. But the alarum was by this time sounded in the watchmaker's warehouse, and the youth's absence discovered, so that he

had no alternative but to proceed at all hazard. On further inquiry, he learnt that the two-horse "Invalid Double-Body" would start from a neighbouring office within an hour, but that no other conveyance for the city of Bath would leave London before the mail.

Perplexed, and by this time somewhat alarmed, the truant readily seized the only chance left for him, and paying part of his fare, was booked forthwith in a feigned name. The "Invalid" travelled slowly for the benefit of its ailing inmates; taking them only part of the journey on the first day, and concluding it late enough on the second; so that it was a coach which really performed what it professed to do—namely, "*slept* on the road."

A hackney vehicle was drawn up to the office, containing an elderly gentleman, who had secured in the "Invalid" one place for his body and an opposite for his legs, which were swaddled in flannel. With a sigh did our young friend gaze upon a face in which were mingled, expression of pain arising from disease, and fury the result of pain. The operation of shifting the elderly cripple from one coach to the other was in progress, which, to the *adagio* of a volley of curses, was at length accomplished. Rewarding his attendants with a look of renewed fury, the growler pulled up the glasses with all the violence he could muster, and was heard no more—for the present.

It was now within ten minutes of the time of starting; and as young Elliston was speculating on the next character he might be introduced to in this drama of "*The Bath Road*," the coach-door was again opened to the approach, "with lingering steps and slow," of a tall female, labouring under a sharp attack of inflamed eyes, and conducted by a footboy, who was beguiling his tortoise pace by licking what still adhered to the paper wrapper of some baked treacle.

Fixed on the pavement to the very last, Elliston, the third patient, entered the narrow ward of this migrating hospital. Placing himself next to the swaddled feet of the raving martyr, and opposite to two faces, one of the widest he had ever gazed on out of a

masquerade shop, and the other the longest he had ever seen except in the convex of a silver spoon, he was conveyed from the rugged pavement of Piccadilly, to travel one hundred and ten miles at this rate of enjoyment.

It was towards the evening, when the company had resumed their seats in the coach, after dining, at the usual house for stopping, where the snarler had secured to himself nearly the whole of the fire, and demolished quite the whole of a bottle of Madeira, that he fell into a roaring sleep. The cartilaginous bassoon which nature had fixed in the centre of his face seemed to emit indications of rest, while accompanying groans gave equal evidence of endurance.

The trick of nodding appeared (like everything else upon the road) to be overtaking the whole coach, and our young traveller himself began to doze, like a judge upon his seat.

A jolt of the vehicle, in passing over the rotten highway of a certain borough, threw him, bodily, athwart the horizontal limbs of the snoring invalid, who thereupon, snatching his short crutch at his side, let fall so absolute a crack on the sconce of his unconscious offender, that Elliston, seizing his assailant by the folds of his fleecy comforter, would certainly have strangled him outright, had he not been awakened to fresh terrors by the shriek of the poor obumbrated lady, who was nearly smothered in the attack.

In due time the party arrived at Newbury, their resting-place for the night. Too full of the past, and too anxious about the future, Elliston, our dispirited adventurer, stood leaning against the doorway of the inn, scarcely aware of the repeated supplications of the tapster that he would occupy the parlour.

He had been already some time in this state of abstraction, when the hostess herself advanced towards him. The sorrows of a handsome youth are petitioners rarely dismissed abruptly from the avenues to female sympathy; and as the landlady was really a kind woman, she was willing to extend her good offices on this occasion beyond

the mere civilities of her calling. Dropping him a curtsey, she said,—

"I fear, young gentleman, this is but a chilly spot. Pardon me; we have a brisk fire within the bar—my little family are just going to sit down to supper, and we would contrive to make you comfortable, if you would step in and partake of what we have."

"My dear madam, I thank you," replied he; "this is indeed an act of benevolence."

Following his conductress, Elliston found himself in the midst of the domestic circle. A table was most invitingly spread, and there was an air of comfort around, which at once finds its way to the heart.

"I must tell you, sir," continued his hostess, looking round with evident pride, "this is the birthday of my eldest girl, so we have a little more going on, this evening, than usual; and the younger ones sit up to supper."

Our adventurer had now an opportunity of observing the party, which consisted of the landlord's father, a small, good-humoured old man, who chuckled at everything he saw and every syllable he heard. Two plain, or rather heavy-looking young men, sat at a distance, evidently guests; their apparel was remarkably neat, and their deportment equally precise; for at every word addressed to them, they rose from their chairs, acknowledging the favour by a kind of half-bow.

The family of the house constituted the remainder of the company—namely, two or three nicely-dressed children, who were collected around their grown-up sister, a fine girl, who had that day attained her sixteenth year. The landlord now also made his appearance, and the whole party sat down to supper.

Our runaway, charmed by this spirit of hospitality, rendered himself, as will readily be believed, highly agreeable. He talked much of London—its incidents—its places of amusement;—the French Revolution—the taking of the Bastile,—at all of which the little old gentleman laughed, as the landlady expressed it, "fit to kill himself." But they all laughed, with the exception of the two diffident young men, who still persisted in rising

from their chairs, on receiving any portion of the repast which might fall to their share.

Elliston, who by accident—or it might have been otherwise—was seated next to the fair heroine of the evening, took occasion to allude to the birthnight, in so happy a manner, that blushes mounted into the cheeks of the daughter and tears into the eyes of the mother, at all of which the old gentleman laughed and laughed again.

Elliston now began to repeat bits of poetry and recite scraps of plays; so that by nine o'clock he had levied contributions on almost the whole acting drama; which though not always apposite to the moment, never failed to make the old gentleman laugh, and we are led to believe were equally successful in pleasing his sweet neighbour.

The revel was now at the best; and we might have searched in vain the whole of his Majesty's dominions to have found a similar number of persons assembled, at this precise moment, more completely happy than the innkeeper's party!

The landlady now turning to her daughter, "Alice, child," said she, "do sing to us your favourite. The sentiment is not quite suited to a merry-making, sir," continued she, addressing herself more particularly to Elliston—"but she does sing it so sweetly, that I much question whether any of your town ladies could excel her." Our enraptured visitor was by no means slow in backing the suit. With some slight hesitation, therefore, Alice began the beautiful ballad of Burns, "Ye banks and braes;" this she sang in a style so inartificial, but at the same time with taste so cultivated, that the old gentleman, for the first time, did not laugh, but participated in the milder sensations of delight which occupied the whole circle.

It being nearly midnight, the party began to separate; Elliston retired to his truckle-bed, but not to repose. So little inclination had he to sleep during the night, that already (for it was now five o'clock on the following morning) had it been announced to him the

"Invalid" was again starting, before he had closed his eyes. A sudden resolution seized him not to resume his journey. He pleaded sickness—megrim,—and in due time the "Invalid" was on its toilsome way without him.

He soon, however, rose, and after a hasty breakfast, turned his steps in the direction of the bar—to thank his hostess for her hospitality—to gain information respecting other conveyances,—and sundry further inquiries; scarcely suspecting, what no one else in the world could have doubted, that the lovely ballad-singer was the sole object of his thoughts.

In that same apartment, which a few hours before rang with the light tones of merriment, but now restored to the trim precision of a well-regulated bar, Elliston made his acknowledgments to his hostess, somewhat less than one hundred times, for her benevolence of the day previous. Alice abruptly entered, and would have withdrawn.

"Nay, young lady," said he, taking her hand and gently detaining her; "I am come to thank *you*, too—and how sincerely, I cannot explain. Believe me," continued he, dejectedly, "I may have cause to look back on the *dawn* of yesterday with sorrow—with contrition—but let this, at least, be void of mystery, that my happiness at its *close* will never—never be obliterated."

But his hour was come. Mounting the roof of the four-horse coach, with a spirit far weightier than all his worldly effects, once more was he on the king's high-road. His backward gaze was still fixed beneath the portal of the inn; and with the hope—the belief—that he was followed by a pair of sparkling messengers, bright as the day-star, he gave the signal of a last farewell; when turning sternly round upon his onward course, he looked once more his fortune in the face.

Arrived at Bath, Elliston soon discovered his friend, who willingly renewed his promise of giving him an introduction to Mr. Dimond. But the opportunity not appearing at that moment the most favourable, something was to be done in the interim; for the state of our adventurer's "viaticum" by no means flattered him with any hope of sustaining the

"walking gentleman" on the *pavé* of this elegant place of resort.

After sundry failures in application for employment, he obtained the situation of clerk to a lottery-office keeper, at a salary of one guinea per week. Here, ensconced behind a wooden desk, sat the future "hero of a hundred" playhouses; here the infant majesty of Elliston cribbed in the mahogany fixture of "Hazard and Co." Often with a sigh did his thoughts revert to the "*confitures*" and first-floor scenes of Madame Cotterille; as often, with still deeper sensations of sadness, to the place he once held in his uncle's esteem. What rendered his time still more burdensome was the want of occupation, for he had little more to do than to sit on a tall stool, and hand over the candidates for the favours of Fortune to her ministers in an inner apartment.

In a very few weeks, however, an engagement was accomplished with Mr. Dimond; lottery-tickets gave place to box-tickets, and the "Wheel of Fortune" was studied under another roof.

On the 21st of April, 1792, Robert William Elliston made his "first appearance upon any stage," at this city, in the character of *Tressell* in "Richard III."—He was received with favour, and went through this unambitious part with entire success. The following notice appeared in one of their leading journals:—

". . . . A young gentleman, whose name we are not yet in possession of, but whose connections, we understand, are of the highest respectability in the University of Cambridge, sustained the character of *Tressell.* He displayed considerable ability—far greater, indeed, than could have been anticipated from his age, which cannot be more than sixteen or seventeen years."

The Bath theatrical season being near its close, and most of the ensuing acting nights appropriated for benefits, no permanent engagement could be obtained. But fortunately for our young *débutant,* Wallis (the father of Miss Wallis, then the reigning favourite at Bath) had witnessed this successful exhibition in *Tressell,* with which he was so much pleased, that he wrote to his old

friend Tate Wilkinson, in Elliston's favour. The young actor received at once an invitation to visit Leeds, which, without hesitation, he accepted.

Tate Wilkinson, known so long as the "Eccentric," might, with equal justice, have won the appellation of the "Honest." He was born in the year 1740. Foote introduced him first to a London audience, in his "Tea" parties at the Haymarket Theatre. At these entertainments, Tate occupied the time between the acts of his master by giving imitations of certain actors, which, perhaps, might have been considered by some the plums of the pudding. On one particular evening, however, he seized an opportunity for throwing in so humorous a mimicry of "*Aristophanes*" himself, that the whole audience were convulsed with laughter. Foote was not a little angry; indeed, he showed so much ill-temper in the affair, as perfectly to convince the offender that he was—not a man to be imitated.

Wilkinson became ultimately the much-respected manager of the York company. He had, however, sundry peculiar habits. During his career as manager, if any member of his company had obstinately neglected to listen to his advice on any particular point of acting, he would mount, on some future night, into the gallery, and hiss him most strenuously—an expedient which presently brought the trifler to his senses. On one occasion, being more than usually indignant at some very slovenly exhibition on the stage, his hiss was remarkably audible. The object of his attack, however, seemed to have friends on the benches, for on a cry of "Turn him out!" poor Wilkinson was unceremoniously handed down from his own gallery and ejected into the street.

To actors more worthy his regard, he would prefer explaining himself by writing, when he believed that any advice of his might be of service. We have an original letter of Wilkinson to this effect, addressed to Miss Campion, who was afterwards Mrs. Spencer, and ultimately Mrs. Pope, on her first appearance at York in the part of *Juliet*. The letter is singular enough—written in characters half an inch high, on the largest and coarsest

folio, exhibiting much such a billet as would raise a laugh in a harlequin farce. The lady in question became subsequently highly celebrated in this character.

"DEAR MADAM,—Without comp[t], I think that your Balcony Scene, in many Passages, has more simplicity than that of any Actress of y[e] many I have seen from y[e] year 1752. But here and there you want Quickness and Variety; as, for instance, 'Romeo, Juliet, all slain,' &c., which sh[d] run into a sudden climax; and you sh[d] say *Pha e ton*, not *Phæton*. You sh[d] also be discovered on y[e] Bed, exactly y[e] same as when left after y[e] Draught. In y[e] Soliloquy, you sh[d] plead to Tibalt, in your Frensy, on one side, & on y[e] other, as to Romeo. I can give you a better mode of waking in y[e] Tomb; and where you stab y[r]self, I will shew you Mrs. Cibber's method. When you have to say, 'There rest and let me die,' y[e] dagger sh[d] remain, and not be thrown away, as that is a contradiction to y[e] Words. Favor me with a call by half p[t] 12 on Thursday, after I have seen y[r] Monimia, and every Hint in my Power you may command for y[e] mutual Interest of,

"Yourself and yours,

"TATE WILKINSON."

When Wrench made his *début* in the York company, Tate took his usual station in the front of the house. At the end of the play, which was "Speed the Plough," wherein Wrench had acted the part of *Henry*, he hobbled into the green-room, exclaiming—"Where's Mr. *Drench*?" (for he seldom called anybody by his right name). "Here, sir," replied the young actor. "Sir, you're a clever *Wench*," continued Wilkinson, tapping him on the shoulder. "There's some roast beef in you, Mr. *French*."

But to return to our own hero. Elliston having speedily acquired fame, became almost as soon the "leader" on the York "circuit." Never had a "junior" risen so rapidly into business, or gained so many verdicts by virtue of a speech.

In equal favour with his manager and the public, and receiving nightly the "spirit-stirring" reward of his

labours, we might have been induced to believe that smiles alone were the wages of indiscretion, and a light heart the consequence of folly. But a sterner prompting was at hand. A recollection of his uncle's repeated expressions of hope in his advancement to academic honours, pierced him like so many daggers. Months had passed away, and no indication had he given of contrition. "Stung with the thoughts of home," he withdrew for some days from the theatre, and resolved at length to address Dr. Elliston by letter. After many unsuccessful attempts, he composed the following :—

"SIR,—However dismayed I find myself in my present undertaking, I know the attempt to gain your forgiveness is my duty. Fearful as I have reason to be of your anger,—how shall I address you—or what can I allege? —I can see no middle state between that of the beloved nephew (as I have a thousand proofs to know I once was) and the discarded Robert Elliston. If but a faint ray of hope would break in to lead me to suppose I could ever regain your confidence and esteem, I should then indeed be at ease.

"Unfortunately for me, the profession I have chosen by no means meets with the concurrence of even my general friends,—and the world at large has hitherto held it in the light of disrespect. What was the infatuation which first prompted me to swerve from the path of wisdom and rectitude which you had pointed out, I know not : had I followed that, I might have made a reputable stand in life—at any rate, moving in a circle more honoured than that into which I have thrown myself. If I succeed in removing any portion of your anger, I more than repay myself—if not, the attempt is a trifling evidence of my affection, though repaying not a thousandth part of what I am indebted to you. My most sanguine hopes do not hint at sudden, or perhaps at any period, entire forgiveness. Suffer me to write to you now and then—to feel that I am addressing you—to relieve my aching heart, by assuring you how I love and honour you. May I entreat, too, you will not let my mother share with me

your anger. I declare to you she is blameless in respect of this step I have taken.

"Your affectionate and contrite nephew,

"R. W. ELLISTON.

"York, May 6th, 1792."

The very despatch of this letter brought relief to his bosom, which he fain would have mistaken for pardon already received—a delusion not very dissimilar to that in after life, when, on giving a bill at six months to his timber-merchant, he exclaimed, "Thank God, that account is paid!" Elliston returned to his duties a new man. What the Bath waters could never have effected, his own prescription had readily accomplished. His health was restored—and thus his first engagement at York was brought to the pleasing termination of pecuniary profit and popular approbation.

But, alas! nothing was responded from Cambridge—no reply reached him from his uncle. This continued silence reduced him again to a state of great mental suffering. Till now he had not felt himself *disowned*. All this was the more distressing as it was about the period of his making a first appearance on the Hull Theatre. He felt he should fail, and became indeed almost indifferent to the result. The night arrived; and in the most flattering manner he was received in the part of *Young Marlow*. But his forebodings were no less true. He did fail—his acting was languid or unnaturally forced; and although the press appeared to acknowledge all that had been hitherto reported of his quality, yet he well knew his effort on that night dropped short of the goal.

After seven months, however, from the date of his first epistle, he contemplated a second. But as most penitential *salmigondis*, like love-letters and sea-fights, are pretty much alike, we shall forbear serving up any further courses of the sort, and merely offer our guests a fragment—this is given from

"Hull, Dec. 25th, —92,
"At Mr. Thompson's, Black Fryar's Gate.

". . . Do not mistake me, sir; my supplication is not prompted by any hardships which I have suffered, for I am receiving a competency, and welcomed as a friend, but from the humble position in which I stand before you. With respect to the profession I have chosen, I know public impression is unfriendly to it. Some of its members may be profligate and immoral; but the state of an actor is that of being almost as much before the public when off the stage as on it. His errors and indiscretions are presently abroad, and the world therefore may too hastily be led to imagine that the life of an actor is inseparable from shame. But, sir, this is not true; or if it be true, I have indeed been singularly fortunate in being placed amongst so many worthy exceptions. Believe, me, sir, it shall at least be *my* endeavour to carry into this profession the principles and conduct of a man of honour and morality."

Well said, Resolution!

And now amongst other subjects of meditation, let it not be supposed the gentle Alice was forgotten. "When the heart of a man 's oppressed with care," nothing could come kindlier. *Young Marlow* steeped his thoughts in the recollection of her, as a kind of anodyne to his aching uncertainty; and cajoled himself by musing on her beauty to supply the void of a sequestered home.

It was early in the next year, February, —93, on a certain morning about as forbidding as that on which he "left his father's house," when in the act of raising the latch of his lodging, to proceed to rehearsal, Elliston was startled by a double rap at the entrance, which set his very pulse into a gallop. It was the postman—a letter! not for his own landlady, though she was still indebted in her Christmas rent, nor for the medical student in the second floor, who had really a great frailty for corresponding, but for *himself*—"Mr. Robert W. Elliston"—the

postmark "Cambridge," and the hand-writing that of his uncle, the Master!

Seizing the letter, Robert William kissed it, pressed it to his bosom before breaking the seal, and played about as many antics as Tom Jones on discovering Miss Western's pocket-book on his road to Upton. No rehearsal that morning. A half-guinea fine stood in the place of "Mr. Elliston called for the reading of the new piece at ten;" for there was *another* manuscript to be looked at, and *that* the letter from Sidney Lodge!

The tone of the Doctor was that which a man of sense and sensibility would have adopted—it was the dove with the olive—but the waters were not subsided.

"Much as I have cause for indignation," said he, "I write less to reproach than to instruct—less to satisfy any vindictive feeling which I might have towards you, than to offer a lesson, which, if timely, will content me more than the exaction of penalties. Tears, and a mere confession of error, are little; they may, indeed, be a suit for pardon, but they are no evidence of amendment. No renewal of my favour will I offer you on *trust;* whatever portion of this you may acquire, you must *win.* If these be not the most indulgent terms, I am sure they are the most valuable I can offer you."

Our happy friend, it will readily be believed, lost no time in forwarding a grateful acknowledgment to his excellent monitor, in which he renewed those several undertakings he had formerly given for the payment of good conduct, offering with them such additional interest, that we forbear to set them out, lest our readers should tremble for the consequences.

The spring of this year terminated the youth's engagement with Wilkinson; and he hastened early in May to London, for the purpose of paying his duty to his uncle Elliston, who had been, for some time past, on a visit at Professor Martyn's, in Frith Street, Soho. On his arrival, however, he learnt the Doctor had quitted London for Cambridge,—a piece of intelligence which came not unacceptably to his temporary relief; for, to confess the truth, his courage had been wondrously oozing some-

where during the whole journey, so that he was, in fact, "little better than a coward," as he mounted the steps of the botanical lecturer.

To Cambridge, however, he followed his good uncle. The aspect of old St. Mary's Church, and the glories of the Senate House, now barred against him for ever, smote him in the keen recollection of the past; and as he trailed along the quadrangle of the small college, over which he once had bounded, tears rose in his eyes, and depression was a far greater sentiment than fear. Dr. Elliston received him with the affection of a well-disciplined mind; and heard, with more than patience, perhaps, the repeated story of contrition. But the truant was no guest at the Lodge. This single interview was all that was conceded; and on such cool terms, within two days, the ingrate retraced his steps to London.

Professor Martyn, by means of his fellow-collegian, Dr. Farmer,* now introduced our young aspirant to Mr. George Steevens,† who took an early opportunity for making him personally known to Mr. John Kemble. Elliston was received with much courtesy, and the part of *Romeo* was suggested by Mr. Kemble for his particular study, proposing that character for his first London appearance, at Drury Lane Theatre. It was July, 1793, in which this meeting took place, and as the new splendid edifice was not then completed, nor likely to be so by the ensuing winter, it was arranged that the young actor should appear about the commencement of the season 1794. This event, however, did not take place.

Bidding adieu, in a less abrupt manner than on the first occasion, to his parents in Charles Street, with whom he had lodged during his stay in London, Elliston retraced his steps to Bath, and made his second appearance there, in the same month, in the character recommended to his attention by Mr. Kemble. His success in *Romeo* was a yet brighter colouring of that hue which had dis-

* Author of an "Essay on the Learning of Shakspeare," and Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

† George Steevens, the able coadjutor of Dr. Johnson, in an edition of the Works of Shakspeare.

tinguished his earlier days. The wild, romantic dream of the Veronese boy—the outpouring of soul on the altar of a youth's first passion—stood forth, a beautiful identity of that image which imagination conjures up as it dwells on the progress of this Italian tale.

Complete as was the success of his second visit to Bath, Elliston was, for a time, shut out from the "first line of business." The youthful parts of either tragedy or comedy were yet in the hands of certain actors, who once, indeed, might have graced them well, but who still retained them, on the claim of thirty years' enjoyment! —a plea, which though good and sufficient to the fee-simple of dirty acres, became a questionable tenure to the brighter territory of art.

We remember to have met with a somewhat ludicrous incident in point. An aged actor, having pertinaciously clung to light comedy long after he had been blessed with a numerous family, had amongst them a son of considerable theatrical ability, but it was in the line of *old men.* This youth made the first trial of his skill at Exeter, in the part of *Sir Anthony*, in the comedy of "The Rivals," wherein his real father was equipped for his son, *Jack Absolute.* The play, it will be at once remembered, must have afforded many points which consequently became mightily absurd; but when the enraged baronet had to exclaim: "I'll disown you—I'll unget you—I'll never call you Jack, my boy, again!" it produced a roar in the theatre which far surpassed any other indication of the night's enjoyment.

In August, 1794, Elliston came again to London, in consequence of serious and repeated disagreements which had taken place between his parents. These now terminated in a separation of the parties.

> "——— Clocks will go as they are set; but man,
> Irregular man's ne'er constant—never certain,"

says the poet; and, true enough, the watchmaker had of late contributed rather to the *tableau vivant* of Hogarth's "Midnight Conversation" than to the picture of domestic enjoyment. His affairs, in short, were now

wound up, and the stock sold off. Young Elliston undertook the support of her who had never failed in parental kindness to him, and the "*Distrest Mother*" once more occupied his thoughts in London, attended with applause more hearty than any he had hitherto experienced—that of his own conscience. The old gentleman became the joint care of his two brothers.

Sauntering, one morning, while at Bath, with a friend into the Pump Room, Elliston noticed a figure enveloped in sundry flannels, whom he at once recognized as his old fellow-traveller in the "Invalid." Scarcely could he forbear a smile on the first recollection of that pugnacious morning, but

> "Young men soon give and soon forget offence—
> Old age is slow to both"—

breaking from his companion, he approached the footstool of this polluted "*Mufti*," and in mock solemnity of tone, said: "If I am so fortunate as to live in your recollection, sir, allow me to lament that you are still under your severe sentence; but we have all our trials." On which, to Elliston's further astonishment, the old snarler, with a look which would have become Jefferies himself at the plea of Richard Baxter, roared aloud—"Scaramouch!"

A ludicrous air of perplexity which Elliston now observed in the bystanders convinced him there was something yet to be explained.

"Don't you know him?" asked his companion. "That is Mr. D——, of the Corn Market, a *rogue in grain*, as they call him at Bath. No one speaks to him here, unless to affront him, as you have done. '*Sentence!*'—'*trial!*'—why, the equivoque was quite dramatic!"

He then went on to explain that the individual in question was a certain corn-contractor, who, not very long before, had been indicted for fraud in his commercial dealings, and sentenced in severe penalties.

An adventure took place about this time worthy of more particular remark. Elliston, on a certain evening, proceeding to the theatre, where he had to play the part

of *Don Juan*, for about the fiftieth time, passing down an obscure street, was suddenly startled by indications of terror and distress, and discovered, on turning abruptly into a narrow court, the lower part of a house enveloped in flames. The occupiers had escaped unhurt, and most of them, miserably poor, were watching, either in stupid agony or with unavailing cries, the destruction of their crazy homes.

Mingling with the various appeals of surrounding sufferers, the most heart-rending were those of a middle-aged female, who, running from spot to spot, and threading the crowd without any intelligible purpose of action, exclaimed: "Poor Jamie! he's gone—he's gone!—no one can help poor, daft Jamie!" By the language and manner of the woman, it was soon clear some one remained unrescued. Elliston instantly pushed forward, and understood that, in an upper apartment, some helpless being was still imprisoned, whose awful fate was momentarily expected. A side-door of the house afforded still the possibility of ingress. Of this chance Elliston availed himself; he rushed up the staircase, followed fortunately by a bystander, emboldened by example, and found himself instantaneously in a wretched attic, where, on a still more wretched pallet, lay extended a poor bed-ridden being, whose state of idiotcy seemed roused to a glimmering sense of some proximate danger, but who had neither power of utterance nor ability of motion.

"'Tis useless!" exclaimed the man who had followed Elliston into the house; "he cannot be saved! the stairs are already in flames!"

"He can—he shall!" was the reply; "be steady, and we can accomplish it."

Approaching the bed, Elliston raised the poor creature in his arms, and binding about him the tattered remnant of sheet and clothing, carried him to the head of the staircase. With difficulty he had passed to the first landing, where, forcing a side-window, he presented his nearly-rescued charge to the multitude. But the shrieks and struggles of the sufferer—the difficulty of making the crowd understand that they were to assist him from

below, all, imperatively, the work of a few seconds—had nearly left them in one common ruin. At length, however, by the aid of his companion, all was accomplished. The living burden, lifted on the sill, was lowered by the fragile tackle, and fell, unhurt, amid the crowd below. The two liberators now effected their own escape, and within three minutes the whole interior was in flames.

Disentangling himself from the embraces of the women, Elliston now, like good *Launcelot*, "took to his heels and ran," reaching the theatre just in time to see a substitute *Libertine*, like other *entrées*, "dressed on the shortest notice," and ready to be served up in his place.

His welcome, as may be well supposed, was enthusiastic. Called upon to tell his own story, *Elliston* was as much in his element as *Don Juan*—for he had *to make a speech;* a faculty which, though in after-life he greatly improved, he by no means inconsiderably possessed at this present moment. The above incident gave such additional attraction to this drama, that it was scarcely out of the bills at any part of the season.

So much for the adventure itself; but Elliston, who took the earliest opportunity of searching out the unhappy patient he had rescued, discovered (strangely enough) that he had originally been an *actor*, and frequently a fellow-labourer with the great Macklin. Indiscretion, and consequent want of employment, had brought on this state of mental aberration and wretchedness. Elliston continued his kindness to him till he died.

The prosperity of our hero at this time, "like a full ear of corn," demanded only the gathering—and to do him justice, he was neither careless of the present nor unmindful of the future.

His residence was now at the house of a highly respectable widower, who professed to give instruction in the caligraphic art—a science which (with that enthusiasm which should attend every man in his own vocation) he placed immeasurably above all other accomplishments necessary to the polite world;—"to write a good letter" was, clearly, to write a *good hand.* He was the first who announced to the public, through the centre pane of the

parlour window,—"This is a specimen of my handwriting, *before* taking lessons of Mr. C——;" and a rude specimen it was, to all intents and purposes. Immediately below—"This is a specimen of my handwriting, *after* taking six lessons of Mr. C——;" and a more rapid progress could not reasonably have been expected, for no copper-plate could match it. It was in this worthy gentleman's society Elliston occasionally passed a leisure evening, and as the writing-master was in the habit of giving little card entertainments, the fortunate actor found an agreeable relaxation in the acquaintance.

A certain merry dame, who, in after years, was an *amie du cœur* of the Elliston family, was generally a visitor on such occasions—a sprightly, agreeable woman, who, by frequent hints and other indirect expressions, led the young actor to understand that he was held in very enviable favour in a certain quarter, and that it would be his own fault if he did not improve his fortune. In fact, she offered to become the means of making him acquainted with a lady in Bath, well known for her great taste and acquirements.

This personage was a Miss Flemming, whose reputation as a teacher of dancing and deportment, had long been pre-eminent at Bath. She was not, at this period, extremely young, nor had been, perhaps, at any, particularly handsome; but what time might have ran away with, or nature but niggardly bestowed, her own diligence more liberally supplied—liberally, but discreetly—for she was a woman, unquestionably, of judgment in this respect. An early round at "quadrille," or an occasional visit at the "Rooms," was all that prying curiosity could lay to her charge on the score of frivolity.

But Miss Flemming now suddenly manifested an irrepressible desire for the drama! True, she eschewed Congreve and Farquhar, as lax; but the "fine and serious parts of the 'Provoked Husband'" were quite of another texture. Frequently, she occupied a side-box at the theatre, and under no circumstances would be absent whenever the young actor was advertised for both play and farce. These facts, with sundry invitations which

Elliston received to select parties at the lady's residence, very naturally excited a whisper in the Bath coteries. But prudence attended the designs of this lady; for instead of hazarding a direct offer of herself in marriage, as some silly, shortsighted women might have done, she played what she considered the surer game, of building up an implied engagement, of which, the wider the whisper circulated, the more would the foundations be strengthened. As to Elliston himself, he heard all these surmises with that careless indifference which belongs to youth; for although sensible of his obligations to the lady's patronage, he was as cold under the irradiation of her smiles, as the snow-capped Andes beneath the torrid zone.

Such was the state of things when, at one of these select meetings, he beheld, for the first time, a Miss Rundall, the principal assistant in Miss Flemming's academy. This young lady, of considerable personal attractions and sweetness of manner, Miss Flemming had dexterously, until now, kept out of sight, and would fain still have done so, but the introduction could no longer be avoided. Suppressing suspicion, therefore, of what she most dreaded, she too soon perceived the tender contest would be hopeless on her part. Yet, if retreat were inevitable, she still had hopes of harassing the enemy.

Elliston, at once struck by the lustre of Miss Rundall, was soon entirely captivated by her address; but his generosity, and, perhaps, his interest, not a little induced him to conduct himself in such a manner towards Miss Flemming, that under no fair pretence could he be curtailed the privilege which had once been so cordially conceded to him, of visiting at the house. With the short course of wooing, it will be unnecessary to detain the reader,—particularly as we bear in mind the caution of *Ranger*, that "nothing looks so silly as a pair of your true lovers." Suffice it to say, a mutual sentiment occupied the hearts of the youthful twain; and Elliston, within "a fortnight and odd days," *eperdument amoureux*, avowed his passion to one of the sweetest women in England, which Miss Flemming heard with feelings not

dissimilar to those of Queen Elizabeth on learning that Leicester was married to Amy Robsart.

Frustrated in the first object of her heart, she now looked to the full gratification of the second, which was, of course, to prevent the match. Immediately, she addressed a letter to the parents of Miss Rundall, saying, their daughter had formed a dangerous acquaintance with a player, and, unless they at once interposed their authority by giving her—Miss Flemming—the right of forbidding any further intercourse, the worst consequences might ensue.

On this intelligence, the brother of the young lady arriving, booted and spurred, at Bath, Miss Flemming looked on her triumph as complete; but, to her utter dismay, she found it was the intention of Mr. Rundall to remove his sister altogether from Miss Flemming, and carry her off to London! Miss Flemming well knew that the *Don*, Elliston himself, was on the eve of departure for the metropolis, to negotiate an engagement of another description, and had great reason to fear that the joint supplications of the devoted lovers would carry their point with the Rundall family. But darker still was the prospect to poor Miss Flemming. Miss Rundall had been her assistant for several years; her manners and amiable disposition had materially tended to the success of the academy, and secured to it the highest patronage; the removal, therefore, was as dangerous to Miss F.'s worldly interests as fatal to her heart's desire—like the sailors, who, to lighten the ship, threw over their bags of biscuits, she had parted with the very means by which she prospered.

This occurrence very soon became a topic of public curiosity; and as both Elliston and Miss Rundall were special favourites with many of the best families, the peculiar nature of their distresses soon excited the sympathy of the generous. A kind of Amphictyonic council was held on the matter; and the result was, a request forwarded by several of the *beau monde* of Bath to the friends of Miss Rundall, that she might be permitted to

return, and that she should receive the best patronage, on opening an academy either as Miss Rundall or "Mrs. Elliston."

Thus was another battle lost to "The Flemming." Betrayed by her own machinations, she would fain have quitted the field altogether. Calling once more a council of war, the question was ultimately settled by treaty. To the request forwarded as above to the friends of Miss Rundall, Miss Flemming subjoined *her own;* but representing the unadvisableness of two dancing interests, which would be ultimately fatal to both, she offered to receive Miss Rundall into partnership. After a little further correspondence, the matter was arranged. Miss Rundall returned to Bath—the articles were signed—"join hands—set partners"—and the matrimonial question left altogether to the discretion of the parties themselves.

Late events had rendered a communication with the Master of Sidney almost imperative, and too happy was our young lover in the opportunity of again addressing him by letter. This he did, announcing that it was more than probable he should soon enter on an engagement at the Haymarket Theatre, in London, and transmitted £50, being part of his first professional savings, which the Doctor placed in the Three per Cents., in their joint names.

"There is now, sir, a subject," said he, in continuation, "on which it still more becomes me to speak, and which, although greatly advanced, must await your approbation:—what I allude to, is an attachment I have formed to a young lady of this place, and whom I ardently desire to make my wife. Severed as I have been from my earlier friends, it has been my endeavour, in forming new ones, to connect myself with those who may do the first no dishonour, should they again restore me to their favour. I shall not detain you by professions of devotion to the happiness of the lady to whom I have alluded, or speak at length of the rare qualities of her mind and person; but I may be permitted to say, for your own satisfaction, that she is a lady of great respectability, and

one who is regarded with the highest esteem by those who are themselves esteemed."

Mr. Dimond now assenting (1796) to Colman's request that Elliston should join him in London, for a short time, Colman writes :—" I have many doubts about *Octavian*, and as many about your appearing in a new piece. A new drama is a risk of itself, and should it fail, the new actor must, in some measure, fail with it. Let me have immediately a list of the characters you have performed, and mark those in which you think you have been successful."

In a subsequent letter Colman observes, — "If so valiant, e'en venture on the characters you propose, *Octavian*, *Sheva*, *Hamlet*. *Hamlet*, perhaps, requires further deliberation. But you will feel the pulse of the town by first playing the other two. As to *Young Wilding*, it is to be remembered that Mr. Palmer will be with me, who is established in the part."

On the 8th of June, Elliston thus announced his marriage to his uncle at Cambridge :—

" MY DEAR SIR,—In adding a connection to that family, of which you are justly the pride and ornament, I have done it no discredit in the choice I have made ; for I have united with it all that goodness of heart, sweetness of temper, or intellectual capabilities could confer. In point of fortune we meet on equal terms, and it will be our mutual endeavour to improve her favours. We have been flattered by the congratulations of some of the leading families of this place, and encouraged by the assurance of their patronage. I have engaged a small house,—one suited to our present circumstances. It was not my intention to have married until midsummer, but Mrs. Elliston was compelled to open her academy by August, and as the preparations required time, we have stolen this matrimonial march upon the expectation of our friends. This will also leave me at liberty to bring her with me to London, where I am engaged to perform for two or three nights, about the 24th of this month.

"I feel, my dear sir, that I want only your approval of my choice for the completion of a sense of happiness.

"Believe me, my dear Sir, your affectionate nephew,

"R. W. ELLISTON.

"Chapel Row, Bath, 8th June, —96."

Nothing worthy particular remark signalized the wedding-day, except, indeed, Miss Fleming appearing in the character of bridemaid !—a part she went through in a state of mind not very unlike that of some heir-presumptive to a rich estate, who, having for twenty years been in the habit of looking on the reversion as inevitably his own, suddenly hears of the birth of a direct heir, leaving him in the *interesting* situation of £10,000 borrowed on his expectancies.

On the 25th of June, 1796, Elliston made his first appearance in London, at the Haymarket Theatre, in the part of *Octavian*, in the "Mountaineers;" and played on the same evening, *Vapour*, in the farce of "My Grandmother." On the ensuing morning, the following notices made also their appearance on the boards of the journals:—"This young performer has claims that fully entitle him to the favourable reception he has met with from a London audience. He appears to possess that first requisite to an actor — good conception of his character. Many passages in his performance of *Octavian* were marked by energy and feeling. His pathos made a successful appeal to the audience, and discovered effects beyond common artifice. His delivery in general was good, except that, when he was desirous of being impressive, he was occasionally too rapid. In *Vapour*, he disclosed some power of whim and humour."

Taking the various accounts given at the time, there can be no doubt that Elliston made a decided "hit" in the part of *Octavian*, and in all probability would have shot equally well in *Vapour*, but for this double attempt before an entirely new audience.

On the 28th, Elliston repeated *Octavian* to great

applause, and on the 30th he appeared in the character of *Sheva.* His success in this part was undeniable. In the opinion of the journals, "no performer of better promise had presented himself in London for many years," and the Bath actor was, *sur le champ,* a confirmed favourite with the London public. These two parts, *Octavian* and *Sheva,* he alternately repeated for a few nights, according to agreement.

Early in July, Elliston resumed his professional duties at Bath, and within a week of his return, his benefit at Bristol took place, whereby he cleared nearly one hundred pounds; a sum hitherto unprecedented in that city. On the 15th he received the following flattering communication from Mr. Colman :—

"London, July 14, 1796.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I shall be very happy to see you again, the moment your affairs will permit you to return. I will either defer settling terms till we meet, or fix them with you by letter. If you prefer the latter, pray propose, and nothing that I am able to effect shall be left undone to meet your wishes.

"*Octavian* and *Sheva,* you might, I am confident, repeat with increase of reputation to yourself, and advantage to the theatre. *Hamlet,* too (of whom you seem a little afraid), has nothing in the character which is not within your scope. If you fancy my hints can be of service to you in any part, I think they may be so in this, for I have been reading "Hamlet" with no small attention, on your account, since your departure.

"I am, my dear Sir, sincerely yours,

"G. COLMAN."

To this letter, so full of hope and encouragement, Elliston did not reply for several days ; for, notwithstanding his recent anxiety to appear in London, and his great reception there, he still doubted whether it would not be wiser to remain in a place which had become so essentially his home. "Hors de *Bath,* point de salut," thought he.

In the mean time, he received a letter from Mr. Gore,* a gentleman who had long been on terms of great intimacy with the Elliston family. The captain's besetting passion was a play.

"Why have you not replied to Colman's letter?" says he. "Sense of security is mortals' frailty; and a man who has behaved so kindly to you as Colman, has a claim on your best attention. I see no reason why you should stand in awe of *Hamlet;* you have every qualification for it, except feature, and art may do much for you even in this. Dismiss all apprehension; and, as at our Swedish game of '*Fer Herne*,' rush boldly forward, and win by daring.

"Cumberland and myself have met—we chatted together last Friday behind the scenes very freely, upwards of an hour. He talked much about you; and do not blush, that I praised you highly as a good son. Last night I was behind the scenes, at Colman's. Jack Bannister bowed again *en passant*, more coolly than he was wont to do. Perhaps he had heard of my attendance on you; and rooks will smell gunpowder. Charles Kemble asked very kindly after you; he seemed pleased to hear of your probable return this season. Waldron, the renowned *Sir Walter Raleigh*, rapped out some dozen oaths—swore 'by 'gad,' he could not have thought there was so much stuff in you—that, 'by 'gad,' you had taken them all in; and that you were an astonishing young man. He talked of Garrick, of whom, to his teeth, he knows no more than I of Sanconiatho. He said, too, he had heard you were engaged at Covent Garden, at £20 a week.

"In the front of the theatre I met Reynolds; he told me he had finished another comedy for Harris, in which Lewis is to play *Harlequin*—'It is full of stale jokes,' said he, because the public understand them; 'and as for plot, even the lying critics can't accuse me of filching them, for my plays have no plots at all.' This isn't being

* Mr. and Lady Morris Gore resided chiefly at Bath, and were on the best terms with the Ellistons.

too partial to one's own—is it? There is much conversation stirring here on the death of Robert Burns: but honourable fame is imperishable. I cannot do better than dismiss my letter with a hint so useful."

Most of our readers are aware of the untoward circumstances which attended the production of Colman's drama of "The Iron Chest"—that the essential incidents of the piece were taken from Godwin's novel ("Caleb Williams")—that it was first represented at Drury Lane Theatre, in March, 1796—and that the event was disappointment and failure; on the cause of which there was much diversity of public opinion, but on which the mind of the author was at least free from any embarrassment of doubt, as appeared by a "*Preface*" to the publication of the above—a production which, at the time, excited very general attention.

That Mr. Colman might have had many grounds for regret, in the first instance, the very subsequent success of this drama is a sufficient proof; but nothing surely could justify an attack on Mr. Kemble, which, for loud invective and the use of certain language (for the first time, then, the weapons of a gentleman), is almost without parallel. That a rhapsody so furious should seize on public attention was no matter of surprise; but attention may be engaged without approbation attending it: nor is it with much difficulty we are led to believe that he who penned so impotent a piece of reasoning, might possibly have written a play not worth the acting.

At no epoch of the drama were writers so much indebted to actors as at the time in which Colman wrote, and none of them more so than Mr. Colman himself. We would detract nothing from the merits of "John Bull," or the "Heir at Law;" but we do mean to congratulate the reputation of the author that these plays were produced at this fortunate period.

The cause of the above dispute we do not enter into—its interest passed away with the moment that begot it; satisfied we are that no provocation could acquit Mr. Colman of doing either violence to his friend or discredit to himself—a dispute in which, as he was not nice in

respect of implements of offence, it is the more mournful that he should have been without a triumph—for triumph this was none, except with those who, like himself, could mistake fury for argument, and "calling names" for the pungency of satire.

Mr. D'Israeli, in noticing the infirmities of genius, gives the following pointed illustration of self-laudification in the case of Kepler, which, *mutatis mutandis,* might be here applied. "I dare insult," cries the astronomer, "the whole world, by confessing that I am he who has turned science (*a novel*) into advantage (*a play*). If I am pardoned; I shall rejoice—if blamed, I shall endure it. The die is cast. I have written this book ('*Preface!*') and whether it be read by posterity, or by my cotemporaries, is of little consequence—it can well wait for readers during one century, when God himself, during six thousand years, has not sent an observer (*a dramatist*) like myself!"

No sooner was Elliston safe in Colman's hands, than the manager disclosed his purpose—namely, the resuscitation of "*Sir Edmund Mortimer,*" in the person of *Robert Elliston.*

Having taken some liberties with Mr. Colman's "Preface," we must now, in justice to the drama itself, pursue its history to the close. The "Mirror," a great theatrical authority of the time, had pronounced this play beyond all hope; that it was a very defective piece of work, and under no circumstances could possibly make a stand. But the experiment Colman was resolved on attempting;—the "magic lamp" he was determined to possess, and on looking round for a fit instrument to his project, fixed on the young *Aladdin* he had purposely enticed to London. Elliston was of an ardent but not a presumptuous temper. *Hamlet* he had regarded with becoming diffidence of his immature powers, and the proposition now made to him of rescuing from the very grave a subject which the faculty had pronounced beyond all cure, and emphatically given over by the great *Paracelsus* himself, inspired him with no slight sensations of fear.

He resumes his correspondence with his uncle:—

"Here am I once more in the metropolis, and have

again paid my respects to a London audience, by whom I have been received with renewed—with increased demonstrations of welcome. Colman's 'Iron Chest,' which has made some noise in the dramatic world, is published, and with it a 'Preface,' or a *prescription*, which the author no doubt intended for Kemble's malady. The 'Iron Chest' is now to be performed at the Haymarket, and I am fixed on to take the character of *Sir Edward Mortimer*. It is thought by many a bold attempt, but by none more so than myself. Young Bannister, eaten up with spleen, has positively refused my repeating *Sheva*, which he claims his unalienable own; and as I do not think it prudent to perform *Hamlet*, or indeed anything I could not confidently offer to the public, I am at a stand. The 'Iron Chest' engages all my attention—I am already in the stirrup of my purpose—wish me, dear Sir, success."

The morning of the 29th arrived. Never had Elliston felt himself more depressed, not even when at Hull he believed himself abandoned by his revered relative. He remembered Colman's words, "A new play redoubles the hazard to a new actor." He almost fancied this manager-author was sacrificing him to the desperate hope of his own extrication. The state of his nerves was something like that of a young barrister on the first day of term, having "to move" in a court as yet unconscious of his accents. A thousand times did he wish the "new trial" were already granted.

A full house and loud encouragement greeted the appearance of the Haymarket *Sir Edward*, which, like the first shot in the field, freed his spirit from its bondage, and he entered gallantly on the fight. The experiment was adequate to the purpose—Colman's object was fully accomplished, and Elliston's fame in a considerable degree advanced. The play met with success—the chief performer with approbation and applause,—and from that moment the "Iron Chest" became a stock-piece in the acting drama, and was repeated every evening to the last of the season.

The "Mirror" had this curious paragraph:—"Had

Mr. Kemble played *Mortimer* infinitely better than he did, the 'Iron Chest' would, nevertheless, have been condemned at *Drury Lane*." (It has been acted at Drury Lane a hundred times since with success.) "Had Mr. Elliston not played half so well as he did, the 'Iron Chest' would have been successful at Mr. Colman's *own theatre*." (The insinuation is clear; the charge easily made; but does the history of the piece for forty years bear out the assertion? Had its success been the work of *claqueurs*, the pages of the "Iron Chest" had long since gone to the trunkmakers.)

But not merely with the young and ardent, to whom novelty is as the very dayspring of existence, had Elliston become an object of interest, but he shared also the regard of those in whom passion is said to wait on the judgment, and sobriety to reprove the whispers of imagination.

Of that mature class to which Bath had long been a haven and a refuge, was a Mrs. Collins, a widow lady, who, having here buried her husband three years since, with whom she had lived in tolerable peace for full thirty, was content to make the experiment of her viduity in the same place which had yielded her so fair an average of connubial profit.

Mrs. Collins was a highly respectable, well-meaning woman. She had, however, one peculiarity, which, as it ran into extremes, we fear we must place in the catalogue of sins; and this was, that she never destroyed, parted with, or lost sight of anything which had ever once passed into her possession. Not that she was a niggard: on the contrary—she was liberal with her means and generous in her sentiments, but she was incurably possessed with the acervatic spirit of *hoarding*. Neither note, slip, scrap, bill, nor account had she ever sentenced to the flame: however trivial the document, the senseless record was still enrolled in her "*Cottonian*" Museum. "Mr. Jones will see Mr. Fitz Simons at two o'clock this day," she had already preserved for twenty years; prospectuses of schemes never carried into effect; shop-cards of parties long since in the "Gazette;" London Directories previous to the days of Wilkes, and hallowed

almanacs nearly coeval with herself. Saddles and stoves, frames of pictures and remnants of carpet; locks of doors and stoppers of decanters; injured Daphnes, and noseless Strephons; spectacle-cases and snuffer-stands; boot-hooks and bell-wires; old turnpike-tickets and wine-corks; cataplasms of a relative who died of a gangrene, and the residue of Mr. Collins' medicine in his last illness.

This well-saved heterogeneous mass, occupying sundry attics, and yielding but little rent, the good widow at stated periods deemed it necessary to overhaul and examine. Taking stock in an extensive retail concern was a trifle to this job—it was her occupation for days—the whole went through the operation of fresh pepper for preservation, and new labels for inventory; and according to Elliston, who was ever mightily amused with the original, she had actually an old jack-weight brought once a-year before the kitchen fire, to be well-aired and made comfortable for the remainder of the twelvemonth.

With this besetting propensity to conservation, it may be supposed that she guarded with Papistic zeal every relic of her sainted husband. There was his wig, his hat, his walking-stick, and every thread and button that had encased his perishable form. In fact, she had saved all things but him.

But these eccentricities impaired not the more sterling quality of Mrs. Collins. Mrs. Elliston she always valued, and Robert William she sometimes admonished. This she did occasionally by letter; and though we do not consider her grave exhortations so necessary to our readers as to the object whom she addressed, we cannot refrain from giving one or two examples.

The following characteristic epistle Elliston received before leaving Bath:—

"Milsom Street (no date).

"I am always in *terror*, my dear young friend, when I hear you are to dine at the houses of *those* who love to *push the bottle*, and think robbing persons of their *reason* is an evidence of *hospitality*. In this class is Sir J. Cope —and I deem it a kind of duty to let you into his *cha-*

racter. Beware of going a second time to the 'Harmonic' with a head full of *discord.* I heard, with concern, the *dispute* you got into; but forbore defending you to Mrs. E., lest *she* might really have heard *nothing of the matter.* When your enemies (*for so they are*) would lead you *astray*, repeat to them your own constant expression, '*professional people should be cautious.*' What is become of Mr. Foote? I have a particular wish to see him, *because* he was recommended to Mrs. C. Brownlow by Colonel Greville.

"Your faithful friend, A. C.

"P.S. The benefit tickets which were *not used* I have *put by.*"

Not many days after the first representation of the "Iron Chest," at the Haymarket, Elliston received offers from both Mr. Harris and Mr. Sheridan. The latter gentleman, having appointed to breakfast with him, was so far true to his engagement, but arrived in Frith Street at a quarter before six o'clock, P.M., just seven hours after the time that had been named. Sheridan, however, immediately entered on the business of his mission, and appeared extremely anxious to see this new light burning under the dome of Drury Lane Theatre; but Elliston, a newly married man, his wife settled at Bath, in partnership with Miss Flemming under a bond of £500, and himself the paramount favourite as an actor in the same place, was not easily persuaded to the project.

He therefore made such proposals to Sheridan as he pretty well knew could not be acceded to—namely, £1,000 to be paid down—the forfeit sum of his articles with Dimond, the penalty of his bond in respect of his wife, "and in conclusion," a large weekly salary for his own professional exertions. Besides which, his preference would have been decidedly in favour of Covent Garden, where he fancied a better security for his money—a consideration which we trust our readers will deem reasonable enough. The result was, that Mr. Harris proved the successful bidder,—his proposal being that

Elliston should play twelve nights in the course of the season; to receive £200; and in the event of his being found greatly attractive, to be paid an adequate additional sum.

In the mean time our new acquaintance, Mrs. Collins, again addresses him.

"Ashley Grove, August 19, 1797.

"DEAR FRIEND,—I have heard with pleasure from *sweet Mrs. Elliston*, who *kindly* enclosed a paragraph from the '*Oracle*,' which gave me *infinite satisfaction*. As you request me to become your *monitress*, I do not think I should discharge the trust *faithfully* unless I were to transmit my sentiments as you may give occasion for them, lest by *delay* they might be *too late* to be *useful*. I have been perusing the part of *Colonel Fainwell* with much attention, and it strikes me as *one* calculated to portray your powers and versatility to *great advantage*.

"But, on a subject infinitely of *greater importance* (no less, my young friend, than the preservation of your *health and morals*), it now behoves me to say a *few words*. You will readily believe I wish you to consult Mr. C.* on *theatricals* ONLY. Avoid being led by *him* into *convivial parties*, which may be ruinous to your *purse*, and, above all, to your *peace of mind*. Be wary of *him* when the *playhouse doors are shut!* Of his *abilities* I think *highly*, and therefore wish you to talk with him on your performing *Belcour* and *Don Felix* on the *stage of the theatre*; but on the *stage of life*, have as little to do with any of them *as possible*. I am pleased to hear you are to appear in *Walter*. You outshone *Bannister* in *Sheva*, and may do no less in *Walter*. If it be *practicable*, I will attend on *your night* at the Haymarket, therefore let me have your *bill of fare*.

"In a *few hours* I set off for *Bath*, where I hope to find *Mrs. Elliston* and my pretty *god-daughter*† well.

"Believe me, my dear friend, your *faithful* well-wisher, "ANNE COLLINS."

* Mr. Colman.

† Eliza, Elliston's first child, born at Bath, May 22, 1797.

On the 21st of September, 1797, Elliston made his *début* on Covent Garden stage, in the part of *Sheva*. His observant friends had long confirmed the opinion of Tate Wilkinson, namely, that too frequently he wanted force, and they were consequently not without some apprehension that he might fail in so large a theatre. But he had better confidence in himself; the experiment was made; and while the most sanguine of his auditors were taken by surprise, the backward and unwilling confessed he was indeed an actor. The night's receipt, amounting to £258, was welcome as summer to Mr. Harris; and on Elliston's repeating the part on the 28th, the amount was £300. On the following evening he acted the same character at Bristol!

After repeating *Sheva* at Covent Garden, the bills announced that the proprietors of the Bath Theatre had consented that Elliston should perform in London once in every fortnight throughout the season, and that his subsequent characters would be those of *Philaster* and *Don Felix*.

"Philaster" is a piece of bilious mosaic, compounded in a great measure of the ravings of *Hamlet*, the jealousy of *Othello*, and the turbulence of *Posthumus*. Elliston's success in *Octavian* and *Mortimer* suggested, no doubt, the probability of a "hit" in this new part; and though he seems to have aimed with good success in those passages wherein tenderness and suspicion alternately prevail, yet on the whole it does not appear that *Philaster* was one of his triumphant undertakings. The recipt to "Philaster" was only £148. The play was not repeated, nor did Elliston's name appear in the Covent Garden bills after that occasion. He acted only seven nights.

Elliston again settled at Bath; Colman renews his correspondence with him:—

"All I shall observe," he says, "of your Covent Garden business is, that never was so promising a child so ill nursed. Your letter bears with it an air of disappointment; but you are so unused to checks, that trifles seem to upset you. I am now deep in the matter of a new

comedy;* as far as I have proceeded, there is nothing which I think would suit you—it is all sock, not a shred of buskin—nor can I introduce anything likely to show you off to advantage. The cut and dry you can still make palatable. I am for *Macbeth!* Open my booth on the 12th of June."

Mr. Palmer, the principal shareholder of the Bath Theatre, had just served the office of mayor of that city, which he carried through in a most expensive and spirited manner, and was conjectured, at this moment, to be in want of money; this Elliston thought a good opportunity for endeavouring to effect a part purchase of the theatre. Measures were taken for this object, and his most conciliatory uncle agreed to advance the funds necessary. But Elliston's calculations appear to have been erroneously made: the offer was not entertained by the other parties. When, however, the new theatre was building in 1805, he fancied himself sure of his object: his offers were not positively rejected, but so many obstacles were raised, that he finally abandoned the project altogether.

Elliston now took a spacious house in Pulteney Street, estimating that he should stand rent-free by letting off part of it,—a very common piece of miscalculation, which, like fortunes made on the slate, appear at the outset so natural and easy.

Owing to the lateness of the Bath season, Elliston was not able to join the Haymarket company before the 9th of August, when he made his appearance in his favourite *Octavian*. His reception was highly gratifying. He seemed to have surmounted the prejudices even of the enthusiastic followers of Kemble, in this part, and obtained credit for that which always charms—originality.

Having next played *Sir Edward Mortimer*, he appeared in the part of *Walter*, in "The Children of the Wood." Here Elliston had the same obstacles to contend with as in *Octavian*—namely, stepping into a character rendered singularly attractive by a living popular actor. Bannister had justly acquired a perfect command over the feelings

* This was the "Heir-at-Law."

of the auditor, in this part of *Walter:* his acting was natural, simple, yet deeply impressive; a part, also, in which he was constantly before the public. The stand, however, which the Bath actor made was greatly flattering.

"Elliston's *Walter* was only inferior to Bannister's because it did not precede it," said a great theatrical authority; but although the pathos of the part was a material which he was expected successfully to deal with, he was perhaps somewhat too stilted for the impersonation of lowly and familiar scenes—*Difficile est communia dicere*—it was the pathetic of tragedy, not comedy. This, like all Elliston's previous attempts, was no copy—confirming his reputation as an original actor.

Elliston, "the child of fortune," was now in a fair way of becoming a man of fortune—for not only was he making money, but what is more rare, he was saving it. The sensation, also, he had lately produced rendered him quite "the observed" of the gay metropolis, so that he was nearly as much courted by the *élégants* of London as he had been at Bath itself.

But London affords a vast variety of scenes to lads of metal, other than the halls of science, or the chambers of the polite—many places which young men, not absolutely "content to dwell in decencies for ever," would just like to *witness once!*—scenes which, being fortunately hidden from the world, and loving darkness rather than light, are sometimes sought under the most curious plea which was perhaps ever advanced—namely, of *seeing the world!*

But to proceed: there existed at this period (1797) certain conventions, yclep'd "clubs," which, though not containing the peculiar essence of Will's, or the precise quality of Button's, had yet most assuredly a quality of their own. Here was no narrow, mean exclusiveness; no ignoble sensitiveness of character—the doors, like a box of charity, were open to the whole world, *pro hâc nocte*, on the payment of sixpence. These places were frequented chiefly by a class of persons who had but one plan in life, namely, to give over work the first moment they had earned enough to get drunk for the remainder of the week.

One of the principal establishments of the above kind was the "Court of Comus," which had laid its foundations in Wych Street, whereof a certain choice spirit of the name of Desborough was rated to the poor; or in other words, the landlord. This Desborough, as dull a rogue on most points, as any in Christendom, was yet famous by a kind of concentration of genius, the light whereof became more vivid by the illimitable stupidity by which it was encircled. This outrageously stupid man was famous, in fact, for doing *one* thing well—well! surpassing, in sooth, any effort of the "Court of Comus" itself—and this was, singing Dibdin's song of "Fortune's Wheel!"

But to return to the "Court of Comus." Precisely at nine o'clock p.m. by the chimes of St. Clement Dane, the doors of this sanctuary were thrown open to devotees (who, like crabs, moved only at night), and the "Flamen" of the sanded floor (Cussans) ascended the curule chair, before whom a pickled herring, some strong waters, and an ounce of tobacco, were regularly placed.

This celebrated youth was the son of an opulent West Indian, and educated at Marylebone school—an indubitable *genius;* but like farmer Ashfield's horse of that name, "he would never work."

Cussans lodged at a baker's, as it afforded him the means of getting in at any hour of the four-and-twenty, except on Saturdays, when he never went home at all. Sands, another lad, hopeful as young *Filch* himself, occupied one room of a tenement in Dark-house Lane, the door of which, for the sake of light and air, had not been shut for forty years; and Hawtin, the trumpeter and *stone-eater*, with one Smith, a glass-eyed clarionet-player, constituted the "leaders" in the "Court of Comus."

On Cussans taking the chair, the official club cocked-hat was handed to him by the Serjeant-at-Arms, Sands; and the moment he placed it on his head, "the kettle to the trumpet spake," and the court was declared sitting.

The first thing, as we have heard, was "Fortune's Wheel." Then the renowned Cussans, the court *improvvisatore,* gave a *canzona,* in which, with some ability, he

identified each visitor present; afterwards, in turn, every one present was separately called on to "*do something.*" This "doing something" was imperative, except, indeed, that indulgences and absolutions might be purchased; but these, though always marketable, were placed considerably beyond the reach of the generality of sinners, the price for each being half-a-crown. "Doing something" implied either a song, a speech, poising a tobacco-pipe or coal-skuttle; an imitation of cat, dog, or fowl, posturizing, or the more classic feat of quaffing to the dregs the pewter *Amystis* of some potent compound.

"Qui canerent agerentque peruncti fæcibus ora."

Each actor had his turn, and each effort its short pre-eminence, till drink alone was triumphant, which, like the sole survivor of the fray, claimed the prostrate field its own.

On gala nights, Cussans, as the clock struck twelve, from a god, descended, like Jupiter himself, into a beast, —not, indeed, as a rampant bull, but as a *dancing bear!* The scene of riot was thus conducted:—Sands, the bear-leader, beating the bottom of a pewter pot with a marrow-bone, threw a lasso about the loins of Cussans, now rolling in the sand, whilst Hawtin and Smith accompanied the exhibition with other signs and sounds fitting the occasion. The belluine judge, nobly sustaining his part, which, like *Snug*, the joiner, he might "do extempore, for it was nothing but roaring," danced, whirled, evoluted, till the poor excitement which drunkenness had produced left him at length as lifeless as an unburied corse.

"Man differs more from man than man from beast."

In his idiosyncrary, Cussans had also a singular and conceited regard for his word of *promise.* This, whether given under a false representation from others; forced at the very point of the bayonet, or filched from him in the moment (the many hours!) of intoxication, he still invariably regarded. Having been reminded that, on one of these occasions, he had promised to hire himself as a

pot-boy to a neighbouring house of call for wits, he actually entered on the ignoble service, at the "Red Lion," in Russell Street, for one entire month, at the expiration of which, he gave notice to his allies that a "Lodge" would be open at the "Court of Comus." The procession of his manumission quitted the blushing lion at a certain hour—Sands, Hawtin, and others, occupying the interior of a hackney-coach, and Cussans, *ipsissimus*, in a harlequin party tire, perched on the roof—Desborough preceding, and, of course, singing "Fortune's *Wheel!*"

On another occasion, a review of troops taking place in Hyde Park, before the King and Prince of Wales, Cussans procured a military uniform and charger, and having effected his way on the ground, actually joined the royal party as they were passing along the line. The distinguished stranger attracted presently universal attention, his mock-heroic aspect and imperturbability of deportment bade defiance to the gravity of the whole staff, and shook the nerves of as gallant a brigade as ever entered the field.

Cussans was also a considerable actor; he played frequently at Sadler's Wells, generally choosing *Sneak*, in the "Mayor of Garratt," as he was much celebrated in the character-song of "*Oh! Poor Robinson Crusoe!*" In this song, he had as many "encores" as he pleased; and on a certain evening, having sang it three or four times, the curtain drew up for another part of the night's entertainment, when, to the astonishment, but still greater delight, of the Sadler's Wells auditory, Cussans started up from the very centre of the shilling gallery, vigorously singing "*Oh! Poor Robinson Crusoe!*" nor would the *Wellsites* suffer the drama to proceed till he had again sang it twice from the same spot.

Poor Cussans! brandy was his death, and water his grave; for he died on his voyage to a softer climate, and was buried in the deep.

Such were the "clubs"—at least such the "Court of Comus!"—*ex uno*, &c., and such was the place (we confess it with a blush) where Robert William, oblivious of

dear Mrs. Collins, "when the playhouse doors were shut," satisfied his young curiosity. Shaking his plumes from the encumbrance of rule, and unbuckling the heavy breastplate of decorum—here, amongst the "free and easy," we track the footsteps of our adventurous hero; but (as the "bills" express it) "for this night only"—at least we hope so—and will therefore leave him to all the gratification the adventures can afford.

By one of those fortuities which render truth sometimes stranger than fiction, the unhappy parents of our hero, between whom, it will be remembered, a separation had taken place many months before, were now brought, face to face, *tout à coup*, in the small back parlour of a chemist's shop, in Somers Town.

A crowd had collected before the glazed door, owing to a man having been carried within who had a few minutes before fallen down in a fit. The good mother, passing at the time, being well known to the compounder of drugs, gained ready admittance; and prompted by something better than curiosity, approached the unfortunate sufferer just as he was "coming to." No sooner had she fixed her eyes on the object in question, than, clasping her hands, she faintly exclaimed, "Robert!" and sank on a chair beside him. The one was the *horloger*, old Elliston himself; and the good Samaritan, no other than his faithful helpmate, whose affection for her husband neglect had never weakened nor separation estranged.

Being thus brought together, a renewal of conjugal rights was the result; and a cottage, in the neighbourhood of Bath, was taken and furnished for the aged couple—the expenses of which young Elliston, with some assistance from the Doctor, cheerfully engaged to defray. The old lady, however, did not long enjoy the comfort thus provided—she died in November, 1798. The widower was then removed to his son's house, where he lingered till the June of the following year, and then expired. The fact was, both mother and son had gone through much vexation and painful trouble on the watchmaker's account. Drink had sadly disordered Nature's works; and

the time-piece, man, was no more. If his amiable mate had ever found him a blessing, he was, beyond all question, a blessing "disguised," for he was seldom sober.

As a proof of Elliston's devotion to his art, at this period of his career, it should be noticed that he was in the habit of drawing up an analysis of each part previous to his first appearance therein. For an example, we give a brief slip of the character of *Panglos* :—

"It is no uncommon thing to find men of letters courting the hand of power or fortune, by descending to meannesses which an independent mind would shudder at. In this state, is the subject of our present contemplation. He continues with few or no attempts to release himself from the caprice and insults of his employers, and his conscience is presently reconciled to his interest. His quotations are not unnatural and irresistibly laughable, and we forgive his vanity for the sake of the mirth it causes.

"Comic characters are seldom analyzed in their moral features; we laugh at singularities, without regarding their tendency, which may possibly be bad. The oddity of *Panglos*, his pedantry and cringing, all combine to make him ridiculous; but the author has done good dramatic justice; for, while we find the Doctor amusing, to answer the cause of theatrical entertainment, he is left contemptible, as a lesson to take home with us."

Happy should we have been to leave undisturbed the good impression which no doubt our hero has made on our readers, by this example of professional diligence; but, as faithful historians, we are compelled now to present them with a letter, which may possibly raise more than a suspicion of his fallibility, and call to mind those sundry airy securities for good behaviour which in 1792 he showered on his confiding uncle, and made us tremble, at the time, for his liabilities. The epistle is from the *conservative* Mrs. Collins, who, from the storehouse of her affection, supplies the following admonition—the exigency of which will be explained by the tenour of her words:—

"I received your packet, my dear young friend, with mingled sentiments of *concern* and *satisfaction*. If I ever

mentioned to Mrs. E. the report of your being an *unsteady husband*, it was to weaken the blow of her being a *deceived wife*—for these latter reports are flying about like *muşquitoes*.

"That you are really *in debt*, I never have believed; *but* that you *go the way* to become in debt, I *do believe*, because I *know it*—know that you *play*—*gamble*—know that you have visited the *hazard table*—thank God, I do not believe it is *yet* a HABIT. But it is in dread of *this* that I now write—when *once* the *habit* is confirmed—when once this idle *pleasure* has ripened into *passion*, you are lost to any hope which *this world* can give of your own preservation; whilst the pang that event will inflict on you, will be a *hundredfold* repeated in the knowledge that you are the *curse* instead of the *blessing* to those who now look up to you alone for shelter.

"The reports that '*young Elliston is a gambler*,' have already reached *Mr. Gore*;' I therefore recommend you to take an early opportunity, *not* of *denying* these, if they be true, but of *breaking the vicious bonds* while yet they are *within* your strength. What have I heard! that even between the *scenes* of the very *playhouse*—frequently in your *dressing-room* there—you gamble in *some shape* or other. Can such things fail of *notoriety*? and will notoriety have any tenderness for the ears of your *inestimable wife*? 'I say again, Take heed!' and believe me,

"Your sincere friend,

"ANNE COLLINS."

On receipt of the above, Elliston first made an attempt at some display at indignation on reading it, but, like Jonathan Wild, who, when thrust to sea alone, in an open boat, cocked his hat and looked fierce for a moment, and then recollected there was no one by to applaud him, so did our hero think better of his anger, and pocketing the affront, vowed there was no real happiness, but what conscience approved; and so passed that evening in the full enjoyment of virtuous resolutions.

In the midst of these things—the analysis, one moment,

and the dice, another—schemes of theatrical partnership, and sudden excursions of pleasure,—Elliston made his appearance as a public teacher!

During the Lent season of this year, he undertook a series of lectures, both at Bath and Bristol, on morals and general criticism—it was a kind of "Blair," "Kames," and *Elliston* partnership, in which the moralist and the critic, pleasantly impregnated with the popular actor, drew together very profitable assemblies at both cities, and ended greatly to the success of this new enterprise. Poor Mrs. Collins! what a letter would she have written—how emphatically scored each alternate word—had she heard the malicious tattle which for a time prevailed on the termination of these evening displays!

Some few months previous to these events, Elliston had discovered the mistake in his calculation of the Pulteney-street establishment. He found that bringing a large house "over his head" was as destructive as an "old one,"—part of it had never once been occupied at all, and his tenant for another had absconded, with a month's rent yet unsatisfied, and a few pounds to boot, borrowed from his landlord in the hurry of some business, by which any gentleman may be surprised. Elliston and his family had now taken up their residence in Bathwick-street.

It was about this period our young friend became known to the Earl Harcourt, a nobleman of unostentatious friendliness and refined taste, enjoying the favour of the sovereign, and dispensing patronage and encouragement to British art under every denomination.

The Earl's father had been nominated ambassador extraordinary to the court of Mecklenburgh Strelitz, to demand the Princess Charlotte in marriage for George III.; he lost his life by a lamentable accident—falling into a well in his own park at Nuneham.

The present Lord was a great patron of the stage and its professors; the Kemble family shared his especial favour, and many actors of merit, his notice and regard. To Elliston and his wife he was most friendly.

The following is among the earliest of Lord Harcourt's letters—addressed to Mrs. Elliston:—

"Nuneham, April 6th, 1799.

"MADAM,—As it cannot but be gratifying to you to hear the opinion of a good judge of acting, and who is himself an excellent comedian, respecting Mr. Elliston's performance of *Charles*, I will not deny myself the pleasure of transcribing a paragraph from a letter I received this morning.

"'*Charles* was better performed by Elliston than by Smith—at least in my opinion. Smith I never really liked in the part. It was a relief to me not to see the chair leaned upon, &c. &c. Elliston looks the character admirably. Lord St. Helens was as much pleased as myself, who, never having seen O'Brien, thinks Elliston the first gentleman on the stage—he has an easy vivacity and a spiritual quality which no other performer possesses —a charming voice, and his side-acting is admirable.'

"If your affection, madam, has some satisfaction from reading this eulogy, my own vanity is gratified while I write it, as I take to myself the credit of having discovered Mr. Elliston's appropriate talent in much earlier days than the present. The annals of the stage record two gentlemen actors only—viz., Wilkes, in the time of Cibber and Mrs. Oldfield, and O'Brien in that of Garrick, which last-named, with all his astonishing powers both in tragedy and comedy, could be anything—everything—except a gentleman.

"I am, Madam, your humble servant,

"HARCOURT."

Who the correspondent of Lord Harcourt really was, does not appear; but we by no means call on our readers to subscribe implicitly to his opinion of Elliston's personification of *Charles Surface*. In our own humble impression, *Charles* was not amongst his most successful efforts; and we the more regret this, as it was no doubt the dazzle of this character which led Elliston away from *Joseph*—a part which he ought to have made most triumphantly his own.

Joseph Surface is perhaps the most difficult part in comedy on the stage, to sustain with effect; to make what is called a hit, is next to impossible. Here are no points —no strong situations which sometimes command applause; all that can be done must be accomplished by sound, intrinsic acting. The character is introduced by neither flower nor flourish—the mere "Good morrow!" are the simple words committed to him. You sympathize with him for not one moment in the play,—for he is no bold-faced villain, who will sometimes beguile the spectator of a transient impulse of pity or applause;—he is detested throughout, on whose shoulders the airy fascination of *Charles* is borne sparkling to the close; and yet, with all this, is *Joseph* the hero of the play— a question which the inimitable Palmer satisfactorily proved.

In July of this year (1799) Elliston received the following:—

" Mr. Sheridan presents compliments to Mr. Elliston, and, at the desire of the Duchess of Devonshire, has transmitted the enclosed. Mr. Sheridan will do himself the pleasure of writing to Mr. Elliston on the subject, in a day or two."

The enclosure was addressed to Mrs. Elliston by the Duchess.

"The Duchess of Devonshire has heard so much of Mr. Elliston's success in London, that if he wishes to be engaged at Drury Lane Theatre, she thinks there can be no doubt of his succeeding; and Mr. Sheridan would offer him terms he would approve. The Duchess will, in case this should take place, endeavour to obtain for Mrs. Elliston a great number of scholars."

There can be no doubt that the " desire of the Duchess" was, in point of fact, the suggestion of Sheridan himself; but Elliston's duty and inclinations had both been pledged to his Bath friends; and, for the present at least, he refused acceding to any permanent engagement in London.

Thornton, the Windsor manager, having offered proposals to Elliston for his services for a certain number of nights, Robert William solicits the advice of his friend

Lord Harcourt on the occasion, and receives the following answer:—

"Oxford, July 11, 1799.

"SIR,—As I understand their Majesties will not leave Windsor before the beginning of next month, I am glad to hear that you are in treaty with Mr. Thornton, as it will be the means of making your talents known to the King and Queen, who, I doubt not, will honour you with their commands. I have apprised them of the probability of your engagement at Windsor, and allow me to say, their Majesties are no strangers to the opinion I entertain of your abilities in the art you profess.

"I fear you will experience some difficulty in your choice of character for an appearance before their Majesties; for I must observe, that if Mr. Thornton's company be not improved since I last saw it, then is it only fit to exhibit in a village barn. Spite of this, I wish you had seen Mr. Fawcett and Munden in the 'Birthday;' their performance was exquisite; worthy, not only the Garrick school, but even Garrick himself. Munden is an actor of true genius; but I trust he will, for the future, *honour* Nature, and not hold her up to scorn; that he will see by the *fairly* earned applause he obtained in the above drama, that it is not necessary to become a Merry-Andrew in order to please. The loudest laugh is not always the liveliest sensation of delight, it is a kind of *borachio*, which leads to no better satisfaction than a headache.

"*Don Felix, Charles Surface, Young Wilding*, the *Jew* (in the 'Jew and Doctor'), and *Vapour*, are characters which would please their Majesties, and represent you to advantage. *Walter*, one of your best performances, I do not mention, because *I am sure the King will never again see the 'Children in the Wood.'* Pray give my compliments to Mrs. Elliston, and believe me to be, your humble servant,

"HARCOURT."

In consequence of this flattering correspondence with his noble patron, Elliston arrived at Windsor, and by command of his Majesty acted on the following night,

Don Felix, before the royal party. On the 26th, the next night, he was playing at Bristol, and again on the 27th at Windsor. Thus, to and fro, between Bristol and Windsor, he vibrated in the space of each natural day; constant as the sun, for one whole fortnight, he performed his course, and like him imparting light and life to the opaque bodies of his clustering fraternity.

It was interesting as singular to behold, at this time, a sovereign—the King of England, at the head of his family, in simple citizenship, indulging sympathies with his people in their national pastimes; brought almost in contact with them; asking no adulation but the respect of well-disciplined minds to age and honour; placing no restraint on the impulsive expression of joy or wonderment, but leading the way in each indication of delight; echoing the youthful glee which the boy's "first play" excited, and almost pressing the same plank which danced with the compact array of animated gazers!

A fête on the 7th of August, in honour of the birthday of the Princess Amelia, was given by her Majesty at Frogmore, and more especially in consequence of the princess's recovery from recent illness. Elliston was invited to speak some occasional lines, in the character of *Merlin*, before the royal party.

Elliston acted six times in the fortnight's engagement at Windsor, the King having commanded five; by whose order, also, twenty-five guineas were transmitted for his benefit. The comedian cleared by this trip above one hundred guineas.

These daily transits between Bristol and Windsor, being undertaken after each performance, by night (for our hero slept like a top within a coach, as sound and as vertical), were styled by his companions *Night Errantry;* and verily our "Troubadour" could have been no other than "William de la *Tour*" himself, achieving also some certain exploits on these missions, if report be true, not altogether unworthy the famed "Provençal" band.

On one occasion, having acted the night at Windsor, and finding himself too late for the mail on reaching Slough, he was compelled at once to order a post-chaise,

as it was necessary he should arrive at Bath by a certain hour the next day. With but a faint hope of finding any companion at that time of night, who might be about to take the same direction, he still made application within the entry of the " White Hart," when a stranger of no ordinary size, and enveloped in a large shaggy coat, sprang eagerly forward, declaring at once that he " was his man ! "

His new-found friend was evidently a little *sprung*, rough, but not vulgar ; rude in speech, yet on the best terms with the very pride of nobility ; and the tumblers he had emptied (which too frequently, in humble life, like cupping-glasses, only draw out the ill humours of the animal) proved him clearly enough as good-tempered a fellow-voyager as many of his betters. What could he be ?

In summing up the case, Elliston concluded him to be the first-born of some good easy yeoman, who, on his first visit to London, had paid dearly for the " Stranger's Guide," and was now returning with mock satisfaction and empty pockets to astonish the " auld wife at home." Suddenly, the unknown struck up the ballad of " Black-eyed Susan," which he sang not without some slight pretensions to taste ; and on Elliston expressing his satisfaction at the change of entertainment, he again tuned his pipe to " My Friend and Pitcher."

How long he would have pursued this vein of melody is uncertain ; but on the chaise stopping for change of horses (as to the term " fresh," it was far more applicable to the travellers than the poor cattle), he abruptly broke off, and ordering one other tumbler " of the same," cried, " So much for good luck at Moulsey, and now all's over ! But I know you, sir," continued he ; " you are the Prince of Wales. I'll not sell you—I'll not sell you," shaking Elliston cordially. " Here ! mark me ; I would say it before your honoured father himself, God bless him !—never a drop more from this day midnight—six weeks and hard allowance ; you look to me—I know you look to me, and I'll stand your friend."

Like an Egyptian hieroglyphic, full of interest, yet perfectly unintelligible, he continued his fragmental address

for some miles further, when again murmuring, "You're the 'Prince of Wales,'" he fell into a most audible sleep.

In due time, the travellers reached Woolhampton, the place, as Elliston had understood, his friend intended parting; he hereupon roared aloud, "Woolhampton!" This altisonant announcement had the desired effect. Up sprang the tenant of the rough habiliment, and rubbing his eyes violently for a few moments, "Woolhampton?" repeated he. "Yes," continued Elliston; "and here I'm afraid we part."

"Sir," replied the other, taking the actor's hand, "we've been fellow-travellers so far; and now, with best service to ye for the number o' merry tales you've told us, what's the total of my whack?" and out he drew a canvass bag, containing no despicable sum.

"Why, verily, my good fellow——" began Elliston; but the other at once apprehending his meaning, jerked him smartly by the collar, exclaiming, "Gingerly—gingerly! You don't stir to-night unless I pay my whack. Come! how much—a brace o' smelts?"

"A brace of smelts!" repeated Elliston.

"Two half-guineas," continued the other; "remember, I've six hard weeks on't in yon village there. Why, didn't I tell you all at the 'White Hart?'"

"Not a word."

"Whew!—that I should 'a been travelling with a grandee thirty mile, and said not a word!" Elliston here merely interrupted him with a smile. "My name 's Tom Owen," proceeded he, jocosely, but confidentially; "you've heard of the fight that's to come off, in September, at Moulsey, 'twixt me and Davis, as good a man as ever entered the ring; but 'tis plaguy hard, training—six weeks on't. Harkye, I know I'm the better man for a' that; so make your bets." Which having said, and insisted on paying his share of the chaise expenses, he snapped his fingers with a laugh, and was presently out of sight.

Elliston had acted this season at Weymouth, a place to which the King was extremely partial, and where it was no unusual thing for him to take his stroll, unattended.

On the morning of Elliston's benefit, he had been enjoying one of these afternoon wanderings, when rain coming on just as he was passing the theatre-door, in he went, and finding no one immediately at hand, proceeded at once to the royal box, and seated himself in his own chair.

The dim daylight of the theatre, and slight fatigue, which exercise had occasioned, induced an inclination to drowsiness. His Majesty, in fact, fell into a comfortable doze, which presently became a sound sleep. In the mean time, Lord Townshend, who had encountered Elliston in the neighbourhood, inquired whether he had seen the King, as his Majesty had not been at the palace since his three o'clock dinner; and it being then nearly five, the Queen and princesses were in some little anxiety about him. But his lordship gaining no direction from the dramatic star, pursued his object in another course.

Elliston, now making his way to the theatre for the purpose of superintending all things necessary for the reception of his august patrons, went straight into the King's box; and on perceiving a man fast asleep in his Majesty's chair, was about recalling him to his senses, in no gentle manner, when, very fortunately, he recognized the King himself.

What was to be done? Elliston could not presume to wake his Majesty—to approach him—speak to him—touch him, impossible! and yet something was necessary to be attempted, as it was now time the theatre should be lit.

Elliston hit on the following expedient: taking up a violin, from the orchestra, he stepped into the pit, and placing himself just beneath his truly exalted guest, struck up, *dolcemente*, "God Save the King!" The expedient had the desired effect: the royal sleeper was gently loosened from the spell which had bound him; and awaking, up he sprang, and, staring the genuflecting comedian full in the face, exclaimed, "Hey! hey! hey! what, what! Oh, yes! I see, Elliston—ha! ha! rain came on—took a seat—took a nap. What's o'clock?"

"Approaching six, your Majesty."

"Six!—six o'clock!" interrupted the King. "Send to

her Majesty—say I'm here. Stay—stay—this wig won't do,—eh, eh? Don't keep the people waiting—light up—light up—let 'em in—let 'em in—ha! ha! fast asleep.—Play well to-night, Elliston! Great favourite with the Queen. Let 'em in—let 'em in."

The house was presently illuminated—messengers were sent off to the royal party, which, in a short lapse of time, reached the theatre. Elliston then quitted the side of his most affable monarch; and dressing himself in five minutes for his part in the drama, went through his business with bounding spirit; nor was his glee at all diminished, when, on attending the royal visitors to their carriage, the King once more nodded his head, saying, "Fast asleep, eh, Elliston!—fast asleep!"

Elliston was fond of billiards, and played a good game, but had as little chance with the first-rate in this pursuit as any idler who suddenly takes a fancy for a country life, and turns agriculturist in opposition to the whole farming practice of the county.

On one of his excursions to Windsor, he visited the "Subscription Room" of that celebrated town; and amongst other persons, met there a Mr. R., a gentleman of much taste and knowledge in the fine arts, and infinitely a better billiard-player than our hero. Elliston, however, not at all mistrustful of his own abilities, and by this time much accustomed to triumphs in his fanciful undertakings, arrogantly challenged Mr. R. to a trial of skill. The friendly invitation was at once accepted, and the two gentlemen took their places accordingly at the "Board of Green Cloth."

For some time they played about even. The stakes being now raised to a considerable amount, the combatants began anew. The actor required no prompter to give him his cue, nor the artist to be reminded of the bold strokes of the great masters. To it they went—when, after a fair struggle, Apelles beat his adversary completely off the field; so that, in the proportion he filled the pockets of the table, he of course emptied those of the comedian.

Elliston, annoyed by defeat, had now the audacity to accuse his adversary of foul play.

The limner, ill enduring "the immediate jewel of his soul" to be thus outraged, threw down his cue, and advancing to Elliston, threatened to kick him down stairs. But though the assault was the painter's, the battery was the player's; for Elliston, directing a well-aimed blow at the head of his assailant, sent him reeling over a tall coal-scuttle, scattering, at the same time, the bituminous contents over the "Subscribers'" apartment. The painter soon recovered his legs, but was in a woful plight; in the language of art, his eye actually stood out from the canvass, and he displayed a bold outline of feature, of which Fuseli himself might have been enamoured.

The result was a trial, in which a verdict was very properly given for Mr. R., the plaintiff,—damages £50.

Mr. Rundall, having attended the cause in the Court of King's Bench, transmits to our hero the following:—

"The evidence of Brown, the waiter, differed wonderfully from the history he gave to me; he stated that, without any provocation, beyond mortification at your own bad play, you gratified your humour by knocking down your opponent, declaring that, if you couldn't beat him one way, you would another. Your counsel, Erskine, dwelt on the improbability of this statement; and in a humorous speech, alluding to the scuttle, told the jury that this witness being 'hauled over coals, in cross-examination, cut but a dirty figure.'"

About this time, Elliston being at an inn with Manager Shatford, after a night's performance at Salisbury, from which place the only public conveyance to Bath was a coach, which passed through Sarum between two and three o'clock in the morning, Shatford suggested, for pastime, a game at loo.

"But where can we procure a third?" said he,—"the landlord? let's call him up!"

"By all means," responded Elliston. "And I'll run and hold the maids from stepping into bed;" which part of the proposition he was in the act of prosecuting, when

the ears of both were assailed by a voice on the stairs, chanting, "The early Horn salutes the Morn;" and on the two companions opening the door, they descried a tall, gaunt stranger on the landing, in a scarlet coat, brown hat turned up with green, and leathern small clothes, exhibiting unequivocal indications of the lutulent condition of the highways.

Elliston, rushing forward, and catching him by his bespattered tail, exclaimed,—

"You'll make one, sir!—come, let's begin!"

The stranger, not a little astonished, gazed for a moment without reply, and then began, deliberately to resume his stave.

"Hoh! ha! Early Horn!" "What again?" interrupted Elliston; "but hark ye, one game—one round at loo, before you go,—'tis a noble, a charming game. Socrates learnt to dance, and Isocrates played at loo.—Come, come, a chair for 'Actæon'!"

"With all my heart, gentlemen," replied the stranger, raising his hat with profound politeness—"but the poor state of my purse——"

"Nay, nay, we'll lend you five guineas," interposed Shatford.

"Ten!" rejoined Elliston; on which, the guest in scarlet again manifesting the deepest sense of obligation, they all sat down together. Shatford produced his cards, which, like a charm against witchcraft, he ever carried about him, and in a very short time our friend, the "Early Horn," made considerable progress. He presently won the five guineas already lent to him! and in the course of one half-hour cleared the purses of Elliston and his companion; winning, in fine, a gold pencil-case, the last tenant of Robert William's side-pocket.

Deliberately drawing forth his watch, and marking the time, the gentleman in red, with his wonted politeness, rose to take his leave.

"You'll give us our revenge, sir?" shrieked *Octavian*.

"Why really, sir, I would indulge you," continued the tall traveller, "but I have an engagement at Devizes, to cut a cock's head off!"

"*To cut a cock's head off!*" repeated Elliston, with the most petrifying solemnity—"to cut a cock's head off!—and have we been playing with a decapitator of the sultan of dunghills? Who are you, sir?"

"Much at your service," answered the politest horseman in England, presenting, at the same time, a card, not remarkable for cleanliness, on which Elliston, in his beloved intonation of voice, read,—"*Mr. Moon, the celebrated conjurer, whose dexterity in command of the cards is universally acknowledged, will undertake to convey the contents of any gentleman's purse into his, Mr. Moon's, pocket, with surprising facility. He will, moreover, cut a cock's head off without injuring that noble bird!*"

It may be well conceived the group at this moment formed rather a striking picture. The scarlet Caterfelto was the first to dissolve the tableau; when, again bending his body, he quitted the apartment, with the same marked politeness he had entered it.

Lord Harcourt's favour and interest had operated usefully to Mrs. Elliston's progress in the good graces of the great. "*Mrs. Elliston*" was the fashion—the rage! The young *débutantes* in elegant life were proud of the instruction received under her direction.

Eminently endowed with those qualities which tend to the solid endurance of domestic peace, she was cheerful, but circumspect; gentle, yet energetic; and liberal, yet prudent in all her actions.

Elliston, at this period (the commencement of 1801), was suddenly possessed by an *esprit de vertige*—a fancy for obtaining a royal license for opening a third theatre in London; and such was the sanguine quality of his mind, that in his own imagination he beheld the new edifice already built—himself absolute dictator—onward as the hero of Marengo—threatening the dynasties of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and declaring their stage-doors in a state of positive blockade. On this subject the Earl admonishes him in the following terms:—

"Harcourt House, April 25, 1801.

"SIR,—My firm belief is, that the King would not be inclined to grant another patent; and were his Majesty so disposed, the opposition of the existing patentees would induce the King to yield to their prayer in petition against it.

"Recollect, too, the existing theatres have been enlarged, to meet the extended population of the town; and if you were to examine their accounts at the termination of each season, you would perhaps find that the number of persons who frequent plays scarcely remunerate the exertions of the 'Rival Houses.' The pure drama has but little attraction for the unhappy fancy of the day. How is success at present calculated on?—a five-act farce composed of such characters as never did yet exist, intermixed, occasionally, with some forced, or sickly sentiment, supported by grimace or buffoonery, with the motley train of processions, battles, spectres, pantomimes, and Scaramouch ballets. I should regret that you, sir, should administer to this perversion of a noble study; but this you must do, should your object be pecuniary success in any new theatrical speculation."

On the 1st of August, a *fête dramatique* took place at Radipole, under the immediate direction of the Princess Elizabeth—a kind of *masque champêtre*, projected, and given by her royal highness to the King and Queen, including other branches of the family, and many of the nobility.

A superb tent was erected for the reception of their Majesties, before whom young damsels, in the character of Dryads, tripped, and carolled, scattering flowerets and devices. Then an entertainment by agrestic masquerade: a party of comedians, attired as gipsies, being grouped under a hedge in the distance, which formed the boundary of the pansied stage. Here was a "King" mightier than George of England, and a "Queen" of spells more potent than the flag of Britain; for here, enthroned, were *Oberon* and *Titania*—here, *Puck* and *Pease-blossom*,

and here—a handful of fairies, outtripping far the Alpine progress of the hero of Marengo. Music, too, breaking in dulcet sounds the willing air, joined the conspiracy to charm and captivate.

At a later period of the entertainment, Elliston appeared before the delighted party in the quality of "Herald of the British arms!" The Danish fleet had been just destroyed by Lord Nelson; and in the same year the French had been defeated by Abercrombie at Alexandria. Elliston, laying the captured ensigns of victory at the feet of the King, repeated a poetic address, written expressly by the Princess Amelia.

The applause which followed this recital had scarcely ceased, when Elliston, a new impersonation—"forsooth, took on him as a conjurer"—and in the garb of "*Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus Paracelsus de Hohenheim*," or more familiarly, as the renowned Paracelsus, presented himself again on the parterre.

> "—— ille suæ non immemor artis,
> Omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum."

In this he was very happy; sustaining the part of the magician, with timely allusions to the martial glories of England—that the genius of Britain was, in fact, the long-dreamt-of philosopher's stone, and the valour of her sons that moral elixir, diffusing unanimity and peace throughout the nations of the world!

There was but one slight failure in this whole tissue of clap-trap. A young vocalist of some promise, belonging to the Weymouth company, having been appointed to sing one of Dibdin's ballads, in the costume of a sailor, was seized by sudden panic on being brought into the presence of real Majesty, and most piteously broke down at the first stanza. His cheek fairly struck its colours; his whistle failed him, and in point of fact, the British *tar* "stuck in his throat." The King good-humouredly observed it was the first time he had ever seen an English sailor frightened.

Elliston having transmitted all these fine accounts to

his wife, at Bath, she writes the following to his uncle, the Doctor :—

"Bath, August 20, 1801.

"MY DEAR SIR,—As I know the pleasure you always feel in hearing good news of ourselves, I am induced to send you a short statement of Mr. Elliston's progress at Weymouth. He tells me that the royal family witnessed all his performances, and said so many handsome things of him, that had he not been writing to *me*, his sense of modesty would have withheld him from repeating them. At an entertainment given by the Princess Elizabeth, at Radipole, he was entrusted with the whole management. The King presented him with twenty-five guineas, the Queen with ten, the Princess Elizabeth twelve, and he received ten in addition from the rest of the royal family.

"I bless God that our prospects are so good ; and I pray blessings on those who have been the instruments, in His hands, of conferring on us so much comfort. Your god-daughter, Eliza, has had the hooping-cough, but is now fast recovering ; the other two continue well.

"I have ventured to send you half a dozen of our Bath cheeses, as you may have some friends near you whom you might wish to oblige with a sample, as well as for your own use. And believe me, my dear sir, with all respect and gratitude,

"Your dutiful Niece,

"ELIZABETH ELLISTON."

As we have professed in the outset, so will we endeavour to preserve to the end, the character of fidelity in these pages, nor, in tenderness to the memory of our subject, cast a veil over facts which might operate as a lesson to others in a career similar to his own.

Within two months from the date of the above, the following was addressed to Elliston, by his friend Mr. Rundall, brother to his wife :—

"MY DEAR ROBERT,—I have heard a piece of intelligence which has afflicted me more severely than anything which has occurred to me for many years. This, to speak out, is your love of gaming! Dalmeida has given me this most unwelcome information. He was lately in company with some friends—theatrical and otherwise; and on mentioning you with commendation, a gentleman present—a counsellor, very high in his profession—acceded willingly to your public talents, but pronounced you a *determined —an habitual gamester*.

"Your exploits are the gossip amongst the very waiters at the White Hart. You will gain the character of a blackleg long before you will acquire wit enough to live by his profession.

"I will not, my dear Robert, disguise my sentiments from you, however deeply they may wound you for the moment; for, by the blessing of God, you may have hereafter cause to thank me. I am cut to the soul when I contemplate these facts, looking on you, at the same time, as a husband and a father. Think of your shame, too, should the knowledge, the hint only of these reports, reach your uncle—one who has indeed been a parent to you, having cherished you in your days of guiltlessness, and forgiven your after transgressions. For the sake of others, let me implore you to reflect! I have not told you all I have heard, nor many anecdotes, which I am still willing to account untrue.

"I am most affectionately yours,

"T. W. RUNDALL.

"East-India House, Dec. 18, 1801."

Having fulfilled our duty by inserting the above, we turn cheerfully to an incident which will show that our subject could sometimes be merry without sacrifice of character:—

In the vicinity of the Abbey Church, Bath, resided a Mr. Sims, an opulent woollen-draper.

This personage was a bachelor, and at this time, about sixty-five years of age. His figure was tall, his step airy, his deportment the flower of politeness, and in disputes

he was the very Atticus of parties. His dress was usually a suit of grey; and his hair, of which there was a profusion, being perfectly white, whereunto a queue appended, gave him somewhat of a *Sir Joshua* contour; though perhaps he bore a nearer resemblance to the more modern portrait of that precise merchant, as personated by the late Mr. Terry, in Poole's little comedy of "Simpson and Co."

While he paid a marked deference to all men's opinions, he had a mistrust of his own, which was singularly curious.

His *ménage* consisted of a duplicate female attendant, that is, two separate beings, but with brains under the same meridian, whose autumnal time of life and counterpart in attire rendered them perfectly homogeneous.

The great characteristic of Mr. Sims was a painful precision in all things. His hat always occupied the left peg in respect of his coat. His parlour furniture was cased in cotton covers, which covers were again involuted by divers sheets of brown paper. Everything, according to him, was "to wear even;" if he pulled *this* bell-rope on the first occasion, he would bear in mind to handle *that* on the second; every chair, teacup, and silver spoon, had its day of labour and relaxation; and had he discovered that, by misadventure, he had worn a pair of shoes or grey stockings out of turn, he would positively have lost his stomach.

In his dressing-room, he was constantly attended by his two tire-women; not that he actually required the services of both, but by such means the reputation of each was kept in a state of preservation; and, to conclude, whenever he retired to bed, he invariably crept up the foot of it, that his linen might be without a wrinkle.

It may not at once appear, how any sympathy could have existed between Elliston and such a matter-of-fact character as this; but Mr. Sims was by no means an ascetic; if never as wise as Ximenes, he was not always as moderate as Fleury; and in respect of his little indulgences, like the country wench, he looked very much as

though he had rather sin again, than repent. An extra glass of punch, or a visit prolonged to midnight, constituted his excess; though once, indeed, he had been known to have so far mystified himself, as to toast a certain female of no extraordinary virtue, in a tumbler of toddy. He, however, confessed that for three days from the above event he had not the assurance to look on himself in the glass.

On a certain afternoon, a knock announced some visitor at Elliston's door, and Mr. Sims deferentially entered.

"My dear Mr. Elliston," cried he, as he advanced, with a step lighter than a roebuck, "this is charming!—and how well you look! Listen: you positively must—must, I say, dine with me to-day."

"Dine with *you*, Mr. Sims?" exclaimed Elliston, in a tone which must have been truly comic. "My good Mr. Sims——"

"——Nay, nay—I shall be downright riotous if I hear any excuses. I absolutely must—must have you. In fact," continued he, making a leg, as he advanced, and tapping the tip of his left fore-finger with the corresponding extremity of the right, "my dinner is already ordered—within one hour will be served;—see, with what little ceremony I treat you."

There was something irresistibly grotesque even in the proposition.

"To-day! said you, worthy neighbour?" demanded Elliston, as he passed his hand thoughtfully across his forehead—"to-day—that is—*this* day, is——"

"Thursday, I would suggest," interposed Sims, most apologetically.

"Just so; and here comes my friend Quick, who reminds me of his promised visit. Dinner on table punctually at five—" continued Elliston, addressing himself to Quick, just as he entered; while he himself was quite aware he had not a solitary cutlet in the house.

"But—but—" interrupted Sims, with his fingers as before—"my humble fare is preparing—is nearly ready——"

"——And will be excellent when eaten cold to-

morrow," rejoined Elliston; "but to-day—to-day, Sims, you are *my* guest!"

The draper having recovered from the shock which these words occasioned, was evidently as pleased as Punch at the proposition, though he looked on the affair as one of the maddest pranks ever yet attempted.

"I will at least apprise my domestics," said Sims, catching up his hat and cane, with the intention of tripping off to his own abode; but Elliston, grasping his arm with considerable melodramatic effect, said, "Not so, friend Sims; this is a point easier settled; and our time is short. Take your own card, neighbour, and just subscribe in pencil, '*remains to-day with Mr. Elliston,*' and I will despatch it instantly to your own house."

The expedient was no sooner suggested than adopted, and Elliston, taking Mr. Sims' card, vanished instantly from the room, for the purpose already named, but secretly interpolated certain other words to the protocol in question, so that it ran thus—"*Mr. Sims remains to-day with Mr. Elliston, and begs that the dinner he had ordered, may be carefully delivered, just as prepared, to the bearer.*"

This being achieved, Elliston returned to the apartment; and Quick being, by this time, clearly aware some *belle plaisanterie* was in blossom, took part in the amicable contest of civil things, till dinner was announced; and thus, within a quarter of an hour of five, the happy trio sat down together.

But no sooner was the first cover removed, than Sims, with some little look of surprise, and great show of satisfaction, exclaimed—"A trout! Mr. Elliston. Well, and I protest a very fine one! but the fishmonger 's a rogue, for he told me *mine* was the only one in the market!"

"Fishmongers do lie most abominably," observed Elliston; "why, he told me the very same thing,—Come, a glass of wine."

A second cover was now removed, and a shoulder of mutton, admirably dressed, was presented; at the sight of which Sims, clasping his hands in token of renewed astonishment, exclaimed,

"A shoulder of mutton!—why, it *is* a shoulder—the very dish I had ordered myself."

"Similar, similar," interposed Quick, laughingly; "a coincidence."

"Coincidences are indeed extraordinary," observed Elliston. "I remember in May, —99, the very day Seringapatam was taken, our sexton's wife was brought to bed of twins."

"With great humility, my dear Mr. Elliston," whispered Sims, "that may be a coincidence; but is it, think you, so very—very remarkable?"

"Why, Hindostan does not yield us cities every spring," replied Elliston, "nor are sextons' wives brought to bed of twins, as a matter of course."

"And that both of these events should have happened on the same day, is at least extraordinary," added Quick.

Here Elliston again suggested a glass of wine all round.

By this time a third cover was removed, and a tart, very temptingly served, succeeded, which Elliston having commenced dividing, Sims rose from his chair, and extending his hands, screamed out,

"An apple-pie, as I live! Forgive me for swearing, but I gave special orders for an apple-pie myself. Apple—apple, said I to Mrs. Green and Mrs. Blowflower, and here it is!"

"Yes, I'll give up Seringapatam after this," said Elliston, mysteriously; "but when fruit is in season, you know——why, I'll be bound they have an apple-tart next door."

"Apples are unusually plentiful this year," observed Quick.

"Come, another glass of wine! It shall at least be no apple of discord."

The repast was now drawing to a close, and Elliston, who had promised his guests a bottle of superior port wine, gave orders for its immediate introduction; but in the mean time, half a Stilton cheese, in prime condition, was placed on the table.

We are told that a certain *maréchal* of France was always taken in convulsions at the sight of a sucking-pig; that Tycho Brahe swooned at the glimpse of poor puss; but nothing could exceed the shock produced by the

sudden appearance of the said Stilton cheese on the nerves of Mr. Sims. Springing from his seat, as though stung by an adder, he shrieked aloud,

"A cheese! a cheese!—and is it possible? a Stilton cheese, too!"

"My good Sims——" interposed Elliston.

"—— 'Tis magic! magic! Excuse me for swearing; but I—*I, myself*, my dear Mr. Elliston, have a Stilton, too!"

"And what more probable?"

"But the mould!—that fine blue mould!—and all this marble tracing—'tis most positively the same!"

"Similar, similar," interposed Quick, a second time.

"Tell me," said Elliston, with an ineffable look of wisdom, "where did you purchase your half Stilton?"

"At Coxe's," was the reply.

"Then, upon my honour, the cheese before you was bought at the same place. Why, 'tis the other half! and your fine blue mould and marble veining must inevitably correspond to the minutest speck. The fact is, we have been lucky to-day in hitting each other's taste. Come, the port!"

This lucid judgment was acquiesced in by Sims, and the cloth being removed, the host began to push the bottle.

In vain have we collected all the fine things that transpired from this moment. The three friends were in considerable force, and the decanter circulated as briskly as a hat in a mountebank's ring. As the wine sank, their spirits rose; Mr. Sims so far forgot himself as to remember a song, and by ten o'clock there was not a happier gentleman of threescore in the four parishes.

Mr. Sims being now sufficiently far gone—in fact, very, very tipsy—Elliston gave directions for a sedan-chair to be in waiting, and collecting the crockery of the woollen-draper, which had lately graced the dinner-table, he placed the pyramidical pile on a wooden tray, flanking the edifice by the four black bottles they had just emptied.

All things being now in readiness, Mr. Sims, much against his inclination, was assisted into the chair; the

tray and porcelain, borne on the head of a porter, like a board of black plumes in advance of a solemn hearse, led the procession to the Abbey Churchyard. The body of Mr. Sims, dancing between the poles, came next in order, while Elliston and his friend, as chief mourners, brought up the rear. In this way they reached the blest abode of the illustrious departed, and having "made wet their eyes with penitential tears," left the rites of sepulture to the care of Mrs. Green and Mrs. Blowflower.

Elliston, in the summer of 1802, received the following communication from his lively friend, Mr. Gore. It is written from Tenby :—

"Never in my days have I been so disappointed in a place as this. We have neither bread, meat, liquor, horses, conveyances, nor lodging. Alexander Selkirk was not more destitute. We have no clothing, but what we carry with us; no water, but the sea, and we must fish for our living.

"I made a visit to the small isle of Caldy; it is throughout alive with rabbits, as a cheese is said to be with mites. Their multitudes might inspire even their pavid nature with courage to attack, and brought to my fancy the fate of that unhappy prisoner who, thrown into a blind dungeon, was in one night literally devoured with rats.

"I am in a hovel which is termed an hotel, with less accommodation than a roadside alehouse, and by no means so picturesque. One of the female natives acts in the capacity of landlady, a being resembling the 'Maid' in the comedy of 'Rule a Wife,' as our players are pleased to represent her; with great variety in her face, her eyes being of different colours, and the left side of her nose gone.

"I was yesterday witness to an exhibition which, though greatly ridiculous, was not wholly so, for it was likewise pitiable; and this was in the persons of two individuals who have lately occupied much public attention—I

[Henry Twistleton Elliston, born 14th January, 1802. Godfather, the Hon. C. J. Twistleton.]

mean the Duke of Bronté, Lord Nelson, and Emma, Lady Hamilton. The whole town was at their heels as they walked together. The lady is grown immensely fat and equally coarse, while her 'companion in arms' had taken the other extreme—thin, shrunken, and, to my impression, in bad health. They were evidently vain of each other, as though the one would have said, 'This is the Horatio of the Nile!' and the other, 'This is the Emma of Sir William!'

"Poor Sir William! wretched, but not abashed, he followed at a short distance, bearing in his arms a *cucciolo,* and other emblems of combined folly. You remember Hogarth's admirable subject, '*Evening;*' it somewhat illustrates the scene I would describe.

"This distinguished trio are concluding a summer tour; but at Blenheim, I understand, they encountered a rebuff, which must have stung the hero to the quick. Emma is reported to have said—'Nelson shall have a monument, to which Blenheim shall be but a pig-sty!'

"After what I have said of Tenby, what think you of a theatre in the town? But such is no less the fact. Truly, it is no bigger than a bulky bathing-machine, and bears about the same proportion to Sadler's Wells as a silver penny to a Spanish dollar. They play 'The Mock Doctor' to-night,. and the Hero of the Nile is the subject of an Address."

We will beg leave, *en passant,* to notice some incidents in the career of Lady Hamilton:—

Emma Lyon, after quitting the service of the honest tradesman in St. James's Market, which must have been about the year 1777, passed into the family of Mr. Linley, the composer, where she first gave indications of strong natural talent for music. Novels and romances, however, engrossing that attention which housemaids are expected to give to other studies, and the "Minerva Press" having gained an entire ascendancy over the linen press, she was dismissed; and thus becoming her own mistress, made at least one step towards becoming the mistress of others.

That clever actress, Mrs. Powell, was at this time

a servant also in a family at Blackfriars. The two damsels became acquainted, and being of similar dispositions, their hearts were presently open to each other; and as these, together with their heels, were as light as might be, they started on what we should call at the present day "a lark," and in the capacity of ballad-singers, made their *entrée* at the Cocksheath camp.

Mr. Perry, who was afterwards proprietor of the "Morning Chronicle," with his friend Bish, subsequently director of the well-known lottery office—young men at this period—made a similar excursion to this celebrated depôt, and in a sutler's booth fell in with the two adventurous girls.

The gentlemen were at once struck with their wit and deportment; and though they looked on them as ballad-singers of no common order, yet they verily believed them to be ballad-singers, having no suspicion of their real elevation as housemaids. Unsuspecting as *Killigrew* and *Sidney* when at the playhouse, in the actual presence of the blonde *Jennings* and dazzling *Price*, equipped as saucy orange-girls, they were, nevertheless, not so careless of the *bonne fortune* which the adventure seemed to promise; but, rather with the perseverance of *Rochester* and *Brounker*, they determined to trace the damsels to London; for it is nothing more than just to the character of the girls to mention that they had obstinately refused a treat offered them at a tavern, and were now dexterously eluding their suitors, whom they began to look on as persecutors.

"Vitas hinnuleo me similis, Chloe," cried the baffled Perry, which, as Emma did not hear nor Bish understand, he might have spared. As to Bish himself, it was hard that *he* should lose a "prize," yet such appeared to be the fate which awaited both, when, to their mortification, they beheld the wenches mount a higgler's cart for the purpose of making their final escape.

It was now half-past two on the following morning, and the creaking caravan had already commenced its journey. Perry and Bish had travelled to Cocksheath on horseback, and now, as on a sudden alarum "to arms,"

they had to seek their steeds. The stables were closed, and the ostler fast asleep. However, by dint of thundering with their sticks, the man was roused. The *couchant* animals were started from their repose; the unoccupied beds at a neighbouring inn paid for, and within three quarters of an hour of the fugitives, *Robin Hood* and his companion were in full pursuit.

After a gallop of above an hour, during which not a word was exchanged, the horsemen pulled up, and Perry, with a look of ineffable concern, said, very wisely, "The jades have been over cunning for us, and have taken another road." Bish was too blown immediately to reply, but gave some pantomimic indication that he was much of the same opinion. They continued their course, however, at a foot pace, and after spending an hour at an alehouse, for the purpose of refreshing their horses, they resumed their journey towards London.

It was now nearly seven o'clock when our two friends, jaded and disappointed, had entered the Kent Road, and were approaching London Bridge, that a loud shout of merriment induced them simultaneously to turn about, and to their unspeakable delight they beheld the caravan, passengers complete, in the act of giving them the "go-by."

All was again hope and activity. Suddenly the cart stopped, and out jumped one of the girls,—Emma,—when the vehicle as instantaneously jogged on towards the bridge. Bish's "prize" being still "in the wheel," he stuck close to the caravan, while Perry directed all his attention towards the flying *Daphne*. In a twinkling he lost sight of her. What was to be done? He could not dismount, unless, indeed, at the price of his horse. Wild with vexation, he looked on one side and on the other—paced backwards and forwards—expressing himself in terms that even startled the tired animal.

Being now on the centre of the bridge, and casting his eyes over the parapet, he descried Emma in a wherry, taking the down direction of the river. No sooner did she perceive he had discovered her, than she gave distinct evidence of unbounded mirth, waving her ivory

arms in token of victory. Ill-starred Perry! In a state of frenzy he sat grinding his teeth and threatening vain revenge; nor did he quit the spot until he saw the little vixen safely ashore, whence she finally vanished amid the gloom of Wapping.

Such was the Cocksheath adventure; but *Robin Hood* and his ally were, in fine, amply recompensed for all their toil. Bish traced his damsel to her service in Bridge Street, where, if she did not put off the garb of a princess, she certainly resumed that of a *Cinderella;* through whom a meeting, within a few days, was effected between Perry and Emma; and the double couple, from this time, entered on the most agreeable interchange of favours.

Not long after the marriage of Sir William Hamilton with the witching Emma, Marinari made a visit to Naples, with letters of introduction to the ambassador.

Sir William received the artist with affability in his *studio.* It was a chamber at the upper part of the house, without any apparent entrance, and entirely surrounded with looking-glass. Fancy was gratified with specimens of the choice antique, while nothing was wanting to administer to luxurious imaginings or fulfil the variety in actual enjoyment.

> "Sofas, 'twas half a sin to sit upon,
> So costly were they;—carpets, every stitch
> Of workmanship so rare, they made you wish
> You could glide o'er them like a golden fish."

After some conversation on the arts, Sir William expressed a wish that Marinari would visit him the next day, for the purpose of taking a drawing of one of the finest models of the human form.

Punctual to his appointment, and armed with the necessary implements for the work in question, the artist took his position in the hall of mirrors, patiently awaiting his more circumstantial instructions. After a short pause, seraphic sounds, first in soft murmurs, broke upon the ear—perfumes, sweeter than the violet, mounted to the delighted sense—harmony then, in the fulness of sound, proclaimed the scene at hand, and Emma Hamilton,

attired as "Hebe," with about as much drapery as poetry permits, glided from the secret opening of a glass panel, and stood before the bewildered painter.

The words of Sir William were verified to the letter. "Never had the artist witnessed a form so lovely,—a grace so enchanting." He felt totally disarmed of all power of art, and the pencil he held was a lifeless reed. Like the wily magician, Sir William watched, in secret exultation, the working of his spell. "To your task," said he, "Begin!"

Again was the air gently agitated by the strains of music, as though sweeping over the distant bay.

"'Tis a dream!—a vision!" exclaimed the half-terrified painter. And as he turned his gaze a moment from the canvass, the airy figure vanished as it came. "Oh, forgive me my sins!" cried Marinari, like the bewildered *Trinculo*.

The magician, however, had not yet fully accomplished his purpose; Marinari was that day detained the ambassador's guest. A sumptuous entertainment succeeded, at which the modern *Thais* presided. Here, all that was most costly was most profusive. Imagination could suggest nothing which art had been unequal to supply to this house of joy; but the bleeding soil in which its foundations were laid claimed not a sigh, not a thought; nor were the mingling cries of trampled thousands for one moment heard amidst the unpausing shout of diplomatic festivity.

As to poor Marinari, excess followed soon upon indulgence; bewildered with delight, he was now more mystified with the grape, and if the day commenced with illusion, the night closed in absolute forgetfulness. Like *Christopher Sly*, he awoke the next morning in his own narrow cell, nor had he quite made up his mind between the substance and the shadow, when Sir William Hamilton accosted him with an English gripe, which left but little doubt on the question of identity.

During the Bath recess, Elliston commenced manager of the pigmy theatres (we might have said bandboxes, had there been either *band* or *boxes*) of Wells and Shepton

Mallet, where he played everything, from *Macbeth* to *Pantaloon*; so that he very fairly might have been considered a host in himself.

On one occasion he made the extraordinary experiment of sustaining the two parts of *Richard* and *Richmond* in the same drama, and this he executed with the most amusing dexterity. *Richmond*, it will be remembered, makes his *entrée* in the last act of the play, when the scenes become alternate, in which the king and the earl are before the audience. On making his exit as *Richard*, Elliston dropped his hump from his shoulder, as he would a knapsack, and straightening his leg with the facility of a posture-master, slipped into a bit of pasteboard armour, and, galeated with fresh head-gear, went through the heroic lines of the Tudor prince. Well might the interpolation have been forgiven, "*Myself am to my own turned enemy!*" Going off on the other side of the stage, he was expeditiously again invested with his bison shape, and thrusting a sheet of music into his stocking, was again the vindicator of the Yorkist rose.

In this way he carried through the scenes until the last; and when the field was to be decided by personal collision, shifted was the pasteboard to the body of a shifter of scenes, who, being enjoined to say nothing, but fight like a devil, was thus enabled to bear the drama successfully to a close; in which, so far from "six Richmonds in the field," there had not been one; and as to Richard, if "deformed," he was indeed "unfinished," and "but half-made up."

Elliston, active in body as well as mind, in the heyday of youth and spirits, positively gloried in these little shifts and hindrances, transmuting all dilemmas into rosy laughter, by an alchemy peculiar to his own genius.

His love of fun often got the better of his sense of dignity; and when it is remembered that this latter organ was pretty strongly developed in the character of Robert William, his love of fun must, at times, have been indeed exuberant. He acted *Macbeth* and *Harlequin*, *Hamlet* and the *Clown*; so that by the time he had closed his profitless campaign at Shepton Mallet and Wells, it is a

question whether his scenic impersonations had not outnumbered his audience.

Elliston, on his re-appearance at Weymouth, had the happiness of finding he had lost no portion of his Majesty's favour, since last he had had the honour of acting before the royal party. At his benefit, his Majesty being present, Elliston introduced his own daughter Eliza, then only five years old, in a dance; on which occasion, Mrs Elliston and her sister also made their appearance in the same ballet of action. This was entitled the "Temple of Fame," composed expressly by Mrs. Elliston, quite as full of loyalty as poetry—"Peace, the offspring of British valour!"—"King George," an illuminated medallion, with a transparent young woman *volante*, above his shoulders, blowing the only trumpet in the playhouse. An additional stanza to "God Save the King," telling regenerate France what she was to expect from the British Lion, terminated the occasion.

It being Elliston's property as a "star" to light the King through the narrow mazes of "all the world"—namely, the "stage," it was by no means below the dignity of Majesty to hold communion with his astral guide. George the Third was a good king, and consulted his stars; and although he frequently put more questions to them in a breath than they could reply to in a night, yet it was sufficient to show he duly acknowledged their intendency.

"Well, well, Elliston," said he; "where—where have you been acting lately?"

"At Wells and Shepton Mallet, your Majesty, in which places I was manager."

"Manager—manager! that won't do—that won't do, eh, Charlotte? Managers go to the wall—get the worst of it." Her Majesty graciously vouchsafed a smile on the attendant comedian.

"It *didn't* do, your Majesty. At Wells I was particularly unfortunate."

"At Wells—Wells!" replied the King, good-humouredly, "'mongst the bishops! quite right—quite right; no business with the bishops, eh, Charlotte?" Her Majesty

here turned a look of slight rebuke upon her lord—"Bishops don't go to plays—no business at plays—you, no business with them. Well, well, where next?"

"I returned to Weymouth, where I have redeemed everything, in the honour of serving your Majesty."

"Eh, eh?" responded the King, in the same affability of tone and manner—"What, kings better than bishops, eh?—found it out—found it out, Elliston?"

By this time their Majesties had entered the carriage, and the King having taken the seat, cried out, while the horses were withheld one moment to his signal, "Bishops and managers—both a mistake—ought to have known better—eh, eh, Elliston?" and away they drove.*

But neither the gracious hint of the King, the repeated caution of the earl, nor Elliston's own observation on the fate of managers, could restrain him long from new speculations. His "ventures were not in one bottom trusted, nor to one place."

The Liverpool theatre was now "to be let:" Elliston was amongst the first in the field, and in this instance preferred consulting his uncle, before whom he placed so clear but flattering a statement of the question, that the Doctor agreed to become security for two years' rent—namely, 3,000*l.* The property passed to the united

* The royal house of Brunswick had always been attached to theatrical amusements. George II., notwithstanding his imperfect knowledge of the English language, was still fond of going to the play.

Frederick of Wales, his son, directed Mrs. Devenish (whose first husband was Rowe, the poet) to prepare an edition of Rowe's dramatic works, for the benefit of the young princes, who were in the habit of acting plays at Leicester House. These were under the direction of Quin. The graceful manner in which Prince George delivered his first speech from the throne, impelled this celebrated actor to exclaim, "Ah, I taught that boy to speak!"

On the 4th Jan. 1749, the children of his royal highness, with the aid of some juvenile branches of the nobility, performed the tragedy of "Cato" before the Court—and the following was the cast:—

Portius......	Prince George.	*Sempronius* ..	Master Evelyn.
Juba........	Prince Edward.	*Decius*	Lord Milsington.
Cato........	Master Nugent.	*Marcia*......	Princess Augusta.
Lucius......	Master Montague.	*Lucia*	Princess Elizabeth.

bidding of Lewis and T. Knight, who, like *Hippias* and *Hipparchus*, now succeeded to the joint investiture of Attic sovereignty.

The speculation terminated very profitably to both these adventurers. They continued lessees till their death; and one of Lewis's family held the theatre until within the last few years, when he retired from the toils of management on a handsome independence.

Late in 1802, Coleman writes, as follows:—

"My purpose is to offer you an engagement at the Haymarket; but to suit *me*, it must be for a longer duration than any of our former agreements—and such I trust may suit *you*. In short, we must meet on the Haymarket ground next year for four months, or not at all. It is my intention to open the house on the 15th of May, with an independent company, to support the new efforts of my pen which has been so long smokedried in London.

"As I know what may be your own views, I offer the following general outline of agreement—articles, for *three years;* a weekly salary of 12*l.*, and a benefit. Your business will be that of a performer of the first rank in the company. Remember, you have eight months of the year at your own disposal, during which you will, of course, not be idle.

To this a long correspondence succeeded on the subject. Elliston, like the paper on which he wrote, was "Bath superfine;" but his line of argument was businesslike:—

"Had I," he says, "voluntarily offered you a commodity for purchase, I might have been expected, perhaps, to accept the terms you have named; but as you come to me, who am no willing seller, on your own exigencies, you have no right to complain of my conditions. It is like money; money is more valuable at one time than another, to a certain party; and if this be your case, and you will have it, why you must pay for it. I have already invested the capital of my professional attraction here with 'Bath, Bristol, and Co.,' and 'I must sell out at an amazing loss' to satisfy you. This is usurious language;

but I cannot apply the metaphor to one who will better understand its force, than George Colman."

Again, he says,—

"The terms you have offered me are liberal; and when I object, I do it, not from a belief that I am a better actor than some you have hitherto engaged, but that circumstances have made me more attractive. If that attraction were a mop-stick without a head, still the mutilated piece of household stuff would be worthy its results. Some time since, you gave me a clear benefit and twenty guineas per week, for my eight weeks—I am now to come to you, with more experience and greater fame, on a less remuneration. I shall take all the risk, while you grow fat on the cream of the dairy."

He concluded by asking twenty pounds per week and a clear benefit. But,

"Wits are game-cocks to one another."

The "mop-stick" produced the following cudgelling—

"You tell me I have made you a liberal offer, and yet you demand a great deal more; now a foot beyond liberality seems to me a stride beyond common sense.

"I cannot call you a mop-stick, and I am quite sure you are not without a head; but while you were with me, as a new broom, you never swept money into my treasury in proportion to the price with which you have ticketed yourself. If you should again take a brush in the Haymarket, what you carried off before is nothing to the present business, or rather, is an argument against your proposal.

"That you have more fame is undeniable; but it is that country fame of which the good London people know and care as little as may be. But it is past a doubt that you would have left the metropolis with a currency of fame payable on demand everywhere, had you kept your account in the Haymarket instead of going to Covent Garden. If I, in a new and hazardous speculation, accede to your lofty terms, I cannot conceive how you will take all the risk, nor (since at Covent Garden you kicked down a little of the milk) how I am to get all the cream

of the dairy. Did it never occur to you that, as some of your reasons for swelling your demands were grounded on the fear of future loss, if that loss did not occur, you should refund something of your profits in the Hay-market? This, my good friend, I fear, has never entered that head which you certainly have.

"Let us now go to work again; I want you, and have fairly told you so; the following is my ultimatum. Fourteen pounds per week, and a clear benefit, as a performer; to cease after one season, or proceed for three, at *my* option, not *yours*."

After sundry other recapitulations, Elliston concludes his letter by accepting the terms which Coleman had offered in his last, and at the same time earnestly recommending Blissett to the manager's attention.

"Be assured," says he, "you ought not to miss sight of him; he is a sterling actor. His *Falstaff*, *Lord Duberly*, *Old Rapid*, and *Lope Tocho*, are all inimitable; the former would, I think, be highly attractive."

Of this "sterling actor" and eccentric man, we beg here to offer some account.

William Wyatt Dimond and Francis Blissett originally tramped into the city of Bath together, which by the time they had reached, they were nearly barefooted. Like *Roderick Random* and his friend *Strap*, they got an occasional lift by some waggon, and on a certain stock of patience, their only resources, commenced the work of their future fortunes. Blissett was quite an eccentric. When Dimond, in after-days, had become the director of the theatre, and Blissett himself in the way of prosperity, the latter invited his manager to a little entertainment at his lodgings, and in the course of the evening observed—

"This day, friend, is the anniversary of our entering Bath together; it was bleak and chilly as our prospects—I well remember it; and to-day is likewise cheerful as our prosperity. I'll introduce you to an old acquaintance"—saying which, he produced a pair of old shoes, literally worn through.

"See! here they are!" cried he, "the only friends I

had at the time, save yourself; they bore me safely here, and I shall keep them till I die. I could almost wish to be buried in these shoes."

Some time after this, he took occasion to intimate to his manager, it was his intention of withdrawing from the company, unless he had an increase of salary.

"Nay, nay, my old friend," replied Dimond; "not so, I trust. You already receive the highest salary which is given in Bath—*three pounds* a week; we cannot exceed it, and I am happy in knowing you do not want."

"—— I'll have it!" interrupted Blissett, striking the table with his hand.

"What, then, do you demand?" asked the manager.

"*Three guineas!*" exclaimed the actor, with an energy irresistibly humorous. "I'll have them, or I go."

"And so you shall," rejoined Dimond, not a little amused,—"and in consideration of our new piece last week, the increase shall begin from that time;" saying which, he drew three shillings from his pocket, and paid them over to his peremptory friend.

Blissett was a kind of amateur chapman, and had a great fancy for cheapening small articles, of whatever description they might be. He would, in fact, buy or sell anything within his reach, and as not unfrequently his personal chattels became objects of sudden alienation, the marketing was ludicrous enough.

He would leave his abode at the early part of the day in one coat, and return in another, which second he had picked up in exchange during his ramble. A dozen pair of knee-buckles have passed through his hands in the course of a single month; and he has even been known to part with the very brass buttons off his coat, whose places have been supplied by mother-of-pearl.

On one occasion, he arrived at the theatre without a hat, having sold his only one in the course of his walk, and had not yet selected another. Everything appertaining to him was open to a bargain, except his good name, and a certain pair of old shoes, which last, like "Sir Oliver's" picture, "he would keep as long as he had a room to hang them in." Elliston himself accidentally

crossed him in one of these fanciful expeditions; meeting the humorist in the neighbourhood of Milsom Street, with a tea-caddy under one arm, and "Dodsley's Poems," together with an oil-skin umbrella, tucked under the other; these, it appears, he had bartered, giving in exchange a pair of pistols and a punch-bowl.

Blissett died at Bath in 1824.

To this slight notice of an actor, who was so eminent a favourite in that place, where he was chiefly known, we will beg leave to subjoin a letter, addressed by him to a leading comedian of the present day:—

"My good Friend,—You wish some historical account of the Bath theatre, from which place, for me, 'there is but one stage more' (in the words of Bishop Juxon to Charles the Martyr), nor shall I repine, unless it be the regret that I had not fulfilled my duty better.

"Who the first Bath manager was I cannot pretend to say, but I believe '*Gentleman*,' alias '*Copper Captain*' Brown. Mr. Griffith, of the Norwich Theatre, followed. Next came Arthur, who was a great comic actor, and to him succeeded Keasberry. Henderson arrived under this reign, thirty years ago—a clumsy Dutch figure, but with a very strong understanding. He went by the name of *Courtney*, and was a most stickling imitator of Garrick. Yet with all his disadvantages, I think he read and played *Hamlet* better than your present *king*.* His salary was the trifling sum of *one guinea per week;* so that he was wont jokingly to say to his friends, he should certainly grow rich, as he had a guinea a week, a benefit in the dog-days, and Keasberry to teach him acting! But his good sense soon freed him from the Garrick trammels, and, like a discreet painter, who had too long copied the ancients with pedantry, retained at last only their beauties, to which he added a fancy and manner of his own.

"Mr. Dimond came soon after this gentleman; he had acted at Drury Lane the part of *Romeo*, under the direction of Garrick. His respectability and gentle

* Kemble.

behaviour soon gained him many friends at Bath, in which place he became quite as great a favourite as Elliston is at present. Mr. Dimond was lucky in marrying a lady with a good estate, with which he purchased a part of the theatre; and there is not an actor who sits uneasy under the shade of his government. *Blissett* (*ipsissimus*), who was born at Reading, was thurst upon the world at the age of thirteen. He *would* be an actor, and came out under the management of Bobby Bates, at Shepton Mallet, but was soon after shipped off by Little Derrick, the then *M. C.* of Bath, to Smock Alley. This was the period in which Mr. and Mrs. Didier, Mr. Edwin, Mr. Richards (the present Mrs. Edwin's father), Miss Catley, and several others, made their *début* in Dublin.

"Much I could say of Mossop, but he would occupy more time than I can just now afford. We literally starved one whole season. I am quite sure, that had we been put into the scales at the end of it, we should not have weighed half our original ounces,—and we never were a sleek company at best.

"I then followed the fortunes of an itinerant manager, the famous Fisher, who went to Russia. From him I went to Edinburgh, with Ross; thence to Birmingham, and at length to Bath.

"And now, with something less than an annual sum of £200, I quit the chequered scene of a player's life; a woof in which, if there be but few bright colours, I have found some threads of friendship and attachment, which are yet strong and binding. If you think my experience can yield you anything useful, command me, my good friend.

"F. Blissett."

Elliston's professional duties at Bath, his occasional acting in other theatres, and the prospect of fresh labours awaiting him at the Haymarket, in London, might have satisfied him for the present. But no such thing; the comedian, like the sentimental young lady, was formed "to shine in adversity," and yearned for the sweets of martyrdom. Having learned the many fruitless attempts

which had been made by dramatic managers for permission to import plays and players into the University of Oxford, he determined at once to enter himself on the same hazard, and to carry, if possible, a point in which all his predecessors had failed.

To Lord Harcourt he applies as usual; and, as usual, the Earl responds :—

"Harcourt House, Feb. 10, 1803.

"SIR,—You may have formed a higher notion of my influence in the University of Oxford than I possess; for although my family has for six centuries been settled in its neighbourhood, I received no part of my education in that place.

"Having, however, many friends resident there, I have already endeavoured to interest in your favour a leading member of the University.

"But should your application meet with assent, I do not see how you can carry on your project with the many other engagements which you tell me you have entered into. Every man knows, or is supposed to know, his own affairs best; and although I am well aware you can perform many parts by your single talent, I cannot see how you can be in twenty places at once.

"HARCOURT."

"Mr. Elliston, Milsom Street, Bath."

As in all his promises, the earl was as good as his word; but the importation of modern stage-plays into the bosom of this antique seat of learning was not so easy an experiment.

The negotiation being opened, Elliston received the following :—

"Oxford, Pembroke College, Feb. 19, 1803.

"SIR,—The Vice-Chancellor having lately lost a near relative, prevented me from conversing with him on the subject of your letter till yesterday.

"His reply is, that no plays will be allowed to be acted

in the University next summer. He told me that he had received several applications on the same subject previous to yours; but if it were possible to grant permission, the preference would be given to your respectability and professional talents.

"I am, sir, your obedient servant,

"JOHN VINICOMBE."

This announcement from Pembroke appears by no means to have settled the question with Elliston. He still follows up his object, and receives the annexed gentle rebuke from the Vice-Chancellor himself:—

"Worcester College, Oxford, March 5th, 1803.

"SIR,—I am sorry you should have taken the trouble of repeating your application to me, after the reasons which I thought it my duty to give to Mr. Vinicombe, for declining to comply with your request.

"The manner in which Mr. Vinicombe spoke of you could leave me no room to doubt the respectability of your character. It is not, therefore, for want of confidence in that, that I did then, and still must, withhold my consent to the visit of any persons to this place for the purpose of making theatrical exhibitions. If I could consent to any, I would not object to your application; but it is my determination to consent to none.

"I am, sir, your obedient humble servant,

"W. LANDON,
Vice-Chancellor of Oxford."

And thus terminated the Oxford experiment.

The introduction of theatrical amusements into our Universities appears as forbidding as theatrical speculations were once deemed hazardous in Scotland; for we remember to have heard that, in the year 1726, one Tony Aston spoke a prologue in that country, written by Allan Ramsay, in which he compared himself to "Columbus," in the danger of so bold an enterprise!

Mr. Gore, in his fondness for the drama, had, from time to time, collected and transmitted much theatrical anecdote.

The following incident, amongst his *memorabilia*, may not be generally known.

Escourt was a celebrated player in the latter days of the seventeenth century. When quite a boy, he decamped from paternal authority, and enlisted under the banners of a theatrical leader. He was but fifteen years of age when, at Worcester, he acted the part of *Roxana*, in the play of "Alexander the Great;" his feminine appearance being at that time a greater recommendation than his immature skill as an actor.

To this place he was traced by his enraged parent, who would evidently have commuted his dramatic salary into a sound whipping; but the manager's wife taking compassion on him, furnished him with an entire suit of her own clothes, and thus equipped, he escaped for the second time.

Arriving at Chipping Norton, he entered an inn. Fear and fatigue induced him to seek an early bed, to which, in a remote attic, he had not long retired, when the busy landlady, abruptly entering, begged that, as the house was full of travellers, "the young gentlewoman" would accept a companion for the night. Poor Escourt hereupon gave consent in that language which is said always to imply it—namely, silence,—which the hostess deeming quite sufficient, handed up a third personage, and hastily quitted the apartment to attend on far more profitable customers below.

Dread, rather than delight, occupied the young runaway, when, on stealthily raising his eyes from the bed-covering, he descried a toothless, beetle-eyed antique, "swart, like my shoe, but her face nothing like so clean." The lad could have crept into a very nutshell, and rolling himself into as small a compass as possible, withdrew to the edge of the pallet, still counterfeiting sleep.

After a laborious fit of coughing and ventriloquizing,

the distempered crone approached the bed, and loosening by degrees portions of her attire, scrambled on that division of the couch which the trembling boy had so liberally allotted her. With a heavy groan down she lay, whilst deeper horrors than the tyranny of *Mezentius* ever devised, filled the thoughts of her companion. The wheeze was soon lost in more distinct accents of sleep, which, though but little grateful to the ear of him who watched so near, yet somewhat relieved him from the terrors of detection and consequent punishment.

But terror—pain itself—will yield to fatigue; and as Damiens himself is said to have even slept upon the rack, so, as the morning approached, exhausted by long suffering, the younger of the twain fell also into a profound slumber.

But the grey-eyed morn had scarcely opened on the denizens of earth, when the snoring travellers of the "Rampant Lion" were roused to a sense of alarm by a shriek hoarser than the raven; and, at the same moment, a sudden overthrow of a water-butt and pewter vessel on the staircase, set the whole establishment into the wildest commotion.

Young Escourt, it may be well supposed, was startled with no less affright, and in confused recollection of the late events, missing his companion, was about springing from his bed, when renewed accents bursting through the bondage of a well-remembered wheeze, exclaimed,—

"Abomination on your house! help! help! I say. You nest of rogues and varlets! help! help! I say!"

It was now clear, that by some strange accident the poor youth had been discovered, and totally unconscious of the ludicrous evidence of moral turpitude fixed upon him, recollecting only his filial disobedience and its probable consequences, he fell on his knees just as the landlady, followed by half the household, entered the apartment, avowing himself a most guilty wretch, but claiming pity and protection.

The good hostess, mistaking the nature both of his distress and confession, as well she might, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, in which she was joined by the whole *posse* at her heels. Further explanations, however, took place; the unconscious libertine was acquitted, and, provided with fresh disguise, was again forwarded on his flight.

CHAPTER II.

ELLISTON.—HIS TRAGIC PARTS.

As the subject of these Memoirs is now about to bid farewell to the home of his dramatic youth, it may be expected that we should bear some testimony to the public opinion of his talent, in a few of those leading parts of tragedy to which by this time he had put forth high pretensions.

ELLISTON was an actor of what may be termed the Romantic School. Unlike in style, either of his great contemporaries, Kemble or Cooke, he was yet distinguished in some delineations of tragedy, by which the names of those two actors have become so justly memorable.

Of the commanding presence—the stoicism—which characterized so much the style of Mr. Kemble, and of that classic bearing which, on the Roman scene, rendered him incomparably greater than any English actor history may have handed to us since the days of Betterton, Elliston had no perception. The metaphysical ponderings of *Brutus*, the inspelled imaginings of *Macbeth*, were seen in the very form and aspect of Kemble; but the fire of *Hotspur* and chivalry of *Henry V.*, bright as they were in his beautiful portraiture, did not extinguish his fellow in art, who suffered but little by a propinquity to that great master.

Elliston was distinguished for flexibility and variableness of voice, which produced powerful effects; now "the silver-toned Barry," and now again the manly intonations of Booth.

The mental abstraction which belongs to the character of *Hamlet*, met with a happy delineation in Elliston's efforts;—his tremulous awe, his impressive accents, when

in the presence of his father's spirit, produced on his auditory a cleaving sympathy; like Betterton, "he made the ghost equally terrible to the spectator as to himself."

Mr. Kemble was here too much the "Prince of Denmark,"—his awe too much at *court*, as though he might have uttered, "Angels and *ministers of state*, defend us!" And though Elliston by no means retained for any length of time, this ability in the part in question, yet in its brief possession, he was popularly considered to have had no superior. In the chastening interview with the players, Mr. Kemble's style of instruction and manner rose far above the attempts of his young rival; and in the closet scene, Mr. Kemble was equally his master. At one moment Elliston seemed almost affected to tears;—he appeared to take too literally "si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi;"—the effect was bad, and altogether inconsistent with the tenor of the scene.

The mixed character of *Orestes* was one of Elliston's most successful delineations. His depressed state of mind at disappointed passion, in the commencement of the play, —his speech in the presence of *Hermoine*, flattered that she had sent for him—

> "Ah! madam, is it true? Does, then, Orestes
> At length attend you by your own commands?"

were all finely impressive.

The manner in which he related the death of *Pyrrhus*, and that wilderness of idea which precedes confirmed madness, exhibited a masterpiece of the Romantic School.

In *Romeo*, Elliston was always attractive;—a success multiplying his triumphs without greatly adding to his fame; as *Romeo* is perhaps the least intellectual character of Shakspeare's heroes. But the wild, romantic passion of the youthful Veronese, and that frightful despair, the last of mortal suffering, were powerfully portrayed by him:—the scene with *Friar Lawrence*, wherein he hears his sentence, "banishment," and particularly the speech, concluding—

———— "They may seize
On the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand,
And steal immortal blessings from her lips,"

were also most effectively sustained.

We do not find any great praise given to his impersonation of *Othello*, although he frequently acted the part. If, therefore, we are to conclude that the attempt was not what might be deemed successful, it is but fair to his attainments in other directions, to credit that there were at least some features in it of considerable merit.

Though far short of a *great tragedian*, Elliston was an impressive player of tragic parts. If not *Cato*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, or *Melantius*, he was *Juba*, *Edgar*, *Macduff*, and *Amintor*, without a superior. In the character of *Amintor*, full of those inconsistencies and weaknesses, which, as in that of *Jaffier*, not unfrequently give a peculiar interest to the scene, Elliston won the praise of his auditors; and the manner and force in which he delivered one speech, was always a point of admiration. He addresses *Evadne* on her remorse:—

—— "Do not mock me,
Though I am tame, and bred up with my wrongs,
Which are my foster-brothers, I may leap,
Like a hand-wolf, into my native wildness,
And do an outrage. Prithee, do not mock me!"

His *Falconbridge* was good; but Mr. Charles Kemble has so far excelled all actors we have on record, in this particular delineation, that we venture not a momentary hazard with him.

Baffled in his many attempts at becoming part proprietor in the Bath property, Elliston had now, however, attained a joint management in a London establishment —namely, that of the Haymarket Theatre,—and in March he took leave of his old friends by a benefit, which was rendered not a little remarkable by a speech from the actor and a "row" in the playhouse.

The manner in which Elliston, in after-days, distinguished himself by these addresses to his audience, of which

he was clearly so vain, induces us to take more notice of this particular instance than, perhaps, we should otherwise have done; for he verily became, in course of time, a kind of dramatic *Anacharsis Clootz*, vindicating dramatic rights, one moment, in a Court of Chancery, and at another, instructing his playgoing auditory in the formation of their judgment, and telling them plainly what was wholesome for them, as critics and men of taste.

His address on this occasion was woven in many party-coloured threads, which gave to his harangue a most pleasing variety;—of course, he had much to say about "gratitude" and "early friends"—then came the "*French Revolution*" and his "*own prospects*"—while "*Shakspeare and the musical glasses*" completed the tissue.

It had been publicly announced, that on the occasion of this benefit, "the pit would be thrown into boxes," and "the gallery admission advanced to pit prices;" no sooner did the curtain rise for the play, than there was a rising also amongst the spectators, which threatened, for a time, serious consequences.

"Throwing the pit into boxes," had very nearly produced throwing the boxes into the pit; for some of the most irritated of the party were actually about demolishing the furniture, and the extra tax which had been extorted by the gallery commissioners, seemed to indicate as awful a result as the impost of "ship-money" itself, or any similar act of tyrannic "benevolence." Elliston, however, "made a speech"—which many might have envied, and none but George Robins excelled;—by which he presently won all hearts to his own service, and peace was restored without one sixpence returned.

Before leaving Bath, Elliston receives the following from Colman:—

"I have engaged," says he, a "Mr. Kelly; and as those whom Heaven has joined, no man is to put asunder, I am compelled to take with him—wife and baggage.

"The lady's tongue bears with it a lazy lisp, which could not fail teaching our audience the 'Whole Art of' hissing, did they require to be reminded of such accomplishments. Plain she is, at all times; but in speaking she chews

the cud, and is rather fitted for a museum than a play-house.

"It is Plutarch, I believe, who tells us that *Minerva* threw away her flute on perceiving the grimaces she made in the surface of a river. She was a sensible woman; I would to heaven Mrs. Kelly would *throw me over* too.

"I have also engaged a Mr. Hatton—a three-pounder, and a very useful man; for he can double up a hundred lengths into his head with the facility of a land-surveyor's reel-measure.

"I hope to greet you in town on the 24th. Come to Waldron's at two o'clock, and I will read to you the Prelude; I will then give you some clue to my *castellum*, where George Colman is to be found by his *friends*—'a place,' as Mrs. Millwood declares, 'by art so cunningly contrived, that the piercing eyes of jealousy may search in vain to find an entrance.'

"Weighty Lady Buckinghamshire* has just written to me for a stage-box, on our opening—for *her*, unquestionably *an opening* must it be. And now, success attend us!"

Early in May, Elliston started for London, but the journey itself was a little interrupted by the coach breaking down within two miles of Devizes. Unfortunately it rained hard at the moment, a pelting torrent, so that the inside passengers being prevented walking onwards, the vehicle was propped up, and the good people compelled to remain stationary, whilst the guard rode on with a pair of horses, for the purpose of bringing back some conveyance for carrying the party into the town.

This incident was, at this moment, a great annoyance to Elliston, as he had appointed to meet Colman, at a certain hour, in London. However, he made the best of it, converting his own mortification into a source of amusement for others,—particularly with one old lady, who declared "it was as good as a play to hear him." He talked, as usual, of Ben Jonson and Moses, Julius Cæsar and Lord George Gordon, so that, however gloomy

* Lady Buckinghamshire, when Mrs. Hobart, was celebrated in the Duke of Richmond's private theatricals.

the prospect might have been without, all was cheerful and sunny within.

After waiting in this situation for above an hour, the fresh carriage arrived, which proved to be no other than a black, mourning-coach, followed by a hearse, intended as a conveyance for the luggage. Here new difficulties arose, some of the parties refusing to enter so mortally grave a vehicle;—difficulties, which were but little removed by the many nervous stories Elliston had to tell about Colonel Despard, who had just been hanged, and poor Colonel Montgomery, who had just been murdered.

A mourning-coach conveying passengers, habited in all the colours of a harlequin jacket, with harlequin himself in the midst; and a hearse following, containing amongst other things the wardrobe of a travelling comedian, must have been a strange sight to the "upturned, wondering eyes" of the townspeople of Devizes. The cavalcade, however, without further impediment, reached the inn, when it was ascertained that at least two hours must elapse before a proper vehicle could be got in readiness for the travellers to proceed.

Part of the intervening time Elliston occupied by perambulating the town; and, entering a stationer's shop for the purchase of some article, his attention was arrested by the fair *boutiquière* who attended him. She was habited in half-mourning, and followed by a little prattling infant, evidently her own darling.

Elliston regarded her with the curiosity of half-awakened recollection, and protracting his stay under some trifling pretence, endeavoured to solve his perplexity. The truth presently flashed on him, and he exclaimed,

"Alice! Alice!—is it indeed you! Do you not remember me?"

A slight suffusion passed over her, as he uttered these words, and raising her eyes, which spoke too evidently of sorrow, replied, with a faint, nervous smile—"Oh, yes! you are——"

"Is it really my young, kind friend *Alice* whom I see?" interrupted Elliston—"who was so good to me at Newbury, eleven years ago, when, melancholy myself, I——"

Here, the tears of poor Alice beginning to flow, Elliston at once frankly asked the history of her distress.

The following is the narrative he collected:—

Alice, for a fleeting season a happy wife, was now, at twenty-seven years, a broken-hearted widow! She had married, about six years before, a lieutenant in the navy—"the noblest and the kindest of men, and so handsome that he was quite a prodigy!"—for such were her own words. Their means were but slender, but they enjoyed that felicity which gives to days the rapidity of moments, and to moments the value of ages.

Their first blow was the death of her own father; a calamity not lessened by the discovery that he had left his family in poor circumstances.

The expedition against Copenhagen, not long after, called the young sailor suddenly to his "first love"—namely, his *country*.

Having joined the naval armament in the Yarmouth Roads, under Sir Hyde Parker, the lieutenant felt no longer "a divided duty." "Love, honour, and obey," was now his country's; and he was quickly called on to prove his allegiance, in the memorable day of the Danish siege.

The glorious upshot was the immediate theme of the young sailor's communication to her, who was at that moment praying for his safety.

A second letter, not long after the former, reached her. Its tone was less of havoc, much more of affection. The lieutenant, in fact, spoke ardently of return, and anticipated, in colours more glowing than those of England's flag, the ecstasy of meeting.

The day mentioned in the letter had arrived. Alice, attired in the very dress her husband had chosen for her as his parting present, caressed her infant by a thousand kisses, on the sweetest holiday she had ever known.

The hour arrived, had passed, but he—he came not. The coach had already rolled through Maidstone (the town near which she then resided), yet brought not her husband.

"He is detained," cried she; "to-morrow I shall see him; to-morrow, which shall gild my many days to come."

She rehearsed again his favourite song, that she might be the more perfect in its performance (as she said), but it was, in fact, to divert her misgivings.

Again, the coach—again, on this second day—threaded the town, yet no form of him, whose spirit was locked up in her heart. She would not be alarmed—she was actually *frightened* at alarm,—framing in her hurried fancy new excuses for his stay, the probability of which she would not trust herself to examine.

Abruptly—almost involuntarily—she rose up, and approaching the window, beheld a gentleman, a friend of her husband resident at Maidstone, already at her gate. She flew to receive him.

"He has written to you?" cried Alice, inquiringly. "You have intelligence of him? Why is he not with you?" The silence of her visitor plainly indicated evil. "Tell me," she almost shrieked—"Tell me why I do not see my husband?"

The event may be recorded in a few words. The visitor in question had humanely undertaken this mission, for the purpose of breaking an intelligence to her, which the public journals had already announced. The lieutenant, it appears, had quitted his ship, and had gone on board a cutter on some duty. One of those hurricanes, so frequently fatal on the eastern coast of England, drove the vessel ashore, and before assistance could be procured, the greater part of the crew were lost, and amongst them the husband of poor Alice! The state of anguish into which she was thrown by this announcement may possibly be conceived;—mental stupor, which, after a certain time, was awakened to the agonizing sense of sudden widowhood.

The marriage of Alice having been, from the very first, an unwelcome subject to her husband's relatives, her present distresses found but little favour with the lieutenant's two sisters. These ladies now induced their mother to treat Alice with positive inhumanity, so that in a short time she was given to understand, as she had chosen to force herself into their family, they did not feel themselves called on to extend her any assistance; and as

their feelings had already been so deeply wounded by the death of their brother, they were totally incapable of entering into other people's distresses.

Collecting, therefore, her effects, Alice removed, with her child, under her own mother's roof, on the borders of Somersetshire. Having been informed of an opportunity for investing her crumbs of fortune, in the town of Devizes, to "unprecedented advantage," and being desirous of relieving her mother from the additional burden of herself and child, she hastily closed with the offer presented to her; purchasing the stock and good-will of her present shop at the round sum the out-going tenant had fixed on it, "to save," as he pleasantly said, "unnecessary trouble to either party."

Such were the events under which Elliston's recognition of the benevolent Alice took place, an occurrence, by no means calculated to render his journey so light-hearted an undertaking as it had promised to be in the commencement.

The reunion between Colman and Elliston having taken place, in London, over a stipulated rumpsteak; the "Little Theatre" in the Haymarket commenced its season, on the 15th of May, with—"No Prelude," a dialogue written by the author-manager, and spoken by Elliston and Waldron, the prompter. This production, full of "pith and puissance," was extremely well received.

But notwithstanding the promises, and—it is only fair to say—the exertions of Colman, his company was not a good one. With the exception of Mathews, it was meagre and inefficient; and even Mathews himself did but little to keep the ship off a lee shore.

The season, on the termination, was but a disastrous voyaye; nor could Colman, the "Prospero," with his "so potent art," restore the vessel "tight and yare."

Elliston now acted *Richard the Third* for the first time in London, and frequently repeated the character; but we apprehend it was, at best, but an unequal performance. The early scenes were sustained with much adroitness; but on the whole, Elliston was here incomparably inferior to his great contemporary Cooke.

Colman, under the designation of "Arthur Griffinhoff," produced a new piece, entitled "Love Laughs at Locksmiths," in which Elliston impersonated *Captain Beldaire* —a trifling part, but which he rendered an amusing feature, by his spirited acting and very clever execution of a simple ballad. He also spoke a "Patriotic Address," another *fantaisie* of Colman's muse, written by way of epilogue to a play of Boaden, called "The Maid of Bristol," which became, in fact, so popular as to render the "Maid" in question, who was but an ordinary, illfavoured piece of goods, almost "a toast;" and sustaining a dull drama, as "Drelincourt on Death!" was borne on the shoulders of *Mrs. Veal!*

The above suggests a little incident related in some of the recollections of Miss Rafter, afterwards the celebrated Mrs. Clive.

On the first night of "Love in a Riddle," a Pastoral by the Laureat, in which Miss R. played the part of *Phillida*, some persons had met in the theatre for the sake of crushing the piece, and they, in fine, succeeded; but when *Phillida* first appeared on the scene, one of the rioters was heard to say—"Zounds! Tom, take care, or this charming little devil will save all." Colman's "little devil" was yet more potent.

The "*Castellum*" to which Colman alluded in his last letter, and to which his pecuniary embarrassments had driven him, was at Sudbury, near Harrow. Here, under another name, *latitavit*, whilst all letters were conveyed to him through a trusty messenger, who made his daily journey for that purpose.

Colman having felt annoyance at some proceedings of his stage-manager, wrote to him accordingly, and without reserve. Elliston, nettled at his reproaches, vindicates his conduct with some asperity.

Colman rejoins by the following:—

"Dear Elliston,—Every man has his *amour propre*, and I certainly did not intend to alarm yours, by the loose hints which I transmitted to you. Have you installed yourself Theatrical Pontiff, and assumed Infalli-

bility? Is it impertinent in the principal to give his opinion to the agent? If so, woe to every man who appoints a deputy! Is it customary for an agent to think himself insulted whenever he receives instructions? If so, woe to every man who acknowledges a principal!

"As a proof that you can commit a blunder, even while you deem yourself most adroit, I would mention that you have this morning taken the trouble to come from London to communicate my patronymic in your own handwriting, to a cunning varlet, under the disguise of a chaw-bacon, at my gate, from whom I had most cautiously concealed it.

"Tell me if my frankness has really given you a wound, and ceremony shall, at once, be applied as a balsam. I will round my periods, cull my phrases, sift my words before I offer them to your acute perception of offence."

Thus was the grievance healed; another rumpsteak was the result, nor was the Madeira a "casus omissus," our readers may be well assured.

On the 4th of April, the *London Gazette* had announced the dissolution of partnership between Elliston, his wife, and Miss Flemming, by common consent. Mrs. Elliston thereupon opened a Dancing Academy on her own account, under the same patronage as that by which she had been always distinguished; so that her schemes, taking up the very genius of her appropriate art, vaulted, with one elastic spring, on the pinnacle of success. Miss Flemming, who found it was now no longer possible to back out from her anteriority of years, gave up, not only the fantastic toe, but other fantastic imaginings, ill becoming a lady of full two-score; and cultivated the more reasonable hope of interesting some Bath valetudinarian, who might be inclined to commute the vain pursuit of a *belle amante*, for the more seasonable qualities of a steady wife.

On a certain morning, three ladies, who had not been apprised of Mrs. Elliston's absence from home, arrived as usual in Milsom Street, to take their lessons. As they had come from some distance, Elliston resolved they should not depart disappointed, and promptly declared

"*he* would give the lesson himself." The comedian was really a very graceful dancer, so that he professed no more than he was able to execute, and was guilty, therefore, of far less audacity than *Leander* in the "Mock Doctor," who understood a cataplasm about as well as he did Hebrew.

The humour of the adventure pleased the comedian, whilst an hour's pirouetting with three sparkling young creatures (as he thought) would by no means be unacceptable. It may be well conceived that it was at the expense of a few blushes of the said damsels that he first presented himself, announcing the circumstances under which he had undertaken the part at so short a notice; but with happy address, he stood before them, a kind of compound of the elasticity of Deshayes, and the sublimity of "*Merlin!*"

In respect of the "more advanced" of these damsels—a lady from Tipperary, it was clearly desirable that the lesson should be given as soon as possible, for her "dancing days were nearly over;" and as to personal attractions, like those good people who, if they cannot command success, will at least deserve it, so with the same ardour did she laboriously cultivate the Graces.

In pursuance of this, she had already exhausted poor Miss Flemming, and having nearly worn herself to a thread, was now attended to Milsom Street by her black footman, with the determination of doing no less for poor Mrs. Elliston.

A short interval, and all was in operation. A little French *émigré* was already seated at the harpsichord, and Elliston had led out his *belle aspirante* to the movement of cotillon. "*Avancez—balancez—chassez,*" &c., ten times repeated. "*Encore—une fois—à votre place—à merveille!*"—again, ten times. The second lady having no longer the fear of mamma before her eyes, was absolutely enamoured of her new instructor; whilst the youngest, who had from the very first burst into an immoderate giggle, appeared now to be under no less an influence than the combined attack of laughing gas and the malady of St. Vitus.

A quick minuet succeeded. All was "hail fellow!" —Dancing mad!—the little *émigré* played like a spinning-jenny, and chattered like a water-mill; all was in a whirl, like March dust. "Miss Florence" became as fiery as a red Indian, and the little school-girl protested she "could keep it up for a week."

How great a portion of this time they would really have occupied, is uncertain, when a servant entering the apartment, suggested some slight refreshment, with a broad hint that dinner-hour was just at hand. At length, all was still; the movements, like the works of a musical-box, were brought suddenly to a stand—and the curtain fell on the Milsom Street Ballet to the entire satisfaction of all present.

In December, 1803, Mathews made application to Colman, on the part of Mr. Charles Young, for that gentleman's engagement at the Haymarket; a question on which the proprietor felt it expedient to consult Elliston.

"After your long silence," says Colman, "never again prefer a charge of idleness against me, it will be but a Pot-and-Kettle recrimination, and only discover the coaly complexion of each of us. Mr. Young has been mentioned to me, as an actor of high merit—even by yourself. In respect of a clash with you, he is willing to engage while you are acting manager, and in possession of the first business.

"Our establishment last year was one of promise only, not of performance, spite *all* our 'performances.' Young, by this arrangement, would help, rather than mar you, for your fence will be better shown by having a man who would not parry so clumsily with you as many in our *salle d'armes*. But if the subject be absolutely repulsive to you, I shall drop it. In the mean, I will announce to Mathews that I cannot definitively reply to him for some days.

"I write from my cabin, but always direct to me at Jewell's. "Adieu! G. C."

"We *must* clash," observes Elliston, in reply. "Mr. Young's claims are of that order, that he ought not to

hold a second rank, which he must do, should he engage with you whilst I am at the Haymarket, and I cannot afford to sacrifice any position to which the public favour has advanced me."

A few weeks previous to the opening of the theatre, the part of *Rigid*, in a new comedy, entitled "Guilty or not Guilty," written by Mr. T. Dibdin, was forwarded to Elliston, at Bath, for study.

Here was a new grievance! more hot water — the "Kettle" singing again, yet but a poor prospect of the "Pot" boiling for Colman. Elliston fancied he should have been first consulted on the play itself, before the transmission of any part to him, and expressed himself grandiloquently thereon, in a letter lengthy as a Statistical Report, to which Colman rejoins:—

"You have amply made up for your silence, my dear Elliston, for you shoot your '*plaustra verborum*' on my poor shoulders, almost to crush me. Your ink, like the water of the Nile, is out upon me, literally 'with a vengeance.' The extraordinary dimensions of your chandler's-shop paper have tickled my fancy, as much as your filling them has excited my wonderment.

"Could I forbear casting this play, with the devil, in the person of its author, at my elbow? You have not only the best part in the piece, but the part in itself is good; and as to the rest, like my bread, it is a cast on the waters of my current company, and must sink or swim.

"I have engaged Miss Tyrer* and Miss Howell, whom I name in order (I think) of their merits. They will be especially useful in our vocal business. Tyrer will become more than useful.

"As the present are really my *Night* Thoughts, I may fairly again mention *Young*. I must confess I deem you in error on this point, though yield it I do, at your request—our object ought to be 'Rich Compounds.'"

When Colman was first arrested, it was at the suit of his *friend;* an event by no means remarkable on *that* ac-

* Now Mrs. Liston.

count; but the circumstance which led to his immediate capture, was highly characteristic of the dramatist himself.

Colman, who had for some time past been chary of his visits abroad, had placed himself, on a certain fine morning, snugly within a hackney-coach, for the purpose of calling on his legal adviser, near Bedford Square. He reached the house about mid-day; and desiring the driver to remain with his vehicle at the door, until he had transacted his business, proceeded at once upstairs.

His purpose being in due time fully discussed, Colman was about departing, but his solicitor, who, in point of fact, was the best friend he ever had, having as great an affection for the *dramatist* as the *client*, detained him as his guest for the day; Colman remained, therefore, for dinner; and at midnight, the supper-table found him still unwilling to depart.

It so happened that Mr. A——, Colman's friendly creditor, had been accidentally passing the street on that very morning, soon after the dramatist had been set down, and had noticed the coach in question at the door of the lawyer; and on passing the same spot about the chimes of midnight, observed the identical vehicle on the identical spot; for Colman had altogether forgotten he had even arrived in a coach at all; obedient to whose orders, the driver had remained nearly twelve hours at the kerb-stone.

A——, who was by no means a stranger to the councils of the manager of the Haymarket, at the house in question, felt at once persuaded he had discovered his man. "This must be Colman!" cried he—"there is but one man in London who would keep a hackney-coach waiting twelve hours, when at twelve paces distant he might beckon twice the number to his service; *here must be Colman!*" For jarvey, this was a good day's work. The hire was of course paid, besides some five shillings fraudulent percentage, which Colman, after supper, was not in a state to dispute.

The driver had also in prospect a fat bribe for the discovery on the following day, of the manager's retreat, which he received in due course from the wily Mr. A——, and poor Colman surrendered.

Some months previous to the foregoing event, Colman had been living at Fulham, immediately contiguous to a cottage then tenanted by Mathews. A—— was at that time in search of him, and Colman being well aware of this, was in the habit of stealthily entering Mathews' house by the back-door, and thus had opportunities of passing many agreeable evenings with his friend.

Mathews, who was fond of fun as school-boys of plum-pudding, had a remarkably fine parrot, which was quick at picking up words as any actor in the Haymarket company; and in as short a time as might be, the green pet was instructed in the exclamation—"Be off! be off! A——'s coming! A——'s coming!"

On a certain evening, therefore, Colman having raised the latch of Mathews' back door, and being about entering the yard, in which the parrot had been purposely placed, his ears were suddenly startled by the bird's new lesson—"Be off! be off! A——'s coming!—A——'s coming!"—a hint which, it may be well believed, he instantly obeyed.

Puzzled by the possibility of A—— being so near, but at the same time not displeased at the hint, Colman, on the following eve applied himself to the postern-gate, for the purpose of ascertaining the true state of affairs, when the stridulous assault was repeated—"Be off! be off! I say!—A——'s coming!"

Utterly bewildered, and with renewed mortification, the dramatist was once more taking to his heels, when the actor, deeming he had carried the joke quite far enough, popped his head from behind the wall, and in a voice, half parrot and half Mathews, screamed out—"Come back—come back! A——'s in the water-butt!—A——'s in the water-butt!"

The Haymarket season, 1804, commenced: Elliston now performed several new characters, particularly *Vapid*, in the "Dramatist," in which he was so successful, that the comedy became at once a favourite. *Vapid* was decidedly his best "buffa" part. Elliston again assisted the efforts of "Arthur Griffenhoff," by undertaking a mediocre character, in a farce entitled "Gay Deceivers."

His popularity had now so increased, that on the announcement of his benefit, the dimensions of the "Little Theatre" were found unequal to the accommodation of his "troops of friends." Like Bacon, he had grown too large for his dwelling, and calling therefore a council of his advisers, it was determined the Opera House should be secured for the occasion. Taylor, the lessee, gave his permission; Colman acquiesced—and Elliston's benefit was re-announced at the King's Theatre, under the immediate sanction of his Majesty.

The performances were "Pizzaro," and "Love Laughs at Locksmiths." At an early hour a crowd assembled about the theatre, which, by the time the doors were about opening, had so thickened, that neither constables nor guards could prevent a pressure, which threatened consequences as fatal as those at the "Haymarket" in 1794.

As the clock was striking five—"concussæ patuêre fores!"—the doors were fairly, or rather unfairly, carried off their hinges. To the very letter, it was a "Laugh at *Locksmiths*;" the people poured into the theatre at every aperture, like water into a wreck, and in a few minutes there was an overflow in pit and boxes, which found its level at no less an elevation than the ceiling. The boxes which had been "taken" in the morning, were taken after a different fashion in the afternoon; none of the rightful parties being able to approach their appointed seats.

The house was literally blockaded. But a small portion only had paid their money, though many had left pledges to the amount, in the shape of hats, shoes, shawls, and skirts of clothing. Some were seen climbing from the pit into fancied refuge of the boxes, whilst not a few were bodily forced again from the parapets into the steaming pit. Action and reaction were equal. "Above! below!" was equal discord; for it is not to be supposed the "gods" were idle. No; there was a row amongst the deities, by Jove! The Titans also were at warm work, at the very gates of Olympus; the sons of Cœlus and Terra demanding what they called "a settlement," whilst those who

had already gained it, were in vain applying for "out-door relief." Celestials and infernals; popinjays and paupers—were mingled "pell-mell" in one common confusion. "Chaos was come again!"

At length, the *chamade* being sounded, Elliston stepped forward, as plaintiff in this losing cause; though God knows, his jury was sufficiently packed for any verdict he might desire. As Richard the Second, at Smithfield (in the words of Hume), "he advanced towards the multitude, and accosted them with an affable but intrepid countenance;" told them the eyes of all Europe were at that moment upon them!—reminded them of the frightful days of the year —80, and blessed his Majesty on the throne! From which culminate state of imagery, he dropped into the "Martinus Scriblerus" vein, concluding by saying that, "convinced as he was, every person honouring him with their presence meant to pay, he begged leave to observe that the deficiencies would be received on the following morning at his house, No. 6, Great Russell Street, Covent Garden."

With great difficulty the play proceeded—"Pizzaro," as we have said. Part of the audience occupying those inches on the stage, to which the Peruvian's "Brave associates" vainly struggled to advance, *Rolla's* address was actually delivered to an admiring circle of ladies and gentlemen from the vicinity of Knightsbridge, Marylebone, and Bloomsbury Square.

So unconscious were some of the party of their peculiar situation, and so utterly destroyed was, at last, the scenic illusion, that on Mrs. Litchfield (who played *Elvira*) dropping, by accident, her mantle, while rising from the Spaniard's couch, a bystanding young lady, with the promptest kindness in the world, stepped forward, and picking up the spangled vestment, begged, with a gracious curtsy, she might have the pleasure of replacing it; nor was she at all aware of this grotesque piece of *maladroit*, until brought to her senses by one of the loudest shouts which had transpired in the theatre on this memorable night. Elliston realized by this benefit full 600*l*.

A trifling incident occurred, about the closing week at

the "Little Theatre," so strikingly *homogène* with our subject, that we cannot forbear the present notice.

A certain comedian who had been playing here during the season, and had made some impression in a part which had fallen to his duty, was haunted by those distressing Blue-devils yclept bailiffs; and though he had successfully baffled the attack for several nights, yet he was not without pretty strong conviction that he would be speedily laid up. In fact, the epidemic was very much about just at this period. It was, however, important to all parties that the actor should fulfil his engagements at the theatre.

To elude the bailiffs, therefore, who were constantly besetting the doors, like earth-stoppers, the following expedient was put in motion. The actor's name was changed in the bills, whilst he, dressing his characters rather at variance with his usual manner, and being an admirable mimic, assuming also a strange voice, went on the stage, as usual; but under the designation of "a gentleman, his first appearance."

Thus, in every single part, was he constantly sustaining two characters, the one in the drama, and the other, that of a country *débutant*, which he accomplished with entire success. The bailiffs were convinced their man had given them the slip, and after a time, like Charles Stuart's pursuers, they passed quietly off, whilst the king of the joke sat grinning aloft, at an elevated window in the building.

In the course of this season, Mr. Aaron Graham, chief police magistrate and one of the committee of management at Drury Lane Theatre, renewed an application he had previously made to Elliston, for his services at that establishment.

The fortunes of Drury were greatly depressed, and the recent failure of a comedy, "The Heart of Oak," as it was called, had left scarcely a shot in the locker. Elliston, however, did not so nimbly obey the magistrate's writ as was expected, and Justice Graham entered up judgment against him in another epistle full of invectives.

The fact was, Elliston had certain secondary pursuits which were greatly assisting his income, and rendered

him indifferent to the proposal in question. He was giving, at this period, private instruction in reading and reciting the English classics, and had as much employment of this description as he could conveniently despatch, in addition to his other professional duties.

Graham, however, still kept close at his heels; and as there really appeared, from what we have just noticed, some danger of our hero falling into the magistrate's hands, under less seemly circumstances than a professional alliance, it is as well, perhaps, that he at length listened to the Drury Lane *overture;* closing with the proposal now made to him, for a three-years' engagement, at twenty pounds per week, and a benefit at the most favourable period of the year.

On the 20th September, 1804, Elliston opened the campaign, taking the place of Kemble, who had now quitted Drury Lane, by acting *Rolla*, and on the 27th. Having repeated it, he started for Weymouth, where again, at the express command of the King, he was appointed to superintend a fête and perform a few nights at the theatre.

The fête took place on the 29th, on board the royal yacht, and was given in honour of the birthday of the Duchess of Wurtemberg. As their Majesties entered the vessel, Elliston and Miss De Camp, in the characters of a sailor and his wife, delivered a metrical address.

Patriotic rhapsodies were, at this period—the renewal of the French war—much in vogue on our theatres. They were well enough for the special purpose, but the greater part of them, as poetic compositions, miserable examples.

In October, Elliston returned to Drury Lane, when he acted *Archer. Charles*, in the "School for Scandal;" *Don Felix, Orlando, Young Bevil*, in the "Conscious Lovers;" *Wilding, Octavian, Benedict, Faulkland, Hamlet, Richard the Third, Belcour*, and *Ranger*, he also played in quick succession; and on the 31st January, 1805, he appeared in the part of *Duke Aranza*, the first representation of "The Honeymoon."

[Charles Robert Elliston, born 4th November, 1804.]

This highly popular drama had been long slighted, rejected, indeed, by the management of Drury Lane. The manuscript, which had been thrown amongst the dusty piles of the condemned cell, fell by mere chance a second time, under the notice of the turnkey, and as a kind of desperate alternative, the play, with due ceremony, was led out for execution. It was, however, strongly cast; and after the first rehearsal, there was an evident change of opinion amongst the actors; for although the main incidents of this comedy are far from original, yet there was such a jocund diversity of character, such an agreeable succession of well-arranged action, and so happy an adaptation of the vigorous diction of the "old masters," that all doubts were ultimately removed as to its verdict with the public.

And well indeed might all apprehensions have vanished, for the result was triumphant. It would be of little purpose to speak of any particular instance in the acting of either Elliston or Miss Duncan: where and what to choose would be the difficulty; any special notice or selection would be, in point of fact, a declaration of the whole, for there was no moment in which the spectator had been unequally delighted. Every actor in the piece was well affected to his particular allotment, and no duties were ever better performed than all the casts upon this occasion.

Poor Tobin, the author of the play, lived not to witness the triumph of his muse. He died, uufortunately, at Cork, a few months only before this first representation.

"The Honeymoon" was acted twenty-eight times in the season; twice by command of their Majesties—and ran eleven consecutive nights, a course which would undoubtedly have been extended, but for that sudden meteoric appearance in the dramatic horizon, which now drew after it the eyes of all observers—namely, "The Young Roscius."

So rich and varied was the histrionic excellence which Elliston displayed in this part, *Aranza*, that had his quality been hitherto equivocal, or altogether unaccredited, this

event would at once have placed him "ac prope socco," and the favourite delegate of the Comic Muse.*

Elliston receives the following letter from his attached friend, Mr. Gore :—

"Well, my cockmate, I congratulate you. Fame is not quite so nimble-footed as scandal, and yet your fresh renown has reached us long ago. But this is not the first satisfaction you have given on the scene of the 'Honeymoon.' Mrs. Elliston declares you acquitted yourself ten years ago in this interesting situation quite as well, though the world didn't know it.

"I have heard something of your little 'Roscius.' This step from the playground to the playhouse I cannot approve. I observe the lady who was to have performed with him is gone to Ireland—Mrs. Litchfield. Pray who is to take her place?—surely not Mrs. Siddons? The character for his *début* is well chosen,—*Dorilas,* in 'Merope.'

"We have, by report, here a second Siddons in Miss Smith. She interests all greatly, and some are thoroughly fascinated by her. From myself I can say nothing—I have not seen her."

Lord Harcourt again addresses Elliston :—

"Harcourt House, April 16, 1805.

"SIR,—A party of my friends, and your admirers, have solicited my interest to induce you to give them a reading, on some evening, at Miss Berry's, North Audley Street. I trust I may be able to make one in that circle, but, for the present, a return of erysipelas on my forehead renders it impossible for me to stir abroad. As you are accustomed to the sight of spectres, goblins, and moving simulacra, if you will call on me about any mid-day, I will exhibit to you my own frightful features. Whether at

* The principal cast of characters in the "Honeymoon" was as follows :—*Duke Aranza,* Elliston; *Rolando,* Bannister; *Lampedo,* Mathews; *Jacques,* Collins; *Juliana,* Miss Duncan; *Volante,* Miss Mellon; *Hostess,* Mrs. Sparks.

this advanced season of the year, and at a moment when the public mind is greatly agitated by concerns of national importance, it would be prudent in you to take a benefit, you, perhaps, would be a far better judge than myself. This I can say, that should I not be prevented by my attendance on her Majesty, I will certainly not only go myself to the play, in the event of your benefit, but will promote the occasion in every way I may be able.

"Of gentlemanly acting, I have often spoken to you; the love of applause has betrayed many an actor into tricks he has been utterly ashamed of afterwards. Wilkes, I believe, never fell into this error. O'Brien, I am sure, never did; nor have I ever witnessed this frailty in you; 'Never to make the unskilful laugh, make the judicious grieve.'

"Our stage is still barbarous in respect of costume. A short waist, a modish head-dress, are often coupled in the old plays, with a Grecian robe and a Gothic ruff. I have seen Woodward and Dodd wear white satin heels to their shoes; and Lewis, too, in such a dress as could only be fitting a mountebank in a fair. Mr. O'Brien made this also an object of his best study.

"I saw the 'Guardian' the other night. Mr. Murray and Miss Wallis, in their respective characters, were absolute perfection, but the *Young Clackit*, though represented by a performer of real merits, was marred by being ill-dressed.

"I wish you could see Mr. Fawcett in 'A Cure for the Heart-ache:' his representation of the rustic is nature herself. Garrick never exhibited a closer portrait.

"Your humble servant,

"HARCOURT."

The benefit took place in April, and was tolerably good, the earl and party occupying a box. Elliston, on this occasion, produced a piece entitled "The Venetian Outlaw," dramatized by himself, from Lewis's Romance, "The Bravo of Venice." The production was successful, and was repeated sundry times before the termination of the season.

Colman's negotiation with Messrs. Morris, Winston, and Tahourdine, for the sale of one moiety of the Haymarket property, and the result of a purchase by those gentlemen, greatly disconcerted the subject of these Memoirs.

Again had Elliston been baffled in his views of partnership; Bath, Liverpool, the Haymarket!—thrice had he been thwarted in his besetting ambition; and he now met Colman, at the commencement of his third and last season on the Haymarket boards, with no feelings of cordiality.

In July, a *petite comédie*, written by Cherry, under the title of "The World's Epitome," was produced at this theatre.

Considerable opposition attended the progress of the piece; and in the second act, Elliston, under the old impulse, stepped forward, begging earnestly that the audience would hear it to the close, which request he actually impressed on his bended knee. The petition was granted, but the "World's Epitome" was damned on the first reading, and the curtain fell amidst the yells and hootings of an indignant audience.

The *froissement*, however, was not confined to the body of spectators, for a difference taking place between Mathews and Elliston, in the *coulisses*, the former accusing our hero of some neglect, Elliston responded in that peculiar language which never fails "to stir men's blood," and a blow from his irritated antagonist was the prompt rejoinder.

At the commencement of the farce, Elliston, under great excitement, made a rambling appeal to the audience; but here also he appeared to get the worst of it, although he had withdrawn the play, at the sentence of the house, which had so emphatically pronounced there should be no two bites at a *Cherry*.

On the following day a letter by Robert William appeared in the public prints.

"Haymarket Theatre, July 20, 1805.

"SIR,—Some misrepresentations having taken place respecting an occurrence at this theatre, last night, in which I was a party, I beg leave to state,—

"It is true that a momentary altercation did arise between Mr. Mathews and myself, which was attended with some warmth on both sides, but it is not true that I 'was knocked down twice,' nor indeed was I knocked down at all. Neither is it true that I was placed in a situation humiliating to the feelings of a man, or derogatory to the character of a gentleman.

"It has been alleged that I am extremely officious in addressing the audience, on many occasions. If to my office, as stage-manager, the term *officious* be applied, I do plead guilty to the performance of my duty, but I do not assent to any less worthy signification of the word. I trouble the audience with observations only when I may deem it necessary, and always endeavour to do so with respect.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"R. W. ELLISTON."

Elliston's recent triumph in the part of *Duke Aranza*, at Drury Lane, was now succeeded by an event at the Haymarket, only less brilliant from the nature of the drama in which he appeared; a musical entertainment, entitled "Three and the Deuce."

This piece had been produced at the same theatre ten years previous to the present; the principal part, or parts, having been written expressly for the display of Mr. Bannister's versatility of genius; an experiment, however, which did not meet with a favourable reception.

Elliston, who had heretofore accomplished some triumphs not dissimilar to the present—namely, a decided success on Bannister's own ground—was by no means deterred from the present trial. The fantastic triune impersonation suited admirably his fancy, whilst a desire for emulation gave him additional vigour for the experiment. The versatility of powers (if we may venture so lofty a

term) necessary to success in the part of "*The Singles,*" might very reasonably have attracted public favour to this announcement, for Elliston was both a pleasing singer and an elegant dancer, while his *savoir faire* of the mock heroic and perception of broad farce, all conspired to the fairest results.

The piece was acted for his own benefit, and the trial was another decided hit. Like Diana, the actor was equally divine under his three phases; and the *petite comédie* was, from this time, assigned to him, by legal conveyance of popular approbation, his own freehold.

In the course of this season, another outbreak took place in the Little Theatre, which, commencing in deep tragedy, concluded very properly in downright farce.

Dowton had chosen for his benefit Foote's burlesque piece, entitled "The Tailors," or, "A Tragedy for Warm Weather," in which the fraternity of the thimble were not treated with the respect which their importance in all ages appears to have enjoyed; and they now resolved, like the Knights of the *Shoulder-knot* at Bath, some years before (on the representation of "High Life below Stairs"), to vindicate the dignity of their order.

A pallid battalion of tailors occupied (as well they might) the *dress* boxes, another operative line threaded the pit, whilst not a few were prepared for backing the suit in the galleries. Dowton had advertised "The Tailors," but they had resolved on "*Measure for Measure.*" The actor on his appearance in the part of *Francisco,* was assailed by no less a missile than a pair of tremendous shears, which would at once have cut the thread of his existence, had the act been an echo to the will.

This demonstration of hostility caused the immediate interference of the constables, and in nine minutes the uproar was at the best. The tailors, it is true, were three to one; but recollecting how many go to a man, it is not surprising they were presently overmatched. Some of the ringleaders, or, rather, foremen in the house, were handed over to the public office, where Mr. Aaron Graham, like *Priuli,* was at that moment sitting.

Here good fortune appeared, in some degree, to attend the tailors; for our friend Aaron being, as we have already had occasion to notice, in the interests of Drury Lane Theatre, was too well pleased at any mortification which might attend another booth in the fair; and with the exception, therefore, of the desperate little mechanic convicted of sheer malice against Dowton, the whole party were dismissed, or, we should rather have said, were sent about their business.

Thus terminated this thimble *émeute.* The tailors claimed the victory, and, quitting the play-house, were content for the future to appear on no other boards than their own.

In September of the same season, Liston made his first appearance in London, at this theatre, in the character of *Sheep-face*, in the "Village Lawyer." As of Tarleton (whom, in fact, he must somewhat have resembled in style), we can truly say,—

> ——— "cujus vox, vultus, actio possit
> Ex Heraclito reddere Democritum."

Hazlitt has pointedly said, "Liston is an actor hardly belonging to the present age. Had he lived in the time of Colley Cibber, what a splendid niche he would have given him in his Apology!"

In October, a revival of Farquhar's comedy "The Constant Couple" was advertised for representation, at Drury Lane Theatre.

Late in the afternoon, handbills had been circulated, stating, that in consequence of the sudden illness of Mr. Elliston, who was to have personated *Sir Harry Wildair*, the comedy would unavoidably be deferred; "She Stoops to Conquer" was the substitute.

As to the handbills, they of course had met the eye of but a small portion of the "British public," and the greater part of the audience, under a sense of disappointment, felt inclined to "take it out" (as the money-lenders express it) in some other article, and have a row for their money. Due satisfaction being obtained in this manner, Goldsmith

was entered "*vice*" Farquhar, and the substitution was permitted to proceed.

But on the following day one of those awkward *contretemps* occurred, of which we blush to confess we have met with more examples than the present, in the course of our theatrical reading.

The following *critique!* appeared in a journal called "The British Neptune:"—

"Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.—Last night, Farquhar's sprightly comedy 'The Constant Couple' was most barbarously murdered at this theatre. The lively knight was by Elliston reduced to a dull piece of affectation; it was *Tom Errand* in *Beau Clincher's* clothes. *Clincher* was altogether lost in the hands of Bannister; it approached Farquhar as nearly as the frog resembled the ox in the fable.

"Miss Mellon was not thoroughly unpleasant in her representation of *Angelica;* but criticism has not language severe enough to deprecate the impertinence of Barrymore, presuming to put himself forward in the part of *Colonel Standard.* We were scarcely less offended with Dowton's attempt at *Alderman Smuggler;* it was only not absolutely the worst thing we ever saw."

Such was the "mirror" in which the Drury Lane company—ladies and gentlemen—beheld their unhappy features at their toilet, on the following morning—Sunday! On their swollen heads, black eyes, and lacerated noses, they gazed in silent stupefaction. They had clearly been cruelly belaboured by elves,—the victims of paw-wawing—in their sleep (for Saturday nights are the Sabbaths of witches), and acknowledged the providence of having escaped with life itself.

They however determined, like the petulant beauty, to be revenged upon their *looking-glass;* and Elliston, Barrymore, Dowton, and Bannister entered a prosecution against the old "Neptune," which would inevitably have brought him from his coral palace, on the dry floor of the Court of King's Bench, but for the mercy of those whom he had so deeply injured. The prosecution was stayed—the proprietors of the paper paying of course all expenses,

and a supplemental fifty pounds to the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund.

Whilst on the subject of "outrages" we must beg leave to narrate an act of surpassing audacity, to the cost of poor Dowton.

During the representation of some piece, wherein Dowton had to be lowered by means of a trap through the stage, his face being turned towards the audience, Elliston and De Camp, who were concealed below, had provided themselves with small ratan canes, and as their brother actor was slowly descending to solemn music, they applied their sticks sharply and rapidly to the thinly-clad calves of his legs.

Poor Dowton, whose duty it was to look as dignified and intrenchant as a ghost, smarting under the pain, curvetted with his heels, like a horse in Ducrow's arena. Choking with rage, he was at length wholly let down, and being now completely out of sight of the audience, he looked earnestly round to discover the perpetrators of the violence. As to Elliston and his companion,—it was *decamp* with each of them; but at this moment Charles Holland, dressed to the very finish of fashion, worthy of Cibber himself, was crossing from one of the rooms. The enraged actor, believing him to have been the offender, seized a mop at that moment immersed in most un-seemly water, and thrusting it in Charles's face, utterly destroyed wig, ruffles, point-lace, and every particle of his elaborate attire.

In vain Holland protested his innocence, and implored for mercy; his cries only whetted the other's revenge, and again and again the saturated mop was at work over his finery.

Somewhat appeased at last, Dowton quitted his victim; but in the mean time the prompter's bell had announced the commencement of the piece in which Holland was to have appeared. What was to be done? The drama was proceeding, Holland already called to the stage! all was confusion thrice confounded. An apology for "*a sudden accident to Mr. Holland*" was made, and the public in-

formed "that De Camp had *kindly undertaken to go on for the part!*"

In April (1806), Elliston applied for permission of the Haymarket authorities to advertise Colman's pleasant little comedy, "Blue Devils," for his benefit at Drury Lane, to which he received the following direct answer:—

"The proprietors of the Haymarket Theatre present their compliments to Mr. Elliston, and acquaint him that past circumstances prevent their acceding to a request with which they have been so unexpectedly honoured."

This note was in Colman's own handwriting. Such was the acetous fermentation of that sweet friendship, which had been so lately sealed in pledges of choice Madeira, and witnessed in the little "rump-parliament" at Waldron's.

It was at this period of life that Elliston became first acquainted with a gentleman, who eventually proved one of his truest and most valuable friends — Mr. Warner Phipps, actuary of the Albion Assurance Company—a man of good understanding and rare sincerity. To Mr. Phipps, Elliston was frequently indebted for pecuniary aids, which never were denied when the object appeared honest and reasonable.

An attempt was now made by a certain clique of the leading spirits of Drury Lane, in conjunction with sundry town wits (and amongst them Theodore Hook, then a young man), for a revival of some of the London clubs, which had lately fallen into abeyance. Elliston was the very *Monk* of the "Restoration."

Their immediate object was a resuscitation of the "Humbug Club," which had originally been projected by Mr. Perry, proprietor of the *Morning Chronicle.*

Mr. Perry, in fact, "gave the people a constitution," at the head of which he was nominally placed. Colman, who, from foregone conclusions, "was unable to appear," was yet, like *Ariel,* a most potent agent, invisible, and duly executed the good bidding of Perry, the *Prospero,* on the enchanted soil of the Oxford Coffee House, where the roystering crew were fraternized.

"The Humbug"—that is, the "old original"—had

been assembled on the first month of several years, by a proclamation, issued by Mr. Perry, who was designated "*Humbugallo Rex*," and countersigned by his secretary, "*Screech*." These proclamations were exceedingly humorous, and may be read on the files of the "*Chronicle*" of the period.

Mr. Pryse Gordon, in his "Personal Memoirs," says,

"When a new member was proposed, he was admitted blindfolded, with much ceremony. He was then conducted by a member to the bottom of a large apartment, whence he mounted a dozen of almost perpendicular steps, being warned, that if he slipped, he would inevitably break his neck. When the candidate had ascended the very summit of the tottering fabric, the bandage was suddenly snatched from his eyes, and he found himself standing on a platform of about a foot square, elevated some ten feet above the inquisitors. Around the table below were sitting the president, his secretary (*Screech*), and twelve judges, all masked, with beards low as their knees, and black gowns. In the centre of the table was a caldron of spirits of wine, which threw a most infernal glare on the whole assembly."

Certain questions were then put to the bewildered candidate, which if, in the judgment of the court, he answered satisfactorily, and respectfully bowed three times in the act of descending, he was duly declared a member of the body.

But as none of these things were possible, no candidate ever succeeded in passing his examination. However, as all is fish which comes to the devil's net, the infernal president usually extended a grace to the failing votary, and he was ultimately matriculated.

Bannister, who had been a member of the "old original," was joyfully received into the association of the Oxford Coffee House. He was here frequently president, when Johnstone fulfilled the duties of "*Screech*."

The following examination of a candidate before these two "*Jacks* in office" took place, as witnessed by the hero of our Memoir. The usual question being put—

"Pray, sir, were you present at your birth?"

Reply — "No; I was a changeling before I was born."

"Pray, sir, what is the stock of wisdom you purpose investing in this society?"

"I come here to get wisdom."

"True; you are of *that class* which experience *sometimes* renders wise."

But notwithstanding the efforts of this "gallant crew," and all their appliances to boot, the new "Humbug" lasted but for a season: the "Restoration," in fact, was but of short duration; and a Revolution came which swept from state and being this last of the Humbugs. The Oxford Coffee House affair failed, as most revivals have been found to do. When once a dog has had his day, the best voltaic battery will but make him wag his tail, at best.

In the course of Elliston's visit to Dublin, he was surprised, one morning, by a visit from a dashing young fellow, who, unceremoniously entering his room, grasped him by the hand with the tenderness of a vice, invoking on him many days of joy and good fortune. Startled by this amicable assault, Elliston in vain cudgelled his brains to bring his friend to memory.

Far more amused than mortified at the comedian's dilemma, the stranger, in the exultation of high spirits and rosy prosperity, bantered him for a while on his frail pledges of friendship, playing off, at the same time, a thousand *bouffonneries.*

"Why, don't you know me? Donald?" cried he—"Donald, at Saint Paul's?—Don't you recollect Donald —*pug* Donald? Robert!"

The veil immediately dropped from before the eyes of our hero, who at once recalled to recollection his truant schoolfellow, "pug Donald," and the many occasions, also, on which, each being soundly whipped for their common fault, the birch of Dr. Roberts might well be supposed to have "twined their hearts in one."

About the time Robert William took flight from St. Paul's to Bath, his schoolmate Donald (for "pug" was

a sad dog) made an equally abrupt excursion to the sea-coast; one for the stage, the other on board ship.

Donald had secreted himself, like a rat, in the hold of a coaster, which having put to sea, he crept from his hiding-place, begging, in piteous accents, the mercy of the master, and that he might be received as a cabin-boy. His prayer was granted; in fact, it was too late for refusal, and in this situation he remained for full three years.

At the age of eighteen, he was made mate of a vessel sailing from North Britain, and there being a press on the river just at this time, Donald was illegally seized by a man-of-war's gang, and put on board a tender, whence he was shipped for the coast of Africa. Being a good seaman, he was rated able, and his exemplary conduct being noticed by the first-lieutenant, he was speedily appointed quarter-master. In a brush with a French frigate, Donald behaved with so much gallantry, that he was placed on the quarter-deck as midshipman.

He had now been gazetted lieutenant three months, and having been a week in Dublin, had discovered, in knocking about the town, the companion of his earlier days,—his partner in many a stolen afternoon, and a large shareholder in a joint stock of flagellation.

Elliston was immediately made known to such of Donald's family who were at that time resident in Dublin. He passed several gala days in the society of his friend; and their imaginations being so vividly recalled to the scenes of youth, they conducted themselves, in some instances, so much like schoolboys, as to become once more joint tenants of the same narrow apartment, namely—the watchhouse.

"Pug" of course went to see his friend act, and which occasion was, in fact, the very first time he had ever entered the doors of a playhouse.

The timely success which had attended the production of "The Honeymoon," induced the directors of Drury Lane theatre to apply again to their piles of neglected MSS., and, like other coquettes, to turn their second

thoughts towards some of those offers they had too unceremoniously slighted in past seasons.

Rejected comedies, mouldy by despair, were ogled from their obscurity; and the frail managers repeated the doleful ditty—

> "Any one of these, which I slighted before,
> Will do very well for me."

"The Curfew," another of Tobin's, became now the reigning favourite.

This drama, put into rehearsal, was advertised for representation for the 14th of February (1807); two days previous to which it was announced as indefinitely postponed, owing to the sudden absence of Mr. Elliston, who was to have performed the principal character.

The Master of Sidney College had been for some weeks in declining health, and his illness having now become alarming, his nephew proceeded at once to Cambridge.

Elliston found his uncle rapidly sinking. He was received with great affection by his venerable relative, who, in pardoning his offences, had no slight category to remit.

The Doctor did not survive this interview many days. He died full of honour, in the respect of all men who had value for integrity and well-directed talents.

Doctor Elliston directed by will 600*l.* to be divided equally between his nephews, R. W. Elliston and the son of Professor Martyn. To each of his grandchildren, of which there were twenty, he left 100*l.*, to be paid with accumulation, as they severally attained their twenty-first year. As residuary legatees, Elliston and his cousin Martyn received 1,700*l.* each.

Out of the late occurrence, certain wild reports were presently spread through the dramatic circles of the metropolis;—first, that Elliston had been bequeathed 20,000*l.*, and an estate in Huntingdonshire, on condition of his quitting the stage; secondly, that he had repudiated the Muses, and embraced the Fathers; Thalia for St. Chrysostom; the Green-room for the Cloister; and a third rumour, that he was about to found a dramatic col-

lege, of which he was to be nominated Provost, with power, under a charter, for admitting licentiates, and conferring histrionic degrees! Certainly he returned to London bearing on his brow the very stamp of an epoch; —his very step was eventful, and he moved in an atmosphere of fate.

On the 19th, however, the misty conglomeration of surmises was dispelled, and Tobin's "Curfew" produced; Elliston having resumed his duties at Drury Lane, by sustaining the principal part in that drama.

Triumphs are not met with in coveys: the plumage which distinguished the "Honeymoon" did not clothe this second flight of the poet. The "Curfew" was at least successful, and brought money to the treasury.

For his benefit, Elliston played *Vapid*, *Vapour*, and *Don Juan*—the receipts being four hundred and seventy-six pounds!

Elliston being known to the Margravine of Anspach, having figured at one or two of her private dramatical entertainments, applied to her, on the part of a friend, about to publish a Theatrical Tour, for permission to introduce a notice of her tasteful *Salle Dramatique* at Brandenburg House, into the work; to which her highness replies—

"SIR,—In answer to y[r] request, I inform you that there is likewise a Theatre in my Wood here, of a Construction so peculiarly pretty, that it would perhaps be y[e] most interesting Description in y[r] friend's Tour. I shall write to my Housekeeper at B. House, to let him view the Theatre there; but I wish him not to print anything ab[t] me or my Establishments, without first letting me see what he intends writ[g]

"I have been much assailed by printed Falsehoods—the Newspapers appear to say what they please, and pack Stories as some people do the Cards, for the Pleasure of cheating, without any prospect of Gain.

"ELIZABETH."

"Bonham, n[r] Newbury, Berks, July 8, 1807."

The Margravine's private theatricals excited quite a sensation at this period.

On several of these occasions, Elliston was the very Coryphæus of the rout,—particularly on one event, wherein there was an equal portion of the antic with the Attic, and where there was certainly no deficiency of amusement, for the laugh which wit might have failed to elicit, absurdity pretty clearly excited.

Sir John Carr, who had lately been knighted by the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, took a patronizing lead in this instance, and appeared so highly gratified both with himself and everything connected with the evening, that Hook, who was present, declared the play could be performed but for one *knight* only.

"Ah! we shall never see such another," replied Sir John, *sans le savoir*.

In the summer, Elliston being at Liverpool, he received the following letter from his friend, Mr. Warner Phipps:—

"I have lost no opportunity of seeing Mr. Young. It would be offensive to friendship, were I to pander to any vanity you may have, by underrating a man whom I look on, in one branch of his profession, to be a most formidable rival to you.

"In tragedy, Mr. Young has made a very strong, and, I think, a well-deserved impression on the public mind. His *Hamlet* contains beauties of very high order, and his acting in the *Stranger* is powerfully, irresistibly impressive. As a tragic actor, he cannot but succeed. His *Don Felix* is a volume of failures, and his actings as much out of character, as an undertaker's scarf on a bridal attire.

"Nature has thrown such a solemnity about his form and aspect, that Thalia will neither yield to his entreaties nor be forced into his embraces—so much for the *stage;* but unless I am much mistaken, there is *still* a vein of fun running through his constitution, which to his friends at home, is rich and yielding.

"Mr. Young frequently sheds over his text a brilliant

lustre; there is a bold honesty in his manner which persuades he is right; you *believe* him in all he says and does. In tenderness he is deficient; he can vindicate female honour, but he cannot condole with the sufferer; he can championize the dignity of blood, but he cannot mingle tears with tears.

"Graham and Tom Sheridan have been watching him nightly, and I have no doubt the Drury Lane merchants are speculating on this new commodity. Sheridan saw him last night in *Hamlet*, and walked behind the scenes at the conclusion of the play.

"I went, two days ago, with Mr. Rundall, to look at the house he proposed for you in Stratford Place. The terms are certainly not high, but I hesitate in respect of the situation. I think there would be a discretion in your not taking the exact ground with families of rank and title. The very people who might become patrons of yourself and wife, would look coldly, disdainfully, on you, as next-door neighbours.

"The great world may be pleased in being followed, but will not forgive being encroached on; in plain English, you have no business in Stratford Place: every house, I believe, in this street, is occupied by rank or wealth; and though no law forbids Mr. Elliston taking up his abode here, yet his good sense should prevent it.

"Garrick, with all his fame, sought and courted as he was, did not presume to place himself in immediate contact with nobility, though his fortune was equal to a handsome residence, which he, in fact, had in the Adelphi Terrace; and Kemble does not venture beyond the bourne of Bloomsbury.

"I would suggest Bedford Place to you; the houses are spacious and convenient; but for God's sake, do not let any duke overhear the fiddle of a dancing school, or your neighbour the countess observe the actor stepping into a hackney-coach. The very principle of the ridiculous is in things being out of place."

Having concluded his short engagement at Liverpool, Elliston made a sort of *détour* on his return to London,

taking Buxton in his circuit, at which place he acted for a few nights.

Miserable was the theatre, and the actors "*Iro pauperiores.*" The capabilities of the house consisted of two scenes, which, like *Master Solomon's* waistcoat, had been turned for many occasions, and from their state of near obliteration, had arrived at such a point of utility as to pass for anything. This will remind us of the Welsh sheriff (of whom the facetious Tom Brown speaks), who converted an old cloak, first into a coat, then into a waistcoat, and lastly into a pair of small-clothes.

A few stage "foot-lamps" illumed the whole house, throwing a dim *ir*religious light upon the fresco brick wall, which supported both the roof of the building and the back of the spectator. The pit floor was composed of a line of hurdles, which kept the feet of the groundlings at some distance from that only overflow which fortune ever permitted, and which, owing to the low position of the building, never failed in the rainy season. The scant wardrobe, to the last thread and button, was, it is true, employed in every piece, but which, being a contribution of all costumes under the sun (like the child's sham watch) could not have been always wrong.

The company was numerically small, unless the numericals had reference to their sum of years, for, with the exception of two urchins, who had but one hat between them, there was not an actor or actress much under seventy years of age.

The entertainment on the night of Elliston's arrival at Buxton was the "Castle Spectre."

In the course of this play, it will be recollected, *Earl Percy* is detained prisoner in *Lord Osmond's* tower, whose movements are overwatched by *Muley* and *Saib*, two of *Osmond's* black slaves. Whilst these Africans are playing at dice in front of the stage, and the *Earl* feigning sleep on his couch, fishermen without the walls of the castle sing a chorus, which gives the *Earl* a cue for his escape; this he accomplishes by climbing a window, unseen by the blacks, and dropping into the boat, supposed

to be floating under the casement. On this night, however, the said scene was thus acted :—

In the first place, the two slaves were represented by one actor; "doubled," as it is called; and the dialogue he carried on with himself, supposing the presence of the second person—

"Hark! music!"—here the first strain of the distant chorus is understood, but as there was not one in the company who could express a note but himself, the actor turned his head over his shoulders and slyly chanted it, *Percy* still feigning sleep. The black continues—

"I'll see what it is!"—he now, by means of a table, ascended to the casement, and thrusting his head and shoulders through the same, a fiddle from behind was handed up to him, on which, out of sight of the audience, he worked his elbows, singing and playing—

> "Sleep you or wake you, lady bright,
> Sing Megen oh! oh! Megen Ee!"

Concealing, then, his instrument, and withdrawing his head, he turned to the audience—

"Surely I know that voice. Still my prisoner sleeps. I'll listen again."

Once again, head and shoulders through the window, the fiddle raised to his hands, on he went—

> "To spring below then never dread,
> Our arms to catch you shall be spread;
> A boat now waits to set you free,
> Sing Megen oh! oh! Megen Ee!"

But, alas! just at this moment, when in the act of a second time pulling in his body from the narrow aperture, the exertion necessary to the operation, together with the fragile state of the antique scenery, produced a most awful crash; the whole side of *Osmond's* castle-wall, with *Muley* sticking in the window-frame, like a rat caught by his neck, fell inwards on the stage, disclosing at one view an heterogeneous state of things beyond, beggaring all powers of description.

Hogarth's "Strollers dressing in a Barn" is not more fantastically conceived; pipkins and helmets, wigs and smallclothes, paint and petticoats, bread and cheese, and thunder and lightning; ladies and gentlemen, full-dressed, half-dressed, undressed, in all the various stages of hurried interchange of joint-stock attire; love and discord, fondling and fighting; chalk, tallow, poison, Cupids, and brickbats; hips, beards, bosoms, bottles, glue-pots, and broken-headed drums; garlands, gallipots, ghosts, moonbeams, play-books, and brimstone!

On the night following the above disaster, Elliston played at the same theatre his favourite *Aranza;* and extraordinary efforts were made to render the play worthy the expected patronage.

The house had an overflow, though a dry night; and matters went for a time swimmingly, as it is called; there was neither break-down in scenery nor acting. *Juliana* (in the costume of *Fatima!*) was, it is true, faulty both in her part and person; for she had lost every tooth in her head; and though her articulation was thereby rendered imperfect, this was of little detriment to the scene, so long as she filled up the stage and showed a spirit.

All went on amazingly well until the scene with the *Mock Duke*, in the fourth act. Here *Jaques* is discovered sitting in a large arm-chair, which, to give it dignity, had been covered over with an old curtain-hanging. On rising from his seat, the hilt of the *Mock Duke's* sword most inopportunely became entangled in one of the sundry holes of the loose coverlid, which, on the actor's walking towards the front of the stage,

"Like a wounded snake, dragg'd its slow length along."

This certainly provoked something more than a smile; but it so happened that the chair in question had been borrowed for the occasion from a neighbouring inn, and being originally fashioned for the incidental purposes of a sick-chamber, its appliances were so palpably disclosed to the whole body of spectators, that the roar produced, far more resembled thunder than any paltry imitation ever

before witnessed in a theatre. The people actually screamed with merriment—in fact, they laughed for a whole week afterwards.

Of the acting company at Buxton, the greater part, as we have observed, though low in gold, were at least rich in those "silver hairs which purchase good opinion;" and amongst them a Mr. Ladbroke, who had fallen into the infirmity of forgetting the words of parts he was constantly in the habit of playing.

Of this there are many instances on record. When Tom Walker was performing *Macheath* for the seventieth time he was a little imperfect, which Rich observing, said,—

"Hallo! Mister! your memory ought to be pretty good by this time!"

"And so it is," replied Walker; "but zounds, it cannot last for ever!"

Mr. Ladbroke, however, was generally perfect at rehearsals; but his mystifications at night arose probably from this cause—his *rôle* was always the old men; and these, whether *Sir A. Absolute, Don Lopez, Foresight,* or *Adam Winterton,* he acted in the *same suit of clothes,* so that when he gazed on his own figure, ready dressed for any particular one of these, all the words of "Bell's Edition" crowded to the threshhold of his memory, which not unnaturally led to some confusion in the interior. Thus, for instance, would he proceed, on making his bow as *Sir Peter Teazle* :—

"When an old bachelor marries a young wife . . . Ah! you pretty rogue, you shall outshine the queen's box on an opera night . . . His Pagod, his Poluphlosboio, his Monsieur Musphonos, and his devil knows what . . . It was but yesterday he fastened my wig to the back of my chair, and when I went to make a bow, I popped my bald head in *Mrs. Frizzle's* face—" so that here we had a compound of *Sir Peter Teazle, Sir Francis Gripe, Periwinkle,* and *Old Hardcastle;* all delightful when taken "neat," but as little relished in the admixture as old Burgundy, whisky punch, dry sherry, and Staffordshire ale, in aliquot parts, for an afternoon's draught.

Elliston had driven over to Poole's Cavern with a friend, in a gig, and in the course of his extended jaunt was strolling on foot leisurely up one of the hills (his companion having the reins of the horse), when a figure approached him from the hedge-side, the most wretched, the most emaciated of beings he had ever beheld.

The man was evidently dying of hunger and exhaustion. This object was a poor Frenchman, who, having escaped from one of the prisons, had wandered about a country, of which he knew nothing, for four days and nights, with no money, no means of assuaging the cravings of nature.

Commiserating the poor creature as he did, Elliston knew not how to proceed, or into what serious dilemma he might bring himself, by sheltering an escaped prisoner of war. He at least determined not to abuse the rights of confidence; in other words, to maintain strictly the rules of dramatic justice, and entitle himself to the applause of his own conscience.

Desiring the poor Frenchman to lie snug in the field from which he had just crawled (like the great Monmouth, with a few peas only in his pocket), Elliston and his friend drove back to a neighbouring village, where, purchasing a couple of loaves, a little bacon, and a bottle of wine, he returned to the spot where the famishing foreigner lay concealed.

The wretched creature (who, in his days of plumage, would scarcely have been a match for "*Captain Weazel*") having long since given himself up for lost, now began to blubber in tears of gratitude, and express his *battements du cœur* in as much pantomime as his weakness would permit.

The evening was fast closing in, but the weather warm and lovely, and Elliston, teeming with melodramatic fervour, hurried the trembling refugee to a low copse in the hollow of a contiguous dell, and boxing him snugly in a heap of furze, completely obscured from the public eye, spread before him the restoratives he had just obtained.

The little Frenchman's head peeping from his prickly nest—the bread and bacon—the bottle of "neat wine,"

and the true stage importance in which, no doubt, Elliston had fully invested himself, must have represented a most characteristic picture. The actor, of course, delivered a speech or two, more apposite to the occasion than intelligible to his listener; and dropping, at the same time, a small sum of money into the lap of the nidulated man of war, commended him to the caprice of Fortune, who sometimes, when in a pleasant mood, exerts herself in extraordinary means, for the benefit of the most insignificant of her votaries.

Having still leisure at his disposal, Elliston felt no inclination for an immediate return to London.

It was just at this time, he had received a letter from his wife. Full of affection, but not unmixed by well-directed reproof, Elliston read over sundry times its unanswerable contents, till a kind of sentimentality crept over him, not unusual to such constitutions, and too often mistaken for solid repentance.

As he wandered this morning along the declivous parts of Dove Dale, he pondered on the home-truths that had just been presented to him; and having arraigned some of those infirmities, to which we have had occasion frequently to allude, and rhapsodized aloud to no inconsiderable effect, he came to the conclusion that he was about one of the most worthless fellows in his Majesty's dominions.

Having done so much—he considered that he had done quite enough. Confession is certainly one step to amendment; and now, like a man who had compounded with his creditors, he felt himself once more at liberty to run in debt, at the first convenient opportunity.

On the following day Elliston arrived at Derby; and avoiding what is called the head inn, after a short reconnoitre, he entered a smaller house of entertainment on the verge of the town, where he determined to take up his quarters for the night. Here he soon ingratiated himself with his landlord—a habit he delighted to indulge in; and having despatched a hasty repast, invited his

new-found friend to partake the bottle which had been just set before him.

The said landlord was nearly as bulky as the tun of Heidelberg; and as it would require consequently about as much to fill him, Elliston conceived he might have made too hasty an engagement; but as this personage was really a merry fellow, and a bit of a wag, our adventurer was not inclined to repent his challenge.

He soon discovered, however, the poor man had more wives than he knew what to do with; for although (not to perplex the reader) he had but one, yet was she "one too many," so that the present moment was, in fact, the first he had had for many a day, for the manifestation of that good humour so natural to him.

Though in the presence of his landlord, Elliston soon found he had calculated without his host; for the good man's volubility was of that extent, that he fairly chattered our hero dumb. But our traveller at least took the lead in the bottle—a part which his landlord, for many reasons, was not displeased in resigning to him; for the liquor, though passing under the denomination,—"Neat Wines," was, in fact, a compound greatly in circulation at this period of the war—namely, a composition of gin, treacle, blacking, and tobacco, or, in politer words, "old crusted port."

On producing a second and even a third bottle of this delectable electuary, the landlord not unnaturally indulged in the joint praise of the qualities of his cordial and the judgment of his guest; declaring that the squire on the hill never drank any other when he met the judges of assize, and exultingly displaying not only the bee's-wing, but the very bees themselves, who, in community with sundry smaller flies, had been carefully corked in, at the bottling of this remarkable vintage.

But society will sweeten the coarsest fare, and the sitting had been still prolonged, when the shrill notes of the landlady suddenly recalled her husband to fresh duties, in the arrival of other customers at the "Red Cow."

Left to himself and the greater part of the third bottle

of the old crusted port, Elliston took refuge in his sentimentality of yesterday; and drawing his wife's letter from his pocket, moistened sentence after sentence with the remaining bumpers, so that, at length, heart, head, and stomach being in one common state of insurrection, he retired—widely from his custom—to an early bed.

And now, Spirit of time-honoured Radcliffe! Shade of "wonder-working Lewis!" descend upon our humble efforts in the "new scenes and changes" of our history.

A deep sleep was the immediate consequence of the "drugged posset" so liberally indulged in by our graceless wanderer, when, about the chime of midnight, as nearly as he could guess, he was awakened by a sharp click at the lock of his apartment, followed immediately by a long-drawn creak of hinge, which left but little doubt in respect of some intruder.

The moon was shining fully on the casement, which was directly opposite the foot of his bed; but a large folding-screen had been placed nearly midway of the room, for the purpose, no doubt, of obscuring the morning light, for the apartment was entirely destitute of hangings; and behind this screen was also the door. The creaking was presently repeated, at those abrupt intervals, denoting the stealthy action of approach. Elliston listened; sleep had sobered him, and some little fear, perhaps, quickened too his faculties. Distinctly did he hear the whispering of two persons, whose shadow the moon's fulness had shown on the side wall. In breathless attention, he remained motionless; the whispering was resumed, and he now caught the very words:

"Afraid! What folly! He's asleep, I tell you; go—go!"

"I cannot!" was the reply.

Elliston felt convinced the second voice was that of a woman, and being at once impressed their object was no less than to cut his throat (for no one contemplates simple robbery in the dead of night, without this *adagio* accompaniment), he was hesitating whether his quiet course were the wisest he could pursue, when again he heard—

"He sleeps! I tell you again, he sleeps! Why, he drank two bottles, they say. Come—come, 'tis soon done!"

"Oh, I cannot!" again responded the female.

"Why, he snores—hark!" at which moment, Elliston raised his eyes from the bed-clothes, and saw clearly the figures of the speakers. They were in the instantaneous act of stepping forward, when, by an involuntary impulse, Elliston sprang from his bed, and rushing to the spot, clasped, with a mingled shout of terror and triumph, the waist of the advancing female, who, uttering a shriek which might have awakened the occupiers of a cemetery, fell on her knees before him.

The *bouleversement* thus suddenly excited (for other sundry articles of furniture had been overthrown), at once raised the whole establishment of the "Red Cow."

Elliston, with no other attire than that which usage has deemed sufficient to the tenant of a pair of sheets, was still holding, in convulsive exultation, his fainting victim, when the fat landlord, who, by the size of his stomach, might be said to carry all before him ("with his rib by his side," whose voluminous nightcap almost buried her vixen visage), tumbled into the apartment.

Not longer to perplex our readers, let the mystery be here explained.

The event which had so inopportunely broken up the *tête-à-tête* of Elliston and his landlord over their crusted port, on the previous afternoon, was the arrival of a commercial traveller and his lady, whose purpose it was to remain that night at the inn.

These new guests, having well supped, at the hour of midnight were about to retire. Unfortunately, however, the room occupied by Elliston, was one through which it was necessary they should pass, before reaching their own chamber; and he having retired, as we have already noticed, at an early hour, was consequently at this time in bed.

The dismay which had assailed the commercial gentleman's good lady, at passing through an apartment in which there was a man positively abed, had given rise to the whole of this common-law evidence of a felonious

intent, which could leave no doubt on the minds of any respectable jury, and which had so unwittingly dragged our hero into an attitude in which we blush ever to have discovered him.

Scarcely had Elliston resumed his duties at Drury Lane, when he involved himself in a war of words with the proprietors of his ancient ally, *The Mirror*.

The Mirror (if we may be pardoned a common-place joke) had presumed to cast reflections on Elliston's tragedy, which the self-esteem of the aggrieved party, of course, set down as *scandalum magnatum*. In fact, this journal had travelled a little out of the direct path of criticism, by indulging in a few tart personalities affecting the actor. As Dryden's criticism, it was no longer "the majesty of a queen, but like Rymer's, the ferocity of a tyrant." *

Among other things, it had stated that Elliston had of late acquired a habit of stretching his mouth from ear to ear, resembling one of those Dutch toys denominated nut-crackers, and it had also gone so far as to question our hero's terms of intimacy with the Latin tongue, by the imputation of a false quantity in the word "marital," &c. &c. In respect of the former, all the nuts, of course, fell to the share of the public, who mightily enjoyed the absurd sensitiveness of the man who could "quarrel with another for cracking nuts only because he himself had hazel eyes"—and in respect of the latter, the "marital" *quantity*, the actor might have been content to take his correction in good part from the critics, as in the marital *quality* he had lately been so signally chastened by his exemplary wife.

In May (1808), the admired Miss Pope made her farewell curtsey on Drury Lane stage, after a service of fifty-two years in the same theatre.

* An expression of Malone.

[Albina Jane Martyn Elliston, born 10th of March, 1808, in Stratford Place: godmothers, Albina Countess of Buckinghamshire and Lady Jane Aston.]

Mr. Pope, the father of our heroine, who kept a hair-dresser's shop adjoining the "Ben Jonson's Head" in Little Russell Street, was barber in ordinary to the theatre; he had introduced his daughter Jane, then twelve years of age, to the notice of Mr. Garrick, who was so pleased by the few specimens she gave of dramatic ability, that he immediately assigned to the little demoiselle the part of *Lady Flimnap*, in a piece entitled "Lilliput," acted entirely by children, with the exception of *Gulliver* himself.

Three years after, when only fifteen, Miss Pope was announced for *Corinna*, in "The Confederacy," as "a young gentlewoman, her first appearance." Her reception was highly encouraging, and success in her profession soon followed. She had very early attracted the attention and friendship of the celebrated Mrs. Clive, with whom she lived on intimate terms until that lady's death, which took place in 1785.*

In the latter part of Miss Pope's career, she had been importuned by her managers to play *Mrs. Heidelberg*, a part which she had never studied in her earlier days, and felt now totally unequal to attempt.

It happened, in 1802, Lord Harcourt, who had always been amongst her best friends and admirers, despatched to her the following note:—

"Lord Harcourt has just received the King's command to notify to Miss Pope, that his Majesty has directed the 'Clandestine Marriage' for Thursday next; and has also, by his Majesty's order, informed Mr. Kemble that it is his pleasure Miss Pope should play the character of *Mrs. Heidelberg* on that occasion."

This was inclosed in the following from his lordship:—

"MADAM,—To a woman of your discernment, the contents of the enclosed note will be highly flattering, though, at the same time, possibly embarrassing.

"The case is this. Last night, at the Queen's house,

* Mrs. Clive passed her latter days at Little Strawberry Hill, near the villa of Horace Walpole.

where your theatrical talents are frequently mentioned, a wish was expressed that you should play *Mrs. Heidelberg* before their Majesties on Thursday next; to which I observed to the King, that however honoured and happy you must ever be in obeying his Majesty's pleasure, yet I believed that you had never yet turned your attention to the part, and doubted the possibility of your being ready in it by the time. The King seemed to assent; but I have just now received a letter from the Princess Elizabeth, in which her R. H. says,—

" 'I have received the King's command to inform you, that if you can contrive that Miss Pope shall play *Mrs. Heidelberg* on Thursday, he would be delighted; and Lord Harcourt may tell her from me, observed the King, that she is the only person who *can* act it, since the loss of Mrs. Clive.'

"HARCOURT."

To which Miss Pope, in much alarm, replies:—

"MY LORD,—You well know my grateful sentiments in respect of their Majesties. No subject has ever loved and honoured them more than myself; and this instance, alas! in my declining day, is the only one in which I feel unable to the great delight of obeying them. The undertaking would be a tragedy, and not a comedy, for, believe me, I should die in the attempt—my dear lord, it would kill me. My powers are scarcely equal to it for any time; but for Thursday! O me!

"The managers have frequently of late urged me to this, with time for study; but I have taken it into my poor head, that the critics would be soured against me, and I might lose the little fame I have obtained—perhaps, in some measure, the good opinion of their Majesties. I tremble again at what I have written—I know I should not have said so much—my duty tells me I should not; but should their Majesties graciously be pleased to see me play the part at a further time, I will make instant preparation to obey them.

"My memory, to say nothing of my other humble qualities, is not so lively as when I was eighteen; and, my lord,

I am an old woman now. If his Majesty would make me a peeress, I could not do it by Thursday. Oh! my dear, dear lord, send me a pardon under the great seal, or I shall never leave home again.

"I have the honour to be, your lordship's most humble servant,

"JANE POPE."

On the 6th of May (1802), however, the effort was made, and Miss Pope played the part before their Majesties. She succeeded, to the undivided opinion of the whole house—"Never had the character been acted with better effects," said one of the journals of the day, "not even by the regretted Mrs. Clive."

King, the original *Lord Ogleby*, quitted the stage on the 24th of the same month, and the "Clandestine Marriage" remained on the shelf for a considerable time from this period.

The suggestions of Mr. Phipps in respect of Elliston's new abode, appear to have had but little weight with him, for he had now entered on the house in Stratford-place, which he fitted up not extravagantly; in fact, it never was thoroughly furnished; but the vanity of the comedian was thus far flattered, in calling so spacious a residence his own, and placing Mrs. Elliston in a position, which he still pertinaciously believed would advance her professional interest with the fashionable world.

Elliston's benefit in this season was a very brilliant occasion. He and Mrs. Jordan acted in their best style, the play being "Much Ado about Nothing." So much rank and fashion had rarely before attended a benefit. Mrs. Jordan was complimented by an elegant ode, which appeared two days afterwards in the *Morning Post*.

At the close of the Drury Lane season, Elliston proceeded on an engagement to Dublin, where he found his attraction by no means equal to his expectations. In a letter to his wife, he says:—

"I was tossed about for twenty-six hours. On leaving

the coach at Shrewsbury, being anxious immediately to proceed, I ordered a chaise, but was told they had no horses at the first post-house; at the second and third, I received similar answers. I was greatly distressed, for it was a point with me to reach Oswestry without delay.

"You will be amused at my expedient. Summoning a diplomatic look into my countenance, I demanded instantly to be conducted to the mayor, declaring that I had despatches for the Duke of Richmond, and that if horses were not immediately supplied, the affair would come at once under the consideration of the secretary of state!

"'Show me to the mayor!' said I.

"'He is in bed, sir,' was the reply—'seriously ill.'

"'Then I shall be sure to find him at home; my business is as much of life and death as his own. Show me to the mayor, or supply the horses.'

"My manner and words had the desired effect—horses were provided, and within twenty minutes I was off again."

Elliston's next letter was from Edinburgh.

"I have here made ample amends for my failure at Dublin (for I can call it no less)—my reception was quite an hurrah!

"I have already remitted 610*l.* to my bankers, and have still this place, Glasgow and Manchester, to pillage. But who can tell how long this tide of popularity will last—this *aura popularis*—whether tide or gale, mutation is the nature of both.

"If God preserve my life, and give me fortitude to pursue my hopes, our happiest days are yet to come, though I myself may pass into comparative obscurity. Believe me I feel at greater distance from home than four hundred miles, when I think of you and my family."

When Elliston was at Glasgow, in the course of this northern trip, he dined on one occasion in the public room of an inn, in which there was an elderly Scotch

gentleman, who had already taken his mid-day meal, and was quietly enjoying his tumbler of whisky-toddy.

His exterior was not prepossessing. He wore a short sandy wig, which the use of many seasons, and the animal caloric of the wearer, had so puckered up, that it came scarce midway of his pole, which was about as red as a brickbat. His cravat was narrow and loose, for his neck was of amazing dimensions. But the stranger soon discovered better qualities than a comely exterior, for he was thoroughly good-natured, and extremely communicative.

In Elliston, he had met with no uncongenial spirit—they soon entered into familiar conversation; and having brought their rummers to one common table, were *tout franc* "as thick as thieves."

Here they sat together, hob and nob, for a considerable time. At length, after a hearty burst of merriment on the part of the stranger, he threw himself back into his chair, and deliberately drawing forth his watch, said,

"And so, you're a stage-actor, you tell me. Perhaps ye 're acquainted with Harry Johnstone?" To this Elliston having made assent, his companion proceeded—

"Weel, weel; and now, sir, I've to tell you one thing more. I have passed twa pleasant hours—vary pleasant hours in your society; within twanty minutes, d'ye mind, from this time, I shall be sa drunk, that I wi' na be able to utter one word, and I just think it right to tak the present opportunity, while I'm noo intelligible, of telling ye who I am. My name is Scafield, and I live five gude miles awa' from Glasgow, and I shall walk every foot on't, this vary night, and I'll just come and see if you're as brave a lad as Harry Johnstone, to-morrow night; for I'll come and see ye act, and my family shall see ye act too."

Having made this speech, Mr. Scafield again betook himself to the whisky. He was verily as good as his word; within twenty minutes he was no more; for in a last effort to keep up the fire, off went the wig, and he rolled from his chair, "taking the measure of an unmade grave." Elliston here called aloud for the waiter; but to his surprise, Sandy seemed to take but little notice of the prostrate North Briton, only remarking,

"Eh, as sure as deeth, it's na but Mr. Scafield—he'll walk hame to-night, I warrant ye; but you'd better let him bide; he's used to it, and we're all used to it here."

On the following night, Elliston acted *Belcour*. His friend Scafield was in this instance, also, as good as his word. There he was in the theatre, amongst the earliest comers—his polished sconce, like a half-peeled orange—there he was,—and about him, two fine strapping lasses, his daughters, and the gude wife, Mrs. Scafield, to boot.

Not to mention the days when kings themselves condescended to turn playwrights—when Charles the Second altered an incident in the plot of Dryden's "Aurungzebe," it is enough that, at this period of our history, by the liberal patronage of George the Third, theatricals were in a flourishing state, not merely in those considerable cities and towns to which we have had occasion to allude, but in obscurer country places, many of which, either in barn or booth, contrived to have their circuit-going comedians, while in London it was still the fashion "to go to the play;" so that at this time, the words of the critic in the days of Garrick and Macklin, were in equal force—namely, that England had four estates, the King, the Lords, the Commons, and the *Players*.

Of strollers, there is a curious anecdote, relating to the remote period of 1587, not generally known.

When the Spanish Armada was hovering on the coast, a company of vagrant actors were performing a piece called "Sampson," in a booth, at Penryth, and the enemy, having silently landed a body of men, were making their way, at night, to burn the town; when fortunately, at that instant, the players having let Sampson loose on the Philistines, the sound of drums, trumpets, and shouts created such a tremendous hubbub, that the Spaniards fancied the whole town, with Beelzebub at their back, were pouring down upon them, and immediately turning tail, scampered off to their ships.

In 1733, an itinerant company of comedians proceeded

even to the island of Jamaica, and actually realized a large sum of money by acting. They received 370 pistoles, the first night of "The Beggar's Opera," but within the space of two months they had buried their *Polly*, *Mrs. Slammakin*, *Filch*, and two others of the gang.

The gentlemen of the island, for some time, took their turns upon the stage, to keep at least the *diversion* alive; but this did not last long, for within two months more, there were but one old man, a boy, and a woman of the original company, surviving. The party had died either by the distemper of the country, or the effects of rum punch.

The shattered remains of the crew, with upwards of 2,000 pistoles in bank, embarked for Carolina, to join another company at Charlestown; but they also perished, having been cast away on the voyage!

Had Jeremy Collier lived in these days, he scarcely could have failed noticing this, as an instance of the just wrath of Heaven at the frailties of stage plays.

PERIOD THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

PROGRESS.

Elliston may now be considered to have attained the culminating point of public favour.

The year 1809 had advanced Napoleon and the Comedian. *Wagram* and *Drury* were interwoven!

It may be well suspected by those whose tastes have led them to a close acquaintance with what is called "life," that Elliston, by nature well-favoured, skilled in the art of pleasing, with passions, which like wine, are termed "generous," and with the attraction of a sparkling notoriety, was open to some of those perils so inseparable from the polite world.

Elliston, who was really fond of his wife, and when in her company preferred her to any other woman on earth, might have been startled, perhaps, at hearing he was not a good husband.

Constantly in the habit of listening to his own praises, and never subject to direct reproaches, he cajoled his conscience with a convenient sophistry, whilst he indulged his inclinations with the more substantial fare of their direct gratification.

The fact is, Elliston had now become a thorough man of pleasure—a libertine who shoots in a preserve, where the glut of game destroys the pleasure of his sport. *Le jeu, le vin, et les femmes* either occupied him in turns, or not unfrequently made one common cause. His own vain-glorious resolutions—the exhortations of his dying

uncle,—his letters to his wife, were all equally forgotten; —were lost at play—were buried in the bowl, or more shamelessly dishonoured in the blandishments of his favourites. He had little reflection but what arose from the wretched chagrin of the hazard table; and to satiety alone was owing any temporary show of decorum.

It is not to be supposed that from the watchful alarms of a devoted wife, these things could have long concealment. Mrs. Elliston felt them keenly, but met them wisely; she well knew, if the strongest tie were broken, little could be expected from inferior restraint,—her reproaches were only those she "could not spare him"—the depression at her heart, and the cloud of sadness upon her brow.

The form of play by which Elliston was chiefly infatuated was Hazard; and this he would follow at any brief opportunity which his professional engagements might afford him. At no period of the day did it come amiss; and the pecuniary supplies which he had received under his uncle's will, added but fresh fuel to the element, rendering "abundance the means of want."

But this pursuit, varied only by indulgences equally demoralizing, had no power yet over his constitutional energy, or diverted his mind from new schemes of professional speculation. The heated and protracted pastime of the previous night, stole not a moment from his more creditable occupations of the morrow. Punctual at his appointments, in full possession of his subject, and directing the routine of business, his bodily constitution long sustained him in these multifarious draughts upon its resources, which if duly valued might have rendered him exemplary as brilliant in his professional career.

Amongst the number of Elliston's gambling associates, was a gentleman of the medical profession, residing in the city. To this individual Elliston had lost, from time to time, considerable sums of money; and under no little suspicion of foul play in his adversary.

In spite of these occurrences, "frequent losses and no reverse," Elliston was still an *ami de maison* of his city acquaintance, who, whether bleeding his victims at home

or his patients abroad, was equally moulding all occupations to the same profitable account.

The truth is, the general practitioner had an exceedingly pretty wife, who though scarcely meriting a better fate than a union with such a man, was nevertheless the subject of the basest perfidy; for the husband having speedily squandered her "pretty little fortune," she was now either totally neglected, or valued only as the convenient instrument to more extensive plunder. The lady, however, was not one of those weak-minded persons who take these matters greatly to heart, for, like a sensible woman, she far more valued the admiration of many than the affection of one; and as this precisely suited the sporting practitioner's "book," he was inclined to believe his matrimonial scrip might some day or other turn out no idle investment.

Elliston, on one of these wine and walnut re-unions, had proposed to this lady an excursion to the delightful town of Sevenoaks, and as her husband was not to be admitted into the secret, the expedition was to be conducted by some dexterity on both sides.

Three days' absence of the medical gentleman at Doncaster might have rendered the lady's escape safe enough, as far as he was concerned, but it was deemed expedient to take some precautions in respect of good-natured friends, with which most neighbourhoods swarm, who might perhaps conceive it their bounden duty to remove any blissful ignorance from before the eyes of a husband, and help him liberally to the tree of knowledge, with all its superabundant consequences.

It was therefore arranged that the lady should equip herself in a suit of mourning, assisted by the most positive of all female disguise—a widow's cap. Thus attired, she was to glide stealthily from home, when, at an appointed spot, the comedian was to receive her into a hackney coach, whence they were to proceed across the water, and subsequently start by post-chaise for the quiet little dinner at Sevenoaks.

Expectata dies aderat. The morning dawned, and the lady prepared herself for the part of a widow with a

complacency quite worthy her bereavement, and arrived, within a few minutes, at the appointed corner, where the enterprising actor was in readiness to receive her.

Here they entered a hackney-coach, but taking, unwisely, the direction of Ludgate Hill, their progress was, for a considerable time, impeded by the multitude of vehicles which are always encountered on this spot. During this suspense, sundry persons, well known to our exemplary wife-widow, passed and re-passed, whilst the lady's security was undoubtedly owing to the nature of her disguise and her own imperturbability of manner.

Having traversed Blackfriars Bridge, this worthy couple reached the spot where the post-chaise was in waiting, and Elliston, with a grace and easy audacity which would have become *Ranger* himself, tendered his services to the transrhedation of his companion.

At this moment a gawky lad, in a tawdry livery, laden with cheese, grocery, and other articles of household consumption, who had been loitering at a shop-window near the spot, now suddenly rushed forward, and casting himself before the widow, in the most grotesque posture of distress, began to blubber out, in disjointed accents of distress,

"Wooh! wooh! ha! ha!—wooh! ha! poor master! poor master! ha! ha! ha!"

The self-possession even of that lady who forms our present subject was not proof against this abrupt outpouring of human agony; whilst Elliston looked on, for the moment, if not with equal confusion, at least with as much indecision of purpose. But the boy still kept up his generous grief in unabated roaring.

It turned out that the youth, who had some time since served in the capacity of doctor's boy to the general practitioner in the city, had been discharged on suspicion of having stolen the fœtus of a hedgehog from his master's laboratory; and being at this moment impressed with the untimely dissolution of his late employer, he had burst into those demonstrations of grief already described.

Another gasp or two might have brought him to him-

self, but on wheeling round, and perceiving the commissariat wreck of tea, sugar, cheese, and pickles scattered by accident at his feet, the sluices of his agony were again opened, resembling far more the howl of a bull-calf than the sobs of a heart-stricken page.

The nature of all this was soon apparent to one so deep in the equivoque of comedies as our hero. He immediately took up the clew thus thrown into his hands, and having rescued the widow from the sticky fingers of the hysteric lad, and deposited her within the yellow post-chaise, he led the youth, with true *Ellistonian* solemnity, apart from the crowd; and entering into a most circumstantial account of the calenture which had so unexpectedly removed the object of his lamentations from the troubles of this world, namely, his late master, and described with accuracy the very vault in Allhallows Church where his remains were deposited, he left him in lawful possession of a half-guinea, to recall his spirits and refit his stores. And now, stepping into the vehicle with the same solemnity of mien in which he had conducted the previous business, the fugitives were once again on their road to Sevenoaks.

There is a certain species of attack to which it is very obvious public characters are more open than those of a private station,—we mean that of *anonymous communications.*

The actor is one whose accessible ground renders him strikingly liable to this kind of offence, as the vulgar perpetrators thereof are, for the most part, actuated by no deeper design than the gratification of an idle excitement. An anonymous attack on a state official, for instance, yields but an imperfect gratification to the general class of these sporting characters—the bird is of too lofty a flight; its "aiery buildeth in the cedar's top;" but the game which flies nearer the ground—the actor for instance,—while it is more easy to strike, tumbles also so immediately within the ken of the marksman, that he has the pleasing satisfaction of being an eye-witness, probably, to the very writhings of his victim.

True it is, that no elevation is secure from these attacks; but eagles are not shot at every day, nor does it come within either the power or ambition of that vulgar class of which we speak, to carry the rifle of "Junius."

As regards Elliston, we shall readily be spared many instances of anonymous addresses, which would by no means tend to elevate the dignity of our history; but we must take leave to mention one example intimately interwoven with the subsequent days of our subject. This was an anonymous, or rather pseudonymous, friend, who stuck to him for eighteen years! the first letter being received in January, 1809, and the last in 1827!

These letters, received in course—some in the gossamer dress of poetry, others in the more sober garb of prose—some addressed to Elliston himself, others to his wife—some castigatory, others adulatory—some affecting dramatic matters, others relating to domestic concerns,—all in the most unequivocal terms of regard, were in number at least *one hundred*, and bearing the signature "*Invisiblina!*" Suffice to say, the correspondent avowed only her sex—for the rest, the mystery followed Elliston to his grave.

"Invisiblina" was a pixy of no common order; nothing relative to the comedian or his transactions was hidden from her knowledge. She was in possession of all he did, and penetrated even his designs. His transgressions stood in recorded lines against him within a day of their commission. Like *Frankenstein*, he was in the power of an agency he could not elude; but unlike *Frankenstein*, he was the subject of a beneficent director.

At times, however, Elliston was almost driven to madness by these inexplicable transactions.

Gifts had reached him, which he was called on to acknowledge through the public journals; and reproaches had followed him, which he was only called on to acknowledge by a reformation of his errors.

"Invisiblina" was a spirit of honour—for she meddled only to reclaim the husband, not to afflict the wife. To Mrs. Elliston she was a friend and benefactor; to Elliston himself, a benefactor and monitor.

Year after year, lustrum after lustrum succeeded, and no guess had been afforded to these perplexing benefits. Plots laid by Elliston had been rendered abortive—schemes for the discovery of "Invisiblina," which "Invisiblina" herself had better cognizance of than some of the agents for their accomplishment; and while the comedian was ignorant of the very element in which she dwelt, there was no corner in his own existence shut out from her intelligence.

The following was amongst the earliest received:—

"May the blessings of life, now and ever befriend you!
Love of children and wife, in your efforts attend you!
Ev'ry sentence abroad, all your actions acquit,
And your conscience applaud ev'ry thought you admit!
But escape you can never the vigilant eye
Of that Spirit unknown—your *Invisible Spy*.

"May you ever advance in the path you've selected!
May you win ev'ry chance, if the cause be respected!
May your offspring be proud of the parent they find,
And the drama endow'd with the wealth of your mind!
But years shall revolve, and my caution be nigh,
And ne'er shall you know your *Invisible Spy*."

Again, the vigilance of "Invisiblina" appears to have tracked him in his wanderings—

"'Two nights together,' so Horatio said,
'He and Marcellus had not been in bed—'
Two nights together, speak your constant crime,
How much you lost—much more—than merely *time*.
Hours, guineas, squander'd—better far have kept 'em—
Rather *pay* bills, believe me,—than *accept 'em!*"

The following is one of Elliston's advertisements in the *Morning Post*, in conformity to the will of the "Invisible Power:"—

"Why does so beneficent a being withhold herself from receiving personal demonstrations of gratitude, for innumerable favours? Why should thanks, fresh and warm from the heart, be forced through the artificial channel of the press? Mysterious being, 'unfold thyself!'"

We subjoin one letter further from "Invisiblina," which will be sufficient for the present.

"Descending from the regions of air to become earthy and of the flesh, I visited Drury Lane Theatre on Monday last, to witness again your impersonation of the *Duke Aranza*.

"Believe me, I was disappointed. You have become careless and inflated—undignified and unnatural. The freshness and native bloom of this portraiture is faded, and the complexion supplied by the daub of harlotry. Trifle no longer with public favour—for he who loses the wealth he once possessed, becomes poorer than he who was never rich.

"The journals have spoken truly of you. Had you acted this part on the first night of the representation of the play, in the manner of Monday last, it never had been one step in the ladder of your fame. Leave burlesque and harlequinade to other places, and for other hands—poor Lord Harcourt would have been pained to the heart had he witnessed what *I* witnessed."

On the 24th of February of this year (1809), a convivial theatrical party (Elliston being of the number) was assembled in Lincoln's-Inn Fields, at the house of Mr. Richard Wilson, a gentleman who had been appointed, in 1802, one of the board of management of Drury Lane Theatre. The King's health had been already given, with suitable demonstrations of loyalty, and Mr. Wilson was in possession of all attention, by an occasional speech, on the state of affairs at Drury Lane, with a hearty hurrah for its lasting prosperity, when the butler rushed into the room, and announced Drury Lane Theatre in flames!

The consternation may be easily imagined. In a moment the house of festivity was a desert—the whole party hurrying to the scene of destruction. A body of constables, as usual in such cases, had formed a barrier at a distance from the theatre, which Elliston had some difficulty in passing. He was, however, fortunate enough in gaining that part of the building in which he had deposited sundry articles of value.

Unhurt, but without his hat, he escaped with his effects from the burning pile, on which he had scarcely congratulated himself, when he discovered his watch was gone. The rogues! it was a gold repeater, which had belonged to the late Master of Sidney; the only tangible memorial which there had been any chance of his nephew's retaining, for all other bequests, being money, were about as secure in the hands of Elliston, as the *Apollo*, at the very moment, on the liquefying roof of old Drury.*

It is curious to remark, that on the opening of the late theatre, which cost 129,000*l.*, an occasional epilogue, spoken by Miss Farren, assured the public that a conflagration could never take place in that theatre, as they had water enough to drown authors, actors, auditory, and all their applause, to boot: at the conclusion of which, a shower of real water was produced, and an iron curtain let down in sight of the assured spectators. The result, however, forcibly reminds us of a friend, who was only overturned once during his life, in a stage coach, which happened when he travelled by the "*Patent Safety.*"

Amongst the many epistolary attentions which

* We subjoin the following extract from Moore's Life of Sheridan, on this calamitous event. "On the night of the 24th of February, when the House of Commons was occupied with Mr. Ponsonby's motion on the conduct of the war in Spain, and Mr. Sheridan was present, the house was suddenly illuminated by a blaze of light, and the debate being interrupted, it was ascertained that the theatre in Drury Lane was on fire.

"A motion was made to adjourn, but Mr. Sheridan said that 'Whatever might be the extent of the private calamity, he hoped it would not interfere with the public business of the country. He then left the house, and, proceeding to Drury Lane, witnessed, with a fortitude which strongly interested all, the entire destruction of his property.

"It is said, that as he sat at the Piazza Coffee House, during the fire, taking some refreshment, a friend of his having remarked on the philosophic calmness in which he bore his misfortune, Sheridan answered, 'A man may surely take a glass of wine by his own fireside.'

"Without vouching," continues Moore, "for the authenticity of this anecdote (which may have been, for aught I know, like the Wandering Jew, a regular attendant upon all fires since the time of Hierocles), I give it as I heard it."

Sheridan received on this event, the following was from Mrs. Jordan:—

"Bushey House, March 2nd.

"My dear Sir,—It is not for one with such weak powers as mine, to attempt any consolatory address to you under this late calamity, who must have a mind to encounter any misfortune, as to comprehend all subjects. But I feel I should be wanting in respect to you, were I to suffer an event which calls forth the sympathy of the whole country, to pass unnoticed by one who has the happiness of being ranked amongst your friends. Believe me, my dear sir, I condole with you sincerely in this late calamity at Drury Lane. I lament, with the public, the destruction of that edifice, on whose ancient site so many literary triumphs have been celebrated, and none greater than your own. And I condole with those sufferers who, in having less strength of mind than yourself, may have had more need of it; and who, in addition to their loss of all, find themselves unblest by the powers of regaining anything.

"But I am not without satisfaction in finding such prompt exertions are making for the benefit of our extensive company. I shall neither be wanting in effort or goodwill in the cause; and if my humble talent should be deemed advisable, do not let it remain idle on a single occasion.

"Believe me, my dear Sir,

"Your sincere Friend, and humble Servant,

"Dora Jordan."

On the event of the great national jubilee, Elliston gave a fête in Stratford Place, to a select party of his own and Mrs. Elliston's friends; which, divested of some *bizarreries*, was reasonable enough. But Elliston could do nothing like other people—all his designs were a little larger than life, and he was ever making that certain point beyond the sublime, which we have long been taught is but a step.

Dr. Kitchener, Mr. Phipps, Pope, Johnstone, and the celebrated Mr. "Romeo" Coates were of the entertainment—a party well-suited to elicit the peculiarities of the latter gentleman, who, though never wanting encouragement, was now in the hands of a host, who, like Wycherley himself, had the quality of bringing the peculiar humours of men into play.

Mr. Coates, of course, was called on to recite, and Dr. Kitchener well observing that, as music was a sister art, he should accompany the recitative with appropriate bars on the pianoforte. This was accordingly put into operation; but the playful "sister," a little too malicious, fell on the tender passages of *Lothario* with such astounding *fracasso*, that the aspirations for *Calista* were completely drowned in the Murder of the Innocents!

"It is frequently in that nice discrimination, in which our greatest actors fail," observed Mr Coates, "you will perceive in me indications of delicacy in recitations, that neither Booth, Barry, Garrick, nor Kemble ever exhibited. When I address myself to Providence, I always raise the left-hand—the innocent, the inoffensive limb! The right arm is the instrument of war and devastation."

"True," replied Pope; "but it is also the right hand of fellowship."

"Ay—ay," rejoined "Romeo," a little puzzled; "but I am ambidextrous." Saying which, he turned towards two ladies, and taking one in each arm, seated himself between them: "Now, this is what I call Love amongst the Roses," cried he.

To do Mr. Coates justice, however, Elliston repeated a "bon mot" of his guest, which gained him better applause. They were speaking together of the merits of a certain great actor, when some one by, observed, "That gentleman is beyond all praise."

"Yes," replied Romeo, "so far beyond it, that it will never reach him."

Pope's besetting sin, *gastronomie*, is well remembered. Amongst the many anecdotes related concerning him, is a humorous equivoque, which transpired at Drury Lane. The "Suspicious Husband" was in rehearsal, in which

Pope had gone through the character of *Mr. Strickland*, but the actor who was to have sustained the part of his servant, *Tester*, being "suddenly taken ill," a very underling, who had scarcely ever spoken a line on the stage, was called on to fulfil his duty. After the morning's rehearsal, which this unhappy wight got through with fear and trembling, his next puzzle was respecting his costume. Accosting Pope just as he was passing off at the wing, he said, "Pray, sir, how is it to be *dressed?*" But Pope, who had ever one thing uppermost in his thoughts, namely, first and second course, replied as abruptly, "Stuffed, to be sure—stuffed by all means." With this intelligence, his friend, the actor, departed.

On the evening of the play's representation, when "all ladies and gentlemen concerned" were met in the Green Room, in walks the *Tester* of the night, as complete a *Falstaff* in livery, as could possibly have been accomplished. His *small clothes*, in fact, could scarcely contain the weight within. The shrieks of the assembled party can be well imagined. "In the name of all that's wonderful, what is this?" was the universal demand. "Why! why! Mr. Pope said it should be stuffed, and may the devil fetch me, but I've had trouble enough," cried the terrified underling.

On Thursday, 16th March, the Drury Lane company opened the Opera House, for three nights, as stated, for their common benefit. The first performance was "Man and Wife," "Sylvester Daggerwood," and the ballet of "Quichotte," by the whole force of the Opera corps, producing 549*l.* The second night was the "Honeymoon," with an occasional address. Mrs. Jordan acted "*The Country Girl*," on the third night, the receipts being 834*l.* So warmly did the public take up the cause of the Drury refugees, that three additional nights were then announced. On the evening in which Madame Catalani sang, in the part of *Semiramide*, the receipts were 903*l.* The total of these receipts amounted to 4,266*l.*,—the principal performers receiving 75*l.* per cent. on their respective salaries—the second class, 87*l.* 10*s.* per cent., and the third class their full demands.

For some little time previous to the destruction of Drury Lane Theatre, Arnold, who had obtained a licence for the representation of English operas, had been coquetting with one Lingham, a breeches-maker, and proprietor of the Lyceum, for renting that building for such performances. The house was at this juncture occupied by wild beasts, conjurors, phantasmagorians, &c., "*mendici, mimæ, balatrones*," bipeds, quadrupeds, and multipeds; for all of which Arnold fancied he had a charm, potent as that of Orpheus—namely, his own music. But on the Tuesday immediately following the fire, no engagements having been concluded, Lingham, with laudable activity, offered Sheridan the theatre on the same terms he had named to Arnold, and thus the breeches-maker fitting the immediate necessities of the Drury dictator, the proposal was entertained.

The very next day, however, Arnold calls on Lingham, proposing to conclude the negotiation at once, and the tradesman, believing he had been commissioned on the part of the Drury Lane proprietors (in whose service Arnold was intimately engaged), without hesitation assented. Everything was therefore supposed to be mutually understood, and the matter was settled; except the formalities of legal instruments.

On the following morning, Lingham quitted London, leaving to his son the power of ratifying this treaty, which was accordingly done, and Arnold, under a written agreement, became lessee for a term of three years.

But the astonishment of the good landlord was by no means slight, when, on his return to town, he discovered who, in fact, his real lessee was; and also, that his son, Mr. Lingham, junior, had consented to the insertion of a clause, giving Arnold the right of purchase at any time within the unexpired term of the lease.

Lingham was by no means indifferent to a choice of tenants—he preferred the Drury proprietors; and as he fancied a little sharp practice had been employed in the transaction, an attempt was made, on his part, to set aside the agreement; but as it appeared he had given

absolute power to his son to act in his behalf, the object was found difficult.

To avoid litigation, the agreement was suffered to remain in force, and the Drury Lane company entered the Lyceum as tenants of Arnold, in the place of Lingham.

The Covent Garden company was at this time carrying on their business at the "Little Theatre" in the Haymarket, previous to the opening of the new and magnificent edifice, and was perhaps the best body of performers that had ever been got together, in the memory of the living.

It was composed as follows:—Kemble, Cooke, Young, C. Kemble, Pope, Brunton, Murray, &c.; Lewis, Jones Munden, Fawcett, Liston, Emery, Blanchard, Simmons, Farley, &c.; Incledon, Taylor, Bellamy, &c.; Grimaldi, Bologna, Byrne, &c.; Mrs. Siddons, Miss Norton, Mrs. St. Leger, Mrs. Humphries, Mrs. H. Johnston, Mrs. C. Kemble, Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Dickens, Mrs. Liston, Miss Meadows, Miss Bolton, &c., &c.

But scarcely will it believed that, with this extraordinary assemblage of talent engaged in the Haymarket Theatre—representing, too, the most sterling plays on the national roll,— the receipts were sometimes under the *nightly expenses!*

This identical company, a few weeks before, acting in the Italian Opera House, rarely failed attracting full audiences—a fact which, undoubtedly, proves that, whether or not large theatres be more beneficial to dramatic representations, the public, at least, like them; perhaps under a sort of impression that they get *more* for their money, or that—

> "Magno de flumine mallem,
> Quam ex hoc fonticulo sumere."

The Royal Circus in Blackfriars-Road, having been advertised for lease or sale, early in this year, Elliston on the 23rd of February (the day before the fire at Drury) sent in proposals as a tenant, and after a lengthy correspondence on the subject, became lessee for seven years, at 2,100*l.* per annum.

When this theatre was in the course of building, the chapel, erected by the Rev. Rowland Hill, in Blackfriars-road, was in a similar progressive state; but the divine having observed, with some bitterness of spirit, the great advance the theatre was daily making over the chapel—that the one party worked like bees, whilst his own operatives were sluggish as drones—he took an opportunity of pointedly animadverting on the case, in an address to his congregation, at the place where he was preaching in the meantime:—

"There are two ships," said he, "within sight of a spice island. One is manned by the elect of heaven, and freighted with good works—the other, directed by the devil's crew, and laden with sinfulness. The object of both these craft, is to reach the spicy port as soon as possible; but the devil's ship, if not a better vessel, is more actively manned,—for, to do Satan justice, he is always industrious. Let it only land, and the whole shore will become tainted,—this fine aromatic flavour which invites you now, will become fetid—mephitic, as the scientific people call it—and you will be poisoned on the very pastures which ought to be yours."

One of the most curious, and equally successful orations of this eccentric divine, about the same time, was in the service of his friend, William Walker, the astronomical lecturer.

Walker, however, had but little hope in finding favour with the preacher, as he was in the habit of engaging the *Haymarket Theatre* for the purpose of lecturing, but he was happily undeceived on this point, for on the occasion alluded to, Rowland Hill thus addressed his auditors:—

"You have often, my friends, heard me denounce the playhouse as a temple of sin and the habitation of the devil—and I say so still. But when our beloved friend and brother, William Walker, introduces the heavenly bodies,—ha! ha! it is quite another thing—you may freely enter, enter without prejudice to your souls, and with great benefit to your understandings. And now, let me scatter these notices amongst you. You may go freely, I tell you, on Friday next, and I hope you will."

Saying which, he threw from his pulpit about a dozen of Mr. Walker's printed bills, which were speedily in circulation amongst his congregation.

About this time Elliston was invited to join a theatrical speculation, originated by Colonel Greville, a gentleman well known in the fashionable circles.

This institution was to be called "The Pic-Nic." The scheme was, to erect a ball-room, a private theatre, and all the concomitant accommodations of card and supper rooms, vestibules, &c., under one roof, on a piece of ground then vacant in Albemarle Street, where the chapel now stands. But not being able to carry this into effect, the colonel took the King's Concert Room, in Tottenham Street, and issued proposals for carrying on his enterprise on this spot.

It is worthy of remark that, some few years afterwards, Elliston was positively in treaty for the purchase of the above Albemarle Chapel, having serious thoughts of taking holy orders, and preaching therein himself!

Elliston, like our old friend, *Mrs. Cole*, was subject to holy attacks; yet these were but of an acute nature,—the paroxysms passed speedily away, and his constitution was not materially shaken by the malady. This chapel attack, however, was one of the longest fits he ever had—he was ill for a week.

But to return to the Pic-Nic. A number of public paragraphs appeared, in which various ladies of fashion were handed up by inuendo, as the "*Frails*" and "*Foresights*," to whom this house of intrigue would be of the greatest accommodation. But conscious innocence! conscious innocence! looked calmly on. The Thespian martyrs rose superior to the malice of the crowd, and the playhouse was announced for opening on the 15th of March.

On a moveable theatre, constructed at one end of the ball-room, the colonel, in person, opened the entertainments of the night by a prologue. This was followed by a French proverb—then came an act from the "Bedlamite"—another French proverb succeeded—a

little more of the "Bedlamite"—the whole dramatic part terminating by an occasional epilogue.

Next in order, was a little music—Mich. Kelly in all his glory; to this, without doubt, a ball succeeded, and a *pic nic* supper was the sum total of the night's enjoyment.

The repast was thus furnished:—The *maître d'hôtel* had previously made out a bill of fare, numbering every dish. Corresponding numbers were then drawn at random by the general subscribers, and each had to supply the stated contents of that dish to which his number corresponded.

Richard *Choyce* Snowden, one of the most rabid in the Pic Nic affair, had originally entered the navy, and was appointed lieutenant before he was twenty years of age; which piece of good luck was augmented by his coming into possession of a handsome fortune at about the same time. This, however, he did not long enjoy, even after his own notion of enjoyment. "Marylebone and the chocolate houses were his undoing;" or, in more modern words, Pall Mall, Soho Square, and its neighbourhood, soon brought him on his beam ends,—"he was in fact a ruined man before he came to"—the Pic Nic.

Snowden then embraced the stage as a profession; and under the name of Stapleton, made his appearance at the Haymarket Theatre in 1810, in the part of *Dennis Bulgruddery*, but was engaged only for a season. So truly does Addison remark, when he speaks of men mistaking their own qualities:—"Many a lawyer makes but an indifferent figure at the bar, who might have become a very accomplished waterman, and have shone at the Temple Stairs, though he could get no business in the house."

Snowden died a victim to dissipation, at his lodgings in Islington. He was a man of coarse habits and depraved disposition—a kind of Minotaur, half man and half brute.

Captain Caulfield, the next "*Bedlamite*," had held a commission in the first regiment of guards, and was so successful in the "Pic Nic" exhibitions, that Harris invited him to Covent Garden Theatre, where he appeared in the character of *Hamlet*.

The Duke of York was present at Caulfield's first night, and finding "he would be an actor," permitted the sale of his commission. At the end of this season, the Captain proceeded to Bath, where he played *Richard III.*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, and some other characters, with equal success, and would inevitably have made a gallant stand in his new profession, but for the distinguished part he played in the Court of King's Bench, where he appeared, in 1804, as defendant in a case of Crim. Con., being cast in a new part, namely, that of damages to the amount of 2,000*l.*

Caulfield now became a prisoner in the custody of the above court. By nature intended for a man of sense, but having bartered the fee-simple of his wisdom for the uncertain tenancy of a wit, he outlived his estate, and eventually died a beggar.

An attack of another nature, namely, rheumatic gout, prevented Greville from carrying on these reunions on the following season. A more fashionable situation had now been considered absolutely necessary, and the Hanover Square Rooms were partly engaged for future operations; but the colonel finally agreed on securing Joliffe's old house in Little Argyle Street, which was, in fact, the rise and progress of that establishment, since known as the "Argyle Rooms."

This being arranged on a still more elegant and extensive plan than the former building, the "Pic Nics" resumed their entertainments. These proceeded with great vigour for one or two seasons more, and Greville, by his interest, obtained finally a license for music, burlettas, and English operas.

Mr. Fuller, member for Sussex, commonly known as the eccentric "Jack Fuller," was a constant attendant on these *soirées*, and on one occasion his amatory temperament had nearly brought him in rough collision with a brother Subscriber, but which was timely prevented by a somewhat ludicrous incident.

During part of this entertainment, Mr. Fuller, who had for a time been ogling a remarkably handsome woman, sitting at some distance, and attended by an equally

"smart young man," began now to express himself in very audible and unequivocal terms of admiration, accompanying the same, by a manner so impatient of restraint, as not only to attract the lady and her *cavaliere servente*, but to engage the attention of the whole assembly.

Irritated at length by the continued behaviour of the "honourable member," the friend of the lady rose suddenly up, and was in the act of an hostile advance towards the offender, when, unfortunately, he capsized a bottle of hot negus partly over the satin slip of his fair companion, and partly over his own small clothes, which being composed of an article at that time much in vogue, namely, nankeen, produced the most ludicrous and distressing consequences.

The ridiculous is ever irresistible; and though the right was assuredly on the side of the enraged gentleman, yet the laugh was unfortunately against him; and Jack Fuller was consequently brought off the hero of the adventure.

On the 23rd of March, Elliston issued an advertisement, announcing that the Royal Circus would be opened on the Easter Monday ensuing, under his direction.

The whole of the interior of the building was refitted and embellished; additional private boxes were constructed, and the *ensemble* bore the aspect of complete novelty. The house was opened with a new prelude, entitled, "The Invisible Avengers," a melo-dramatic spectacle, to which was added a remarkably good pantomime, "Harlequin and The Witch of Ludlam."

Elliston's engagement at the Lyceum prevented his appearing at his own theatre until the 16th of June, when he made his *entrée* as *Captain Macheath*, in a burletta melodrame, in three parts, founded on the "Beggars' Opera."

So absolute was the success of this experiment, that the burletta was acted for fifty nights, when an adventure was made of a far more startling character, namely, a grand ballet of action, with music, &c., founded on the "Macbeth" of Shakspeare! This *galimafrée* was produced early in September, and, preceded by an *entrée*,

composed in the saccharine of rhyme, by the hands of Dr. Busby, and introduced by Elliston himself as *maître d'hôtel.*

It was a composition mixed with all manner of good things, from the conserve of Æschylus to the sweetmeats of Shakspeare. In a literary point of view, the classic doctor appeared to invoke the spirit of his great departed namesake, the pedagogue of Dryden and the flagellator of Prior, by setting in one view the whole inspiration of man, from the days "When music, heavenly maid, was young," to the new score of the Royal Circus.

As manager and lessee of the theatre, Elliston felt he could not, with strict propriety, advertise his name for a benefit; but with the quick perception of a *Father Joseph*, he attained all the advantages of such a measure by announcing in the bills, "that on the 27th of September, he would 'address the audience' in acknowledgment of the kindness of their patronage, and enter on further explanations respecting his scheme of management."

Never was a word better chosen—it was a *management* worthy a seat on the Treasury Bench, for it certainly filled his exchequer, and at the same time kept the people in good humour.

The house was filled on the night in question. Elliston acted *Macbeth*, and recited Collins's celebrated Ode. Then came the speech—his thanks were abundant, and his promises for the future liberal. He designated his theatre as a "dramatic asylum, open to the burnt-out actors of Drury," and mingled so many lofty sentiments with the objects of pleasure, that even his neighbour Rowland Hill might have mitigated somewhat his severity in respect of playhouses, or extended to friend Elliston as liberal a boon as to his beloved brother, William Walker, the lecturer.

At the termination of his first season at the Royal Circus, Elliston entered on a new speculation—one more theatre!—the Manchester; which he opened, with an excellent company, in December, and an address written by his "own laureat" (as he styled him), Dr. Busby.

The Doctor appears to have been no faint shadowing of his forerunners, Elkanah Settle and Stephen Duck; for, although never contesting the palm with a Dryden, or admitted into the boudoir of a Caroline, yet the journals teemed with his poetry, and theatres were redolent of his addresses. He affected the Pindaric rather than the Epic—the "Muse without stays," as the sprightly Tom Brown designates her, rather than the sterner lady in whalebone.

But Elliston and Ellistonian affairs were the poet's principal theme. They contributed to each other's fame —it was a joint policy of renown; and though the great Edmund Kean might have talked of "his secretary," it was reserved for princes and our own hero to move under the irradiation of a Muse.

An incident, humorous in its way, occurred during this brief campaign, for which we by no means vouch, but give only on report. "Jack Bannister happening to be at Manchester at the time, though not of the company, by way of amusement induced Elliston to advertise him, under a feigned name, for some small part in a comedy, announcing at the same time that, between the play and farce, the same gentleman would "attempt a scene in the 'Children in the Wood,' *after the manner of the celebrated Mr. John Bannister*, of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane."

At the conclusion of the play, the curtain again rose for the *imitation*. On walks the mimic, in suitable costume, as perfect a *Walter* as ever appeared on the boards of the Haymarket. Bannister here made his bow to some trifling applause, and then entering on the scene, which he had selected for the purpose, went through the whole of it after his own best manner.

But the interruptions were many; for scarcely had he spoken three lines, when he was saluted by a most distinct hiss. This was soon followed by a laugh, and presently cries of, "Off, off! trash! — hiss, hiss!" — announced to the poor country *presumer* that he had entirely failed. In fact, he was most completely damned. He now ventured to address the audience—*but* no—they

would not hear him ;—they were thoroughly disgusted at the miserable attempt of *imitation.*

So much for the joke. Bannister enjoyed the affair heartily ; but the true state of the case being in a very few days generally made known, Elliston found himself in no little disgrace with his Manchester friends ; in fact, he only got out of the scrape by a most unqualified apology.

On one of the latter nights of his renting the theatre, Elliston acted "The Three Singles." The person who was to have played the part of *Renaud* was taken suddenly ill during the very representation of the piece, when Ward, the leader of the band, laying down his fiddle, volunteered to finish the character ; which being received by sounds of applause, he jumped on the stage, and went through the business with admirable art. Owing to his success on this remarkable occasion, Ward determined to hang up his fiddle and turn actor. He made several attempts in other characters, but signally failed in them all. *Renaud,* however, stuck to him like a plaster.

This is another instance of that monophlox so remarkable in poor Desborough in the early part of this history. Steele, in the "Guardian," has given an amusing account of one William Peer, an actor who took his degree with Betterton, Kynaston, and Harris, whose memory has been preserved to posterity by playing only one part. The character was that of the *actor* in "Hamlet." No one could repeat the lines like him,

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

"His whole action in life," says the essayist, "depended on his speaking these three lines, which he did better than any man else in the world."

A very similar occurrence to that of Ward took place at Covent Garden Theatre, not many years since. Braham was taken ill during the first act of the "Cabinet," when Woodham, a trumpeter in the orchestra, as an *amicus theatri,* took up the part of *Orlando,* and went through the music and songs with remarkable effect. He, also, on

this success turned his attention to the stage, but failed in all future attempts. Providence thus, for a special purpose, seems to give a momentary inspiration.

Of Mrs. Billington there is an anecdote not to be found in the "Biographical Dictionary of Music." Soon after Miss Weichsell (which was her maiden name) had married Mr. Billington, she was engaged at the Dublin Theatre. Mrs. Daly, the manager's wife, had for some time harboured troublesome suspicions that her husband had discovered greater happiness in the society of the accomplished vocalist, than was seemly for an honest man and the father of a family. In fact, she determined to watch the parties narrowly; and on one eventful evening, planting herself in a crouching position, just under the lock of the manager's dressing-room in the theatre, she testified, through the key-hole, all that her worst fears had whispered her. Resolving not to disturb the harmony within, as some enraged women would have done, *Mrs.* Daly tripped nimbly off for the purpose of bringing *Mr.* Billington himself, to partake the disclosures of the key-hole, and share in the entertainment.

Having, therefore, amused themselves by alternate bobs at the kaleidoscopic combinations within for some few minutes, Mr. B. (with as much prudence as Mrs. D.) conducted himself with equal forbearance, looking for better satisfaction than any noisy trash about injured honour, by calling up a score of scene-shifters and supernumeraries to have a peep also.

Mr. Billington having thus got his legal witnesses together (for he appears to have had some knowledge of the law of evidence), was not long before he commenced his action—process for process—when the lady protested that, if the dressing-room affair ever found its way into any other court, she would never again appear on the Dublin stage. This resolution was in every way masterly for the case of the defendant, for Mr. Daly also as positively declared that, if she refused performing, he would immediately proceed against her husband for the forfeiture of £500, according to her professional agreement with him, to which Mr. Billington was of course a party.

The ill-starred plaintiff hereupon found himself in a cleft-stick. Should his wife refuse to fulfil her engagements, £500 would certainly stand against him ; and, as any damages he might have fondly anticipated from a jury would not, in all probability, be very—very large, he abandoned the legal form of attack altogether.

Mr. Billington now made up his mind to call his antagonist to a field of honour ; but "No," replied the tactical manager—"this will never do. Had you determined on this course in the first instance, I should have been bound to permit you to run me through the body ; but as a gentleman and a musician, you ought to know, that a court of honour will never consent to play second fiddle to a court of law." And thus ended the affair.

In the time of Sheridan, the actor (father of Richard Brinsley), a fashion prevailed amongst the *élégantes* of Dublin, of benefiting distinguished players, by the lady patroness attending in person early at the entrance of her box at the theatre, and receiving her company, as though in her own drawing-room, who paid their respects to her, before taking their places in the dress-circle.

In the year 1758 a certain *parvenue*, being ambitious of trying her strength amongst the higher grades, was rash enough to take a patronizing lead for the benefit of some actor. She issued her cards accordingly, through the fashionable circles, for a special night, and took her place early in the theatre, for the general reception. To her great mortification, however, and no less to that of the poor player, her *levée* had but a gloomy appearance. Seated in solitary grandeur at the ostiary of her box, she had little interruption to her own meditations, for no company arrived. Her nervous state was anything but delectable. She was ready to expire with vexation, when the box-keeper advancing with rather an aspect of encouragement, observed, "Your ladyship's *gallery* is excellent !—your ladyship's *gallery* looks charming !"—In the course of five minutes more, the man returned, with still brighter looks,—"your ladyship's *pit* improves

—we don't despair of your ladyship's *pit*,"—but alas! in the boxes, not a soul!

By this time, the curtain was up for the comedy:—maddened by rage, the lady now took her seat on her crimson chair of a side box, with the agreeable prospect of a whole dress circle perfectly unoccupied,—some twenty persons in the pit—but "her ladyship's gallery excellent!" Her fury was positively volcanic; at the close of the first act, the box-keeper again advanced, observing,

"Your ladyship's *gallery* is tremendous—positively overwhelming—we can't contain them."

"Send them *here!*" ejaculated the lady, "if there are five hundred, send them here, into the boxes, and let the expenses be mine." The "order" was instantly obeyed, and a body of ragamuffins were admitted, which, if quantity did ever supply the defection of quality, here was full satisfaction. The house was now a bumper—the benefit a good one; the lady patroness satisfied all demands, but withdrew from this hour as a leader of fashion.

The success of his first season at the Circus now induced Elliston to attempt an enlargement of its privileges. The license by which performances had hitherto been authorized, did not permit dialogue to be introduced, excepting with an accompaniment of music throughout; and on the 5th of March (1810) Sir Thomas Turton presented a petition to the House of Commons, for enabling the petitioner to exhibit and perform in the said Theatre, 'the Royal Circus, all such entertainments of music and action as are commonly called Pantomimes and Ballets, together with Operatic or Musical Pieces, accompanied with *Dialogue*.

An alteration was suggested in the nature of the petition, for exempting the proprietor of the Royal Circus from certain penalties under the law for regulating dramatic exhibitions. To this Sir Thomas Turton unadvisedly (as Elliston thought) consented, and thus changed the power to be granted, from an *enabling act*, to one of *exemption*. This scarcely could have hoped for a

successful issue:—exempting an individual from penalties incurred by breach of an existing law, could not be sanctioned by the House of Commons.

On the same month a further statement was made on the part of Elliston to Mr. Perceval for the above privilege. To this, a reply was forwarded on the following day.

"Downing Street, 11th March, 1810.

"Mr. Perceval presents his compliments to Mr. Elliston, and thanks him for the trouble he has taken in explaining to him the grounds of his application to Parliament. Mr. Perceval, upon reference to the best means of information he could obtain, is satisfied that Mr. Elliston's request cannot be granted, except upon a ground which would go to alter the whole principle upon which theatrical entertainments are at present regulated within the metropolis and twenty miles round it."

To any one but Elliston, this would have been conclusive, but with him it was far otherwise. The rebuff only occasioned another bound, and the harder the stroke, the more elevated was his flight. To oppose the very minister of the crown was a striking fact. Again Elliston assailed the Treasury Bench. With Downing Street in one pocket and Drury Lane in the other, it would be difficult to conceive a more supreme point of human elevation, than the manager,—except, indeed, that of the Cham of Tartary, who, having taken his repast, permits the sovereigns of the earth to sit down to dinner.

But Elliston felt that his injuries were not confined to a mere rejection of his parliamentary petition, but that he was suffering encroachment on his own territorial possessions. In addition to the Olympic and Sans Pareil licenses, another had been recently granted for a theatre in Tottenham Court Road. This license had been given to one Paul, a retired pawnbroker, who having closed his duplicate doors in High Street, Marylebone, and sold off all his unredeemed pledges, had a fancy for turning theatrical manager. This hallucination had been chiefly promoted

at the desire of his wife, a lady, who, being persuaded she possessed the combined talents of Siddons and Mara, thought that she could multiply her husband's gains by far more than the paltry percentage he had been accustomed to, and raise herself to the distinction of a leading star.

Paul listened, unfortunately, to these dazzling proposals, and secured the King's Concert Rooms in Tottenham Street, which he speedily converted into a tasteful and well-arranged theatre.

This place, the new proprietor opened on Easter Monday, with a burletta founded on "Love in a Village," which was in fact the old opera itself, scene for scene, and word for word, with the interruption only of a note or two, occasionally, on the pianoforte. An old coat with fresh buttons would have been a less artful experiment.

Mrs Paul was of course the *Rosetta*, a part most illadvised; for though certainly a beautiful woman, yet was she far more fitted for a *Clytemnestra* than a pastoral maiden; so that, notwithstanding her failure in "Love in a Village," she justly acquired the admiration of the whole town. Poor Paul, from a man of substance, was in a short time reduced to a slender estate. Compelled to raise supplies by a mortgage of his effects, he stood now on the other side of the very counter where he was once dictator, having leisure to contemplate his folly, and affording one more example of the indiscretion of theatrical undertakings. The doors of Tottenham Street were now for the first time closed, under a commission of bankruptcy.

Petitions were now laid before the Privy Council, in respect of a third Theatre. The following account of the proceedings was transmitted to Elliston:—

"Sheridan sat at the council board, whose petition came on after yours. There was one also from the wife of Tom Sheridan. (Thomas Sheridan was at this time in Spain, in a declining state of health.) All the petitions were in the hands of counsel, excepting Greville's, yours, Sheridan's, and that of Mrs. Thomas Sheridan. Sheridan's

was very declamatory, and certainly produced an effect; but, I think, yours was as persuasive as any. Lord Harrowby perused it with evident attention. The Attorney-General, who was officially present, gave strong indications of dislike and hostility to a third theatre, and shook his head wondrously like Lord Burleigh, or as you might have fancied the *Lord Mayor* in 'Richard the Third.'

"To your petition Sheridan listened with more gravity than he is accustomed to exhibit. Graham was present, and observed, 'You were a pretty fellow to petition the king, after violating the laws at your *Circus*; and that if you were brought before him, he should deem the utmost penalty under the Vagrant Act applicable to your case.' The Justice was in a fury. Much was said about the illegality of your Circus 'Macbeth,' when Sheridan slily observed, the greatest violation was to the bard, in *your* attempting the impersonation! Adam attended on behalf of Drury Lane Theatre—he was quite didactic and pathetic."

The expenses attending Elliston's petition to the House of Commons were 101*l*., and 31*l*. before the Privy Council.

The Royal Circus having undergone extensive alterations, Elliston commenced his season (1810) on Easter Monday, under all those flattering prospects of success which he was fairly entitled to entertain. The amphitheatre, which had hitherto been the arena of equestrian exercises, was now converted into a commodious "pit" for spectators; stables into saloons; and the mangers themselves into stalls of far different office—namely, "choice fruit and lemonade." The empire of the "Houyhnhnms" was, in fact, entirely at an end. Apollo and the heavenly Nine appropriated the ceiling amongst themselves, elevating the thoughts of the spectator from the dung of Augeas to the azure of Olympus; whilst

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Note.—At page 140, line 6, *for* pole *read* poll;
" 267, line 14, *for* Vanburgh *read* Vanbrugh.
" 347, line 1, *for* Brockenden *read* Brockedon.

Bacchus and the laughing Ariadne participated an expansive proscenium, which glittered in the choicest symbols of intellectual banqueting. To this new house Elliston gave the name of the "Surrey Theatre."

The entertainments on the opening night commenced by an address—a poetical rhapsody—the child of Busby, and the adopted of Elliston.

The "Beggars' Opera" was the principal piece—Mrs. Garrick (formerly Miss Gray) sustaining the part of *Polly*. A warlike melodrame succeeded, in which there was a vast multitude in arms, and the cremation of the citadel, though it nearly choked the audience, had no power in stifling the huzzas of the people.

Early in this season, Miss Sally Booth, so long a favourite with the public, made her first London appearance on these boards. The "Beaux Stratagem," converted into a burletta, or musical comedy !(), introduced this lady in the part of *Cherry*—Elliston himself, of course, filling that of *Archer*. This barbarous crotchet placed upon the drama, under certain restrictive licenses, was, in this instance, complied with by great skill and considerable taste. Some delightful melodies were furnished by Mrs. Elliston, whilst the "Musical Catechism," between *Cherry* and *Archer*, produced a very rapturous *encore;* the rubric of the bills always announcing it in coloured letters.

The success of this dramatic transmutation induced a second of a similar nature; and some weeks subsequently, the "Bold Stroke for a Wife" was as adroitly invigorated with a decoction of music, and Mesdames Centlivre and Elliston the joint patentees of the *nostrum*.

But this course of harmony was now suddenly invaded by an event which rendered the present season of the Surrey Theatre one of the most remarkable which had yet occurred. "The season of love was no more," and discord and heart-burnings, equalled only by the memorable O.P. insurrection on the plains of Covent Garden, in the year preceding, now agitated the extensive territory of St. George's Fields.

On the production of his pantomime, the spirited manager had engaged, as *Columbine*, a Miss Giroux, a sparkling brunette, "of foreign aspect and of tender years." This young lady made her appearance accordingly, and the Surrey *Terpsichore* soon kindled a *tendre* amongst the "pretty fellows" of Nelson Square and Melina Place. Elliston, at this period also, had enriched his company by the services of a Miss Taylor, a lady inferior neither in personal attractions nor graceful accomplishments to the magnetic Giroux. She was, perhaps, more of the Sylphide than the Muse. Giroux might have been *Apollo's* chosen—Taylor the beloved of *Oberon*.

Elliston being desirous of turning this "double cherry" to the best market, and believing the peach-blossom Taylor would, perhaps, be more than equally attractive with the olive Giroux, invested her on a certain night with the diadem of pantomime, and Miss Taylor appeared for the first time in the part of *Columbine*.

Nelson Square and Melina Place were now in a state of positive insurrection. This was an usurpation to which they could not for a moment submit, and they at once determined to vindicate the rights of the dethroned queen. On the night in question (that of the fair Taylor) the *Girouites* assembled in considerable force, and securing the first rows of the pit, and the most advantageous position in the boxes, prepared themselves for the coming struggle.

The adherents of Taylor were on this night comparatively few, for they had been taken by surprise; but no sooner was the curtain raised for the commencement of the mystic scene, than a cry of "Giroux! Giroux!" sufficient to "Tear the cave where echo lies," resounded from all quarters of the theatre. This evidence of unlooked-for hostility soon awakened the *Sybarite Taylors* to resistance. Worthy the cause, and the more inspired by the odds against them, they repelled, with triple force, this furious onslaught, and the very building was shaken to its base. The strife was now carried on in downright earnest. The opposing parties, no longer satisfied by words, sprang on the benches, and crowded on the para-

pets of the boxes, giving the clearest indications that they were prepared for any result. The belligerents were in their element, and in his element was Elliston himself; for in the attitude of a speech he was speedily before them. But the honeyed words of *Ulysses* were here of no avail: still more exasperated were both parties, and the curtain fell amidst universal confusion.

On the second night, a fearful renewal of difference took place. "Taylor" was still in the bills, and the adherents of Taylor considerably multiplied.

The parties now contended under distinct leaders. One Thomas Barratt marshalled the array on the side of the dazzling Taylor, while another, Michael Slater, not less in heroic beauty, mingled the gallant hearts which beat for the glory of Giroux. The rising of the curtain was again the telegraphic notice for the general onset. The *Gs* and the *Ts* went at it, pell-mell. "O. P." was now completely eclipsed in "G. T." Hats bore the impress of their favoured initial; and no two letters of our time-honoured alphabet ever before came into such awful collision.

Hostilities were thus carried on, night after night, with equal violence and improving method. On each succeeding evening, some new device, by one party or the other, was projected; nay, such was the excitement, that, bursting the cerements of the very theatre itself, it invaded the neighbourhood at large. The arrival of either "The Giroux" or "The Taylor" at the stage-door, was a signal to their appropriate partisans, who hailed their own "bright, particular star" as she descended from the hackney-coach. "Taps" and "spirit shops" were tributary in the cause. The "House of Call for Painters" had emblazoned *The Giroux*, and "The Duke's Head" had been sacrificed to *The Taylor*. Placards, handbills, pasquinades, and acrostics were in merry circulation, while an itinerant song, founded on "The Rival Queens," collected a roaring auditory around the Obelisk. Amongst others, we submit a copy of a precious protocol, which proceeded from the playhouse itself.

"SURREY THEATRE.

"Miss Giroux, deeply deploring the display of a spirit in this theatre which, however flattering, is by no means calculated to serve her who is the object of it, presumes publicly to declare, that she has neither personally nor otherwise, encouraged any hostility to the professional pretensions of a young person called Taylor.

Miss Giroux takes the liberty to request that the enlightened portion of the British public, which does her the honour to approve her performances, will add to so proud a distinction the favour of abstaining from all unseemly contest, nor

'Mix with hired slaves, bravoes, and common stabbers,'

but allow, at once, MIND to triumph over MATTER!

"N.B.—Miss Giroux is not aware, that in this generous nation it is disreputable to be either a Jew or a foreigner; but attempts have been made to fix on her the *stigma* of both! Miss Giroux is by no means a Jew, and has the happiness, moreover, of being born an English young lady."*

But a question will naturally arise, What was the manager about this while? The truth is, these noctur-

* "When Cuzzoni and Faustina (two celebrated Italian singers) were in England together, the spirit of rivalry was carried to an extravagant pitch. It is told by Horace Walpole, that his mother had them at her house to sing at a concert; she was under the greatest difficulty how to settle the precedence. Finding also it was impossible to prevail on the one to sing whilst the other was present, she took Faustina to a separate part of the house, under pretext of showing her some curious china, during which time the company obtained a song from her rival Cuzzoni. A similar device was practised on the other hand to get Faustina to perform.

"Sir Robert Walpole having taken the part of Faustina, Lady Walpole countenanced the other; and when Sir Robert was from home, she invited them both to dinner.

"The Cuzzoni party was headed by the Countess of Pembroke, whose followers always hooted Faustina. The contention at the opera was at first only carried on by hissing on one side and clapping on the other, but at last proceeded to rattles and other instruments of discord." —*Hogarth's Hist. of Music.*

nal revels contributed materially to the health of the playhouse exchequer.

But now, considering that the moment had arrived in which, if he did not interfere, some one else would; and being desirous of accomplishing that moral triumph which had animated Giroux, namely, "Mind over Matter," he pompously stated that, on a certain night following, he would himself "*give judgment in the case!*" The attitude he assumed for the purpose was consistent with this judicial language; for, on the ensuing Tuesday, when presenting himself on the stage for that purpose, not quite "sober as a judge," he turned towards the prompter, and with dignity positively superlative, exclaimed, "Bring me a chair!" And when the prompter appeared, bearing in a stately arm-chair, into which the manager sank with the severity of a Wedderburn, it was perhaps the most powerful stroke of burlesque ever witnessed.

The plenary indulgence which had evidently been the occupation of the manager, and the dissatisfaction which the "judgment" was giving to all parties, renewed the contest, and most wofully augmented the effects. These scenes being repeated on future nights, the manager was at length brought to his senses. The mock tribunal gave place to a court far beyond a joke; the case was removed from Surrey to Westminster, where, in July, the Attorney-General applied for a rule, &c., against the leaders of the fray. The two Columbines, in the hands of Sir Vicary Gibbs and Lord Ellenborough, must have produced a racy scene, by no means unamusing to the other gowns in the Court of King's Bench. A trial took place, when, on conviction of the parties, a public apology terminated the affair.

At this time, Elliston received the following! from Mr. Warner Phipps:—

"Having denied myself to you lately, on one or two occasions, you may be led to suppose I have some cause for offence. Such is indeed the case—

"Believe me, my friend, you are becoming—have become, the shameless victim to a passion, which has, alas! but little more to do in accomplishing your utter destruction. It will be destruction of a mind naturally endowed by higher properties than fall commonly to the share of men;—the abuse of advantages far greater than many in your profession have been blessed with;—utter desolation in the most affectionate bosom that ever beat for a husband's honour;—and an example to children, whereby pollution will possess their minds in place of the seeds of wisdom. You are publicly—you are universally known as intemperate;—the vice dishonours you as a companion, and puts a brand upon you as a public man. I have not seen you on one occasion, in the clear, manly, possession of your faculties for the five last interviews I have had with you; and if you think I now take a violent liberty with that which is your own affair, you must look on it as the incision of the knife to the gangrene which must otherwise destroy you.

"As heartily as I have received you as my friend, so will I distinctly throw you off, if these things are repeated. This is not the first time that I have used this language; but I have been willing to believe the wordy confessions you once made to me, proceeded from a vigorous resolution to amend. I do not wish vexatiously to recall to your mind the favours you have received from me, by my advice in your complicated concerns; but in addition to the difficulties which such concerns must necessarily throw on one who undertakes their investigation, I will not add the unthankful perplexity of seeing my labours rendered abortive, by the madness or stupidity of habitual ebriety.

"Elliston;—I will not beg the question with a man in your critical position;—you have not a moment to lose—your respectability is expiring—your energies declining—your estate wasting—and your very hopes are themselves becoming hopeless.

"Of particular circumstances, there is one I would notice before concluding. You have hinted lately, I believe, at my carrying some communication or other to Mrs. Elliston. That is not the case—and I regret it is

necessary for me to assure you that it is not so. Mrs. Elliston has twice called on me under evident distress—great, very great, mental anxiety. Once she called, after the day of your opening, and again about three weeks since. These visits were occasioned by your absence from home on the whole of the two previous nights, without either notice or the slightest explanation. Of your distinct errors, our only conversation was—on that subject, which, like the daylight, is clear to all.

"I do not trust that I have not wounded you; on the contrary, I hope I have deeply probed you. If I am not of weak resolution myself, you will never again receive such a letter as this from me; for you either will not require it, or if you do, it must proceed from some other hand.

"*2nd June*, 1811." "W. Phipps.

The language of this letter produced a deep impression on the mind of the truant. Elliston was obviously abashed—crest-fallen. He knew how just the imputations had been, and he felt how sincere and disinterested was the man who had urged them. At about this very time, also, Elliston received another of those mysterious epistolary favours from *Invisiblina*, alluding, in equally strong terms, to that same scene of dissipation and riot, which had formed part of Mr. Phipps's accusation. This, if not tending to his deeper depression, at least multiplied his perplexities. The "whereabouts" of this *Invisiblina*—the machinery by which she directed her operations—and the nice accuracy of her intelligence, more and more bewildered him.

He was now suddenly visited by one of those violent calls of righteousness and reformation, which have more sincerity at the moment than steadiness of purpose; a sense of holiness, like love, far too hot to hold; and Elliston now turned towards Stratford Place, regretting, perhaps, that the days of mortification were past, for, like Blaise Pascal, he would at that moment have bound himself in an iron girdle, or put on the hair-shirt of a penitent of La Trappe. Certain it is, he returned to his wife in a

temper of contrition as little worthy reliance as his late engagements had been of imitation. But he returned to one whose soul was as generous as her affections ardent. This excellent woman, like the gentle "*Amelia*," received the penitential "*Booth*" with cheerful forgiveness, while Warner Phipps, like the good "*Dr. Harrison*," looked on, with the hope that so fair a beginning would be consistently maintained.

Lovegrove, during the few years his health permitted him to act, made a rapid advance in public favour. He appeared in the part of *Lord Ogleby*, in the Drury Lane company at the Lyceum, on the 3rd of October—a *début* highly flattering. In the short space of six years, Lovegrove established a fame on which popular opinion was absolutely undivided. No one found any fault with Lovegrove—a circumstance which is by no means a consequent attendant, even on the most brilliant career of histrionic art. The chastity of nature was never lost sight of in the humour of the part, nor the fidelity of character sacrificed to jocular effects. But with this, Lovegrove was no tame actor; his colouring was strong, but the lights and the shadows fell naturally; his impersonations forcibly characteristic, never caricature. He certainly would have gained the *Harcourt prize* in the Dramatic University.

In private life, Lovegrove was a singular man. Though by no means an ascetic, he appeared to have but few associates. With his professional brethren, he had no intercourse whatever; his place of residence was entirely unknown; nor had the prompter any other means of communicating with him on the business of the stage, than by directing his letter to the door of the theatre. But Lovegrove's amiable and obliging manner secured to him respect, and sufficiently proved that his singularity was not the result of misanthropy or selfishness; nor was it amongst the least strange things, that a man so constituted should have chosen the profession of an actor.

This idiosyncrasy not unnaturally induced some to believe, that much of the adventure we are about to

relate, as told by Lovegrove himself, was the offspring of his own heated imagination. There is no doubt that something singular and alarming had taken place (for Lovegrove was by no means inclined to practical jokes), which a mind predisposed in the nature we have described his, might have peopled with additional images.

Lovegrove, on a certain evening, having acted his part, had quitted the Lyceum early, on his way home, as it is supposed. At about midnight, just as the curtain had closed the night's entertainment, the theatre watchman was startled by a piercing exclamation of — "Help! for God's sake, help!" and Lovegrove himself, covered with brick-dust and mortar, rushed over the stage, in a state of frenzy, and pursuing his way into the green-room, dropped, exhausted, into a chair.

When sufficiently restored to make himself understood, he gave the following recital:—

"As I was passing the end of Dyott-street, I was powerfully assailed by two women of gaunt and masculine appearance, who as instantaneously pinioned me with a cord, and hurried me down a blind cellar, contiguous to the spot where I had just been standing. Surprise and terror totally deprived me of the power of voice. In this state, I was forced on through a dank, noisome passage, apparently quite under ground—wet and putrid as a common sewer. We then reached the foot of a crazy staircase, where was stationed a ruffian, worthy the wretches in whose hands I was confined. By the hasty glance I had, his beard was of a fortnight's growth, his head perfectly bald, and he wore a long rough drab coat, stained with all manner of filth. He carried a lantern. I noticed he had but one hand, an iron hook on the stump of his arm supplied the other. Not a word passed between the women and this man. I was thence forcibly pushed up several flights of stairs, the man leading the way.

"An effort I now made of resistance, when one of the women grasped me by the throat, blaspheming and laughing. We were still mounting. We could not have ascended less than five or six flights of stairs from the pit of the first cellar. We at length reached a door,

which the conductor unfastened, whence we passed to the open roof of the house, and after a few paces, through another doorway into an attic of an adjoining tenement. I shrieked aloud—but the door was slammed to and instantaneously locked. The women now relaxed their hold, and disappeared through a trap at the bottom of the wall, at a further end of the room. The man now lighted a candle. I grasped his coat. 'In God's name, explain this!' cried I. But he resolutely moved on, and stooping through the aperture, whence the women had departed, I heard the entrance barred on the other side.

"My senses now almost abandoned me. I again screamed aloud—but not a sound,—not a footstep did I otherwise hear. I looked around. In a corner of this foul apartment was a low bed. I gazed on it with renewed apprehension, and beheld, stretched therein, a human form—apparently a female—she breathed heavily, as though in agony of body. I moved nearer, and distinctly saw marks of violence on her features. The creature was dying—evidently expiring of hurts she had received. A horrid conviction seized me, that I had been brought here for the purpose of fixing on me evidence of her murder.

"'Tell me!' I exclaimed—'who — what are you?' An agonizing groan was my only reply—and a sigh—'twas the last of life's effort—for I am convinced, at that moment, the object before me breathed her last. I was now frantic—frantic with fear, and felt equal to any exertion. I perceived near me the fragment of some furniture—perhaps the very weapon which had inflicted the blow of death—I seized it. The door was locked, but the fastening—a heavy wooden lock—was in some degree parted from the panel. Into this chink, I thrust violently the piece of timber. I felt it bite—the lever to bear—and with the force of desperation, I wrenched it from its position—the door gave way. I rushed along the roof, over which I had previously been hurried—God only knows the peril I was then passing—the door of the first house was unbarred. I descended the staircase—for it was dark, almost as pitch—and I ran, or rather fell down several flights.

"I must have reached nearly the bottom of our former ascent, when the voice and figure of one of the female demons who had just quitted me, again scared my senses. I could not mistake the wretch. A fresh act of desperation animated me. I at once retreated—again mounted a few steps, and found myself at a window. I forced it open—climbed to the frame-work, and sprang——God has preserved me!—and sprang—I knew not whither. But I fell yet alive—unhurt—into a kind of stable. I now noticed a faint light on the ground-floor of the contiguous building—one of those dens, it appeared, for marine stores. Two men were sitting. I rushed forward—passed them like the wind, and found myself in a narrow unlit street. I still ran wildly on—windings—passages—but in what direction, I knew not. Flight, flight alone possessed me. Danger was at an end, yet I felt I could still but fly. A recollection of objects now returned—the way at length became familiar—and I ran, ran on, till I met you here. What have I not escaped!"

Mysterious as was the narrative, nothing was ever known further of this adventure. Lovegrove's natural reserve soon baffled the curiosity of his friends, and after a few days, the explication was altogether left to the surmises of those who had listened to the account in the theatre.

The partial eclipse into which the comedian's fair fame had been thrown by Phipps's letter, being now past, and the luminary once again in full splendour, we will forget all causes of the worthy actuary's anger, as related, and proceed to the more grateful task of recounting an act of generosity, by which our hero will be considerably restored to the favour of the indulgent reader.

Amongst the various places of Elliston's resort for the purpose of hazard, was a house in the neighbourhood of Blackfriars, where he had occasionally met Mr. L——, a young gentleman of sickly appearance, but who still followed up the phantom of play with that excitement which, for the time, is able to sustain the weakest frame in all the heated combinations of its pursuit.

At places of this kind, personal acquaintance is generally no other than that arising from the traffic of the table, nor does a thought or word transpire which is not employed on the purpose of rapine.

Mr. L—— was at this time about twenty-six years of age. Disease had already possessed him under that form, which so frequently mingles the mockery of hope with the most peremptory fiat of mortal certainty. His manners were gentle—his temper unassailable; and at those brief intervals when the passion of play permitted his mind a moment's freedom, he exhibited an understanding of no ordinary quality, and a taste (particularly in the fine arts) highly cultivated. But the whole occupation of his flickering existence was the act of passing to and fro, from his own home to this apartment of despair. Here, in the evening, he would arrive at about eight o'clock, in a hackney-coach; and by the same means, at any unknown hour, quit the house on his return. Here, with the entire sum of his estate and strength, he was a nightly visitor, for his other hours were literally a course of exhaustion—his daily journey between a moral and a mortal grave. With this gentleman Elliston had sometimes conversed, and frequently played.

It happened on a certain evening the comedian had been singularly fortunate—had won a considerable sum, the greater portion of which the proceeds of Mr. L——'s purse. The majority of the company had by this time departed; indeed, all the *habitués* of the house, except Elliston and his companion, who continued their play. Good fortune still followed our hero, and by two o'clock he was a winner to the full amount of his adversary's ready effects, perhaps of his resources. But Mr. L—— was calm and unruffled. He paid his money, and handed over some further acknowledgments.

"You will still play on?" said Elliston. "You must recover some of this to-night."

"No, not to-night," responded Mr. L——.

"Nay—you must take some vengeance of me," continued the other, "the jade must be wooed; take my word for it, she'll be fond after pouting,"—saying which,

he presented sundry bank-notes to his companion, and again set the table.

The game was renewed—the stakes higher; and, at the conclusion of another hour, Elliston was a winner to a still further extent.

A slight flush, rather of exhaustion than anxiety, passed over the features of Mr. L——, and he rose to depart.

"I do not like this," said Elliston; "we must not part at such odds as these; you shall still have your revenge, and to-night, too."

L—— rebuked him only with a faint smile, adding, "We're later than usual. Do you hear what a night it is?"

"As you please; but I have protested you shall have your revenge. The cards here are against you; another place will be more fortunate. You shall have luck to-night; but not here—not here."

"What do you propose?" asked L——, with animation.

"Come. I'll show you."

The companions now entered a hackney-coach, and, after a drive of fifteen minutes, were set down in Stratford Place. Elliston led Mr. L—— into an apartment, and some refreshment being at hand, they partook accordingly.

"I have disappointed you so far," said Elliston; "this is not quite the gay scene you may have anticipated. But, courage! your more immediate object is here" (continued he, shuffling the cards). "I never won a guinea in my own house yet, and I am sure Fortune will not be inclined to follow me, on such a night as this, after abandoning her so scurvily in Blackfriars."

"Come, then, to some further business," replied L——.

Down they sat. Luck now blew from a fresh quarter under the new sky in which they played. L—— was recovering; a transient, treacherous success, adding mockery only to the certain course of the infatuated gamester. Again—again he lost; new loans were advanced and further acknowledgments handed over to his opponent. It was now past three o'clock.

"Why, how is this?" said Elliston, with marked gravity,

as he deliberately turned up a pile of notes, and spread the specialties before him—"this is a large amount, Mr. L——, a very considerable sum of money. You must have lost——"

"What is the debt?" demanded the other, impatiently.

"True; it must be lessened," replied the comedian, in a sententious tone. "I think—I am sure, it may. I am not quite satisfied."

"Mr. Elliston," cried his companion, as a sudden flush spotted his pale cheek, "what am I to think of this night's transaction—this strange irritation? Though I know you for a fair dealer, yet let me remind you, that he who provokes the game does little better than take advantage of his adversary."

"Will you for five minutes resume your seat?" said Elliston, solemnly—"we must not part yet. They say I am fond of long speeches, but I'll be brief, for our time is so. I have told you *I am not satisfied.* Here"—(continued he, in the tone of one calmly determined)—"here, Mr. L——, is the cash; the whole amount of what I have this night won from you; and now that we may proceed upon the clearest understanding, I seriously pronounce, no power on earth shall induce me to retain one fraction of it."

L—— gazed in speechless attention—he knew not the nature of his own emotions.

"This has been a long sitting," resumed Elliston—"has broken deeply into our rest, but it shall close to our comfort—to our happiness, *if you but permit it.* Mr. L——, you are far from a state of health—perhaps not a long-lived man; think how little time, therefore, could be given to reflection, even were the whole amount so devoted. Do not despise the admonition of even an erring man; and let not pride, that pitiful illusion, be the last cheat to leave you barer than poverty. Never" (concluded he, with great energy),—"never will I touch again one farthing of this sum—it is yours, or it consumes this night before your eyes. Now for the security I ask—give me the honour of a man you will never play again."

The reply of the young man failed upon his lips, but the tears rolled down his cheeks, and his frame drooped by exhaustion.

"Alas! alas!" sighed he, after a labouring pause. "How am I humbled! In the sense of my own worthlessness, and before the generosity of this man, how am I humbled!"

"Humbled!" cried Elliston, with energy—"humility! —why, how is this, when I had hoped on both sides for exultation? Exultation on *my* part, that I had been able to achieve a substantial good, and exultation, still greater on *yours*, for having secured the moment whilst it yet remained, to make peace with your own conscience. Will you give me the word of a man?"

"Yes; and before God, my witness——"

"No—no—not that!" interposed Elliston. "I have no right to such a bond. Give me but your word—your word of honour."

Such was the generous appeal, and it was not made in vain; the security which our hero had so warmly sought, was given with all the impassioned evidence of sincerity.

Elliston was of a temperament fully to enjoy the delight which such an adventure was so calculated to produce. But strange and inconsistent is the nature of man: the comedian himself still continued to visit Blackfriars as usual, so that all traces of the past scene were soon lost in the mazes of the hazard-table.

Such, alas, was our frail hero!—one of those who appeared to regard righteousness, as a liberal host does his best wine, using but little of it himself and dividing his stock for the benefit of his friends.

About three months from the above event, Elliston, after an absence of two days from home, found the following letter, amongst many others, on his return to Stratford Place:

"I am dying; from this bed of pain and anguish I can never rise. I am dying—and God knows how willingly, but for that, which can alone make death terrible! If to one almost lost to hope, there can be an interval of quiet,

such is the moment I pronounce, 'Bless you! God bless you, sir!' You know why I should say, God bless you! An hour like mine must be past all hypocrisy. You would have rescued me from ruin—would have restored me to that, which all men, ere they die, will discover to be the only true joy on earth.

"For a time, shame—for it was not virtue, nor common honesty—shame guarded my steps, and baffled that fiery passion, with which my neglected boyhood had grown up familiar. I did not play; avoided, fled all means of play—all place, all time, in which even danger might lie disguised. But my mind, so long estranged from honourable bent, became a void—would not be roused—'twas steeped—'twas poisoned, sir! The venom had stung my very soul to death, and I became the helpless, hopeless, despicable thing—a confessed liar! I returned to vice—I hurried to destruction—dishonoured that last, last bond, not to be sued on earth, and in pain, in poverty, in contempt, and utter desertion, I am fast, fast dying! But all will perish with me, except my disgrace! Bless you—bless you, sir! It still comforts me to say so. I shall die with it on my lips."

Deeply affected, it may be well imagined, was Elliston, on reading this distressing history. The letter had been dated three days back, from a street in Westminster, but without number of the house. Elliston went immediately, with the full determination of discovering the penitent.

In this he had some difficulty, for he applied at several lodging-houses without success, and had nearly given up his pursuit, when he accosted a female in the act of descending the steps of a house he had previously passed. It was here Elliston gained all his intelligence—for it was the house in which poor L—— had that morning breathed his last.*

This narrative recalls strikingly an incident in the

* The substance of the incident above was confirmed to the author by a gentleman connected with an extensive firm in Paternoster Row—a connection of L——'s family, and who saw the young man frequently in his late illness.

career of King, the actor. King played deeply; and on a certain occasion he borrowed five guineas, being his last stake, with which he won two thousand pounds. Escaping from the apartment, he fell on his knees, exclaiming, in an impassioned manner, "Give me a Bible!" on which he took his oath never to play again. But the oath he kept not many months, for King afterwards became a member of the "*Miles*" club in St. James's-street, where he lost everything.

At the commencement of this year (1811) Elliston had again broken fresh ground, in an entirely new project—namely, The establishment of a Literary Association at Bristol! In pursuance of which, he had purchased, for the sum of 1,600*l.*, freehold premises in John-street. The house, which had formerly been an Italian warehouse, or in other words, a pickle-shop, he now opened for the sale of Italian anthology and Classical conserves.

The back apartment, which he styled "The Lyceum," was accordingly thrown open; to which the whole literary mind of Bristol was invited. This was well supplied by evidences of appropriate taste—an Apollo, some Etruscan vases, Patterson's Roads, reviews, magazines, and a world of tracts, pamphlets, and newspapers. The front room was a library, or shop for the sale of "old, choice, and rare books only." Here were no idle, sickly, pale-backed bantlings of the Minerva press—nothing of the *belle assemblée* of literature whatever. Like Charles Lamb, the great projector had proclaimed Dryden and Pope as the last in the empire of letters, and the "choice old books" alone constituted his care. Amongst others, he had collected "Memoirs of the Duke de Ripperda;" "Sir Thomas Double at Court;" "Enqviries tovching ye Diursity of Langvages in all parts of the World;" "The Ladies' Perceptor, by a Gentleman of Honour, at Cambridge;" "The most famous, delectable, and pleasant History of Pirismvs, the renowned Prince of Bohemia;" "ΠΑΝΣΕΒΕΙΑ; or, a View of all Religions on the Earth;" "Scotiæ Indiculum; or, the Present State of Scotland, 1680;" "Voyages of J^n^ Struys;" "The Ship of

Fooles;" in high Dutch; and piles on piles of "Dramatic Mysteries;" to these were added a vast variety of shells, fossils, coins, Indian weapons, and a gong which might have awakened from their very graves, a whole generation of Bristol by a single stroke.

Elliston, who never entered with indifference on any speculation, embarked in the book scheme with more than common enthusiasm. Repeatedly, as his other duties would permit, he personally peregrinated in the collection of antique literature, frequenting innumerable book-stalls, and rummaging the back parlours and store-closets of all the good wives he could call to memory. Like the magician, in "Aladdin," he journeyed from place to place, crying "New books for old ones;" and by the end of a month, he had collected poetry, like the Muse herself, altogether stripped of covering.

At the head of this establishment he placed a man by the name of Brick, a dilapidated schoolmaster, whose duty it was to superintend all that the great designer had brought into operation. Under these arrangements, the Institution for a time flourished. The old books accumulated amazingly: but the city of Bristol, alas, was no genial soil for the empire of letters! The frequenters of "The Lyceum" fell off—there were few returns of either persons or profit—the "Ben Jonson Head," over the door, ceased to be oracular; and our hero began to think seriously of sending his literary exhumations to public competition, and taking the current coin in exchange.

But the time had now arrived, in which he received intelligence of a decisive blow to the Bristol affair *Duns Scotus*, the shattered schoolmaster, had found time, during the latter two months, for ingratiating himself in the favour of a rope-maker's daughter, in the neighbourhood of John-street; a lady of easy manners and the same quality of virtue. Mr. Brick, like many literary men before him, was soon illaqueated by the flaxen beauty; and considering, perhaps, that if he did not find her a virtuous maiden, he could at least make her an honest woman, conferred on her the distinction of Mrs. Brick,

the marriage being solemnized within a stone's cast of "The Lyceum" itself.

Within three days of these espousals, the history was brought to a conclusion — Mr. and Mrs. Brick had departed on a matrimonial tour, and "The Lyceum" desecrated by an irruption on the till. The age of reason was no more, though the schoolmaster was emphatically abroad, and the Bristol associates returned once more to their wharfs.

The Royal Circus (or Surrey Theatre) had attained, at this period, its highest celebrity, and as it may be curious to remark the rude foundations of this *Transtamesin* dynasty, we beg to offer the reader a brief notice. This theatre was built near the junction of the cross-road, on St. George's-fields, and opened in the year 1780, by the elder Dibdin and one Hughes, for the representation of burlettas and equestrian exercises. A spirited competition was here, for some time, maintained, with Philip Astley, proprietor of the Amphitheatre, in the Westminster-road.

The Circus was burnt down in 1805. The fate of the *Pegasus*, which surmounted the building, created as much interest during the conflagration, as the *Apollo* of Drury Lane on the "One dread night" of March, 1809.

The earliest advertisement we offer, is humorous, and in that bitterness of spirit so peculiar to dramatic rivalry!

Sept. 1772,

"The celebrated Sobieska Clementina and Mr. Hughes on Horseback, will end on Monday next, the 4th of October; until then they will display the whole of their Performances, which are allowed, by those who know best, to be the completest of the kind in Europe. Hughes humbly thanks the Nobility, &c. for the Honour of their Support, and also acquaints them his Antagonist has catched a bad cold so near to Westminster-bridge, and for his Recovery is gone to a warmer Climate, which is Bath in Somersetshire. He boasts, poor Fellow, no more

of activity, and is now turned Conjurer, in the character of 'Sieur the Great.' Therefore Hughes is unrivalled, and will perform his surprising Feats accordingly at his Horse Academy, until the above Day. The Doors to be opened at Four o'clock, and mounts at Half-past precisely. H. has a commodious Room, eighty feet long.

"N.B. Sobieska rides on one, two, and three Horses, being the only one of her Sex that ever performed on one, two, and three."

Hughes was a fine, stalworth fellow, who could have carried an ox away on his shoulders, and eaten him for supper. The next is equally a curiosity:—

"Hughes has the honour to inform the Nobility, &c. that he has no intention of setting out every Day to France for three following Seasons, his Ambition being fully satisfied by the applause he has received from Foreign Gentlemen who come over the Sea to See him. Clementina and Miss Huntly ride one, two, and three Horses at full Speed, and takes Leaps surprising. A little Lady, only Eight Years old, rides Two Horses at full gallop, by herself, without the assistance of any one to hold her on. Enough to put any one in fits to see her. H. will engage to ride in Twenty Attitudes that never were before attempted; in particular, he will introduce his Horse of Knowledge, being the only wise animal in the Metropolis. A Sailor in full gallop to Portsmouth, without a bit of Bridle or Saddle. The Maccaroni Tailor riding to Paris for new Fashions. This being Mr. Pottinger's night, he will speak a Prologue adapted to the noble art of Riding, and an Epilogue also suited to Extraordinary Leaps.

"Tickets (2s.) to be had of Mr. Wheble, bookseller, Paternoster-row, and at H.'s Riding School. Mounts half-past four"

Again:—

"Hughes, with the celebrated Sobieska Clementina, the famous Miss Huntly, and an astonishing Young

Gentleman (son of a Person of Quality) will exhibit at Blackfriars-road more extraordinary things than ever yet witnessed, such as leaping over a Horse forty times without stopping between the Springs.—Leaps the Bar standing on the Saddle with his Back to the Horse's Tail, and—*Vice Versa*, Rides at full speed with his right Foot on the Saddle and his left Toe in his Mouth, two surprising Feet. Mrs. Hughes takes a fly and fires a Pistol —rides at full speed standing on Pint Pots—mounts pot by pot, higher still, to the terror of all who see her. H. carries a lady at full speed over his head—surprising! The young gentleman will recite verses of his own making, and act 'Mark Antony,' between the leaps."

"Clementina every night—a commodious room for the nobility."

We will now take at random, a bill of Philip Astley, the despised of Hughes and Clementina, but the formidable rival to the Blackfriars' establishment:—Hughes certainly had the advantage in orthography.

"ASTLEY'S, WESTMINSTER-BRIDGE, this and every evening. HORSEMANSHIP, by Mr. Astley, Mr. Taylor, Signior Markutchy, Miss Vangable, and other transcendent performers. This performance will be commenced by a new MINUET, danced by two Horses, in a most extraordinery manner.

"A Comical Musical Piece, called THE AWKWARD RECRUIT.

"The Amazing Exhibition of THE DANCING DOGS, from France and Italy, and other genteel Parts of the globe, consisting of—1. Two Dogs as Chairmen, carrying a Monky to a Maskerade. 2. Two dogs disputing poleticks. 3. A Company of Dogs carrying from a Vineyard, Baskits of Grapes, and accompanied by a Savoyard, with a Magic Lanton. 4. A Dog as a Lady of Quality in her Equipage, attended by others in elegant liveries. 5. A Dog cobbling. 6. A Dog that walks on any two of his Legs. 7. Two dogs, as a Tumbler, and his attendant Clown. 8. A Dog dressed in a Spanish

Rabbit, taking another little dog to a Boarding-school; with a variety of others too numerus for Insertion. This Exhibition will conclude with a Variety of Dogs dressed *in militaire*, beseeching a Town; one of them represents a Corporal returning with the Colurs of the Citadel in his mouth to his General; he halts on three Legs, being supposed to have received a muskit ball in one of his four-feet. Two Bull-Dogs; the English-Bull-Dog, rather than quit his hold, suffers himself to be drawn Thirty Feet high, whilst the Mashine is surrounded with Fire Works, representing a heavy Discharge of small Arms and Artilery."

The season of the winter theatres being brought to a close, the "*Independents*" were not above acquiring new strength from the national establishment. Holman, Mathews, Liston, Mrs. Glover, and Jones, had been engaged. Munden was now added to the Haymarket company, and made his appearance in the part of *Old Rapid.*

This was the first time Munden and Elliston had been brought together on the same boards, a concurrence highly beneficial to the interests of the theatre, and acceptable to the public. These two accomplished comedians soon understood each other, and gave ample refutation to the absurd notion, that an actor of merit displays to higher advantage by the side of inferior pretensions—an idle principle, which may possibly throw some artificial glare on the plated goods of inferior manufacture, but is by no means the assay of the solid bullion. Neither Munden nor Elliston had ever played with greater individual effects, and each acquired something in addition to his own worth, by the manner in which his points were justified by the opposite party.

A piece of practical humour transpired at the commencement of this coalition, which we cannot forbear inserting.

In his impersonation of *Old Rapid* (the tailor) Munden invariably made a point, by quizzically unfolding a new coat on the back of a chair, smoothing it down with

the pride of a satisfied artisan, and removing the papers, one by one, which enveloped the bright new buttons. This characteristic operation always produced a pleasant response in the audience, and as it was nothing by which comedy might be ashamed, Munden always made the most of it.

Elliston, who was confessedly what is called a fair actor, (never appropriating effects which did not belong to him), on this evening, however, by one of his strange impulses, when Munden was engaged at the back of the scene, was seized by an irresistible *envie* for the buttons; and found himself, perhaps before he was aware, in a felonious assault upon Joe's pet joke, which he utterly annihilated, by uncasing the buttons to as much laughter in the pit as had ever been the award of Munden himself.

The dismay, the bitter disappointment to poor Joe, can scarcely be conceived; his mortification was childish, for tears came into his eyes. But this scene being over, a second was acted in the Green Room. Munden rushed into the apartment, passionately exclaiming, "Where is he?—where is he?—let me tear him to pieces—*who* is he?—*what* is he?—*where* does he come from? Bart'l'my Fair?—where is the jackanapes, I say!"

Elliston, who, like the trembling *Rizzio*, had flown to petticoat protection, crouching behind the ample folds of Mrs. Glover's white satin, now peeped out his head, which the irate comedian perceiving, fell on him with the most grotesque exhibitions of fury imaginable. Seizing him by the hair, Munden shook his curls, *bien poudrés*, calling him "an assassin," "a parricide," and a vast variety of terms, which did the highest credit to his imagination. Elliston roared lustily, but as some of the by-standers considered he had well merited his punishment, and others were mightily amused with the scene, none came to his assistance.

About four days from this event, Munden and Elliston played together in the "Road to Ruin;" and at the conclusion of the third act, Munden again ran into the Green Room, crying out, "Where is he?—where is he, I say? Hid him again, eh?" At the same time peeping in the

rear of the surrounding ladies, and fantastically raising the flounces of their attire. "Bobby," cried he, running up to Elliston—"Bobby, Bobby, I forgive you the buttons; you have made me to-night—immortalized yourself—I'll never play with any *Harry Dornton* but you, Bobby," continued he, shaking him, on this occasion, by the *hand.* "You've beat 'em all—Holman, Lewis—all of 'em; but, Bobby," pursued he, in a mock sententious tone, "don't dash my buttons any more."

A melodramatic piece had been produced at the Surrey Theatre, for the purpose of exhibiting two magnificent suits of armour of the 14th century. Marriott, of Fleet Street, undertook this work, and his estimate was £400.

Sir Claudius Hunter, the Lord Mayor elect, in his surpassing perceptions of the ceremonial for the ensuing 9th of November, made application to Elliston for the loan of his new armour, to assist in the civic pageant. The request was acceded to, but accompanied with a provision that the steel armour could only be permitted in the event of the atmosphere being free of damp and fog on the day in question; a condition which, at once, appeared to preclude all hope of the said steel. As to the brass suit, that was a perfectly unconditional favour, Mr. Kemble undertaking the personal superintendence of decorating the helmets with costly plumes.

The 9th of November arrived. Fair was the morning, and bright the anticipations of the modern Walworth, as he contemplated the glittering array which would presently become the gaze and admiration of the world of London.

> "Some wore coat armour, imitating scale,
> And next the skin were stubborn shirts of mail;
> Some wore a breast-plate, and a light *jupon*,
> Their horses clad in rich caparison;
> One for his legs and knees provided well,
> With *jambeaux* arm'd, and double plates of steel;
> This on his helmet wore a lady's glove,
> And that a sleeve, embroidered by his love."

Elliston was at this time in the country, and on the

following day an account of the previous one was thus transmitted to him :—

"On the arrival of the *cortège* at Guildhall, we found that no accommodation had been arranged for your men, as Sir Claudius had promised, nor was a crumb of refreshment ordered for either of them. For seven hours they were kept within Guildhall, where they seem to have been considered as much removed from the necessities of the flesh, as Gog and Magog, above their heads. At length, from the compassion of some persons at table, Brass-armour was supplied with wine, which being in bumpers, and passing into an empty stomach, had a very positive effect on the inner man ; and poor Brass-armour began to reel, at the hazard of his own bones and the very lives of his surrounding almoners, for he was—

'a thirsty soul,
Who took the challenge and embraced the bowl ;
With gusto swilled the wine, nor ceased to draw,
Till he the bottom of the brimmer saw.'

"As to Steel-armour, he was far more discreet, refusing wine without corn, and moved solemnly about, like the ghost of Hamlet, in the very presence of *Claudius* himself ; and looking, doubtless, with anxiety, to the crowing of the cock, when he might 'render up himself.' Brass, at length, became so very drunk, that it was found necessary to attempt his removal ; but being, verily, pot-valiant, he appeared most unequivocally to declare, 'Nemo me impune lacessit,' for he placed himself in as good an attitude of defence as he could, and resolutely refused to budge an inch, which, as he was now totally unable to stand, he might very fairly have avowed. At length, however, the order of removal was enforced, and the degraded knight was conveyed to his place of settlement ; Steel brought up the rear, and, like a true lad of metal, strode to his fallen friend. Marriot was in attendance until past midnight, when the two half-dead bodies were released from their imprisonment, and Brass and Steel carried off to the manufacturer's abode."

Mrs. Garrick (the widow of our British Roscius) had frequently honoured Mrs. Elliston by marks of attention, and expressed herself interested in the welfare of her family; and now, in her eighty-eighth year, she would occasionally drive to Stratford Place, personally to delight the young Ellistons by some agreeable surprise or well-timed present. It was at this period a request was made to her, on the part of Elliston, that she would become sponsor to one of his children, Lucy;* to which the following letter was written in reply:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I cannot withhold expressing to you my feelings on the receipt of your letter, the contents of which have equally distressed and gratified me. My regard for Mrs. Elliston, yourself, and family, would at once have occasioned me pleasure in a proposal to bring us more nearly connected than we have been; but, my dear friend, the refusal which I am compelled to send you, for becoming godmother to your child, arises from a sense of duty, which I am sure you will respect, and freely release me from all charge of insincerity in my professions towards you.

"In the course of the happy days I passed with my revered, departed husband, comprehending, as you know, thirty years, the question of baptismal surety occasionally became a subject of his notice (for he had frequently been invited to an honour similar to this which I have received from you), and having strong feelings on the spirit of this Christian institution, declined that as a distinction or gratification, which he felt he might not be able to fulfil as a moral and religious duty. This conviction he duly impressed on me; and it is, indeed, in compliance with his own request, I am now led to forego your proposal, from the knowledge that I am already placed beyond the possibility—even if God be pleased to spare my life a few years longer—of acquitting my conscience in the responsibilities I should bring upon it through my consent.

* Lucy Ann Theresa Elliston, born Dec. 21, 1811; died Jan. 28, 1831.

"Baptism is a holy sacrament of the church of Christ, which, in the engagements of all parties therein concerned, should be religiously remembered; but I fear, with one-half the world, the office of sponsor to a Christian infant is looked upon in no graver light than as a piece of fashion.

"Your children will not want the regards of a warm friend so long as I may be spared; and I trust, my dear friend, in your proper anxiety in respect of this ordinance of the Church, you will ever remember the moral well-being of children must depend materially on the example of parents, and that God will bless you with His grace to fulfil this to His express will.

"I am, yours faithfully,

"E. M. GARRICK.

"Adelphi, March 21, 1812."

Eva Maria Garrick was born at Vienna, 1725; her maiden name was Viegel; "Violette" she assumed whilst in the service of the Empress Maria Theresa. Violette, on her arrival in England, was highly patronized by the Countess of Burlington; as a dancer, she was in equal favour at the Opera House. On Violette's marriage with David Garrick, the earl presented her with a portion of £6,000. This fact gave rise to a suspicion that she was a natural daughter of the earl's—a belief not altogether abandoned to this day. Mrs. Garrick died in 1822, in her 98th year. She was placed in the same vault with her husband in Westminster Abbey.

In September, Elliston was again distinguished by one of those striking differences of opinion (by which "The Noble Art of Self-Defence" is characterised) with his old playmate, De Camp. That Elliston should take a *box* in his own theatre was not unreasonable; that De Camp, his officer, should participate the same, by no means extraordinary; and that the Surrey should afford "a clear stage and no favour" was only fair play. We beg, therefore, to insert a copy of a letter addressed to the

Morning Chronicle, by Sam Russell, on the 15th of the same month :—

"SIR,—I perceive by your paper of this morning, that some goodnatured friend has furnished you with an allusion to a *fracas* which took place at this theatre a week ago, between Mr. Elliston and Mr. De Camp, in such form as grossly to misrepresent the circumstances. As I have been referred to, I think it right, in justice to Mr. Elliston and Mr. De Camp, to say that it is true, dissension did occur in the theatre on the evening of Tuesday, the 8th, in which some hasty expressions were used on both sides, and which, *for a single moment*, did occasion a slight personal encounter. The effect of this was a meeting, the next morning, on Dulwich Common, where Mr. Elliston was accompanied by myself, and Mr. De Camp by one of his friends. Mr. Elliston and Mr. Camp exchanged shots, when, on the interposition of Mr. De Camp's friend and myself, the parties were prevailed on to shake hands. And thus the matter ended."

On the above subject "Invisiblina " admonishes our hero. Her spirit appears to have been greatly moved ; and, in wonted mystery enthroned, she thus pours out the vials of her wrath :—

"So ! you've been fighting—admirable !—that short antiseptic which many a rake-hell has adopted to sweeten his offensive reputation. Alas ! in sober sadness (a sadness I fear you are but little acquainted with) I view you in your new character—emulous of your illustrious predecessors, Quin, Ryan, and Walker—a duellist ! The declaration of the Great Frederick has ever pleased me : 'My subjects may fight if they like it ; but unless one of the parties be killed, I'll hang both.' If such were our English law, we should have few of these mock heroics to salve rotten reputations. How easy it is to become a hero ! and you have taken the shortest cut. How will admiring crowds flock now to Dulwich Common, to view

the spot on which this *Paris* and *Menelaus* contended; then will they say:—

> 'Can none remember that eventful day—
> That ever-glorious, almost fatal fray—
> When *Vincent's** leadless pistol met his eye,
> And *Surrey Columbines* stood laughing by?'

"With what open arms the good people at Cheltenham must have received you after this exploit; and how sunny must be the face of a gentleman who has *just received satisfaction!* Pray let us have no more of these scenes; the town is already laughing at you, from May Fair to Redriff.

"Your wife will receive this day some brawn; and the little Christian a token of 'Invisiblina's' regard. Let the opening of Drury Lane Theatre be your great chance to come."

There is an anecdote recorded of a son of Macklin, who, when in India, fell into quarrel with a brother cadet, the result of which was a hostile meeting. When Macklin came on the ground, he appeared enveloped from top to toe in a large great-coat, so that no part of his figure could be distinguished but his head. On the parties taking their stand, Macklin, to the surprise of all, threw aside his extensive wrapper, and appeared in a perfect state of nature, with the exception of a pair of yellow slippers. To the inquiries of his antagonist, he observed, "I am told that most of the wounds which prove mortal in India arise from some part of the woollen or linen of a man's dress being forced into the flesh by the ball, occasioning in that climate a speedy mortification; to avoid which, I am determined to fight in the manner you see me."

Now, Mrs. Charke, the eccentric daughter of Colley Cibber, was guilty of an adventure still more outrageous, in which (not to alarm the reader) we will at once premise, that although she appeared without her own attire,

* De Camp.

she had very abundantly borrowed that of another person. Mrs. Charke had long lived on unpleasant terms with her father, by whom she was treated with just severity for her total disregard of all social duties and common decorum. Being on one occasion greatly irritated by the dramatist's refusal to honour her drafts, she equipped herself after the style of a gentleman of the road, and hiring a suitable charger, actually waylaid her father upon Epping Forest, by stopping his chariot, presenting her pistol, and desiring him to deliver. The affrighted comedian, to save his life, could do no less than part with his purse. "Young man—young man," said the dramatist, "this is a sorry trade; take heed in time!"

"And so I would," replied Charlotte; "but I've a wicked old hunks of a father, who rolls in money and mistresses, yet denies me a guinea, and has had the impudence to make so worthy a gentleman as yourself answer for it." *

On one of the pantomime nights at the Surrey, in this season, the harlequin, in jumping through a window, fell with considerable violence on the other side of the scene, owing to the neglect of the carpenter in not having placed the *wadded bedding* to receive him. The unhappy pantomimist uttered a tremendous shriek, but was not materially injured. On Elliston being apprised of the circumstance, he observed: "Ay, there was much cry, and little *wool*."

By the enterprise and perseverance of Mr. Whitbread, the new Drury Lane Theatre, in the spring of 1812, was announced complete. A grand movement was now making for opening this splendid edifice for dramatic action, and rehearsing those antique glories by which the site was still memorable.

Arnold being appointed to the management, Elliston signed articles with the proprietors for five years' service, determinable at their option at the end of the third year,

* The above was not quite an original exploit—Doll Cutpurse robbed the celebrated General Fairfax on Hounslow Heath.

at £30 per week for three nights' performances, and £5 nightly for any extra service.

In August, the committee announced, by advertisement, that the authorship of the poetic Address to be spoken on the restoration of the theatre, was open to public competition. This declaration gave rise to the celebrated publication of the "Rejected Addresses," one of the happiest efforts of its precise nature which has ever perhaps appeared; and likely to enjoy the favour of posterity equally with "the only true and particular" composition, to which the play-going public were doomed for nine consecutive nights.

Upwards of one hundred sealed Addresses were forwarded to the dread "*Sorbonne*" of the Drury Committee, of which "*sunt bona, sunt quædam mediocria, sunt mala plura;*" and not a few of the number, as may well be imagined, attacted notice after a fashion somewhat different to the secret promptings of the respective bards; and, like the tinker's terrier, have owed their preservation to being the "ugliest dogs" in the whole country. Some examples of the litter we have seen; one or two we beg here to unkennel. The first doggrel ran after this manner:—

"A new theatre in quite a modern style,
Beautifully finish'd—a stupendous pile,
In a short time uprears its lofty crest,
Just like a burnt-out Phœnix from its nest;
Where loyalty once more shall raise its voice,
All that can make a British heart rejoice.
Here the proud Corsican shall quickly know
The fortune which shall humble England's foe;
Here shall he find the battles all recast—
Blenheim to Salamanca—July last.
To Whitbread thanks, and noble Holland too,
For bringing all this beauteous scene to view;
Raising a temple where but yesterday
All was a mass of smoking stones and clay,
Showing so much of industry and skill,
And what the English can do if they will."

This composition was spun to above eighty lines. We will now pull out another cur by the ears:—

"Once more we meet you—meet you once again,
Patrons and good old friends, in Drury Lane;
Once more in spite of all the fates can do,
Welcome a British audience—you—you—you!
But, oh! my thoughts are driven to recall
That fearful night, which you remember all,
When furious flames assail'd these hallow'd beams,
And sent their fury in ten thousand streams;
When you, good citizens, with aspect dire,
Shouted through London—'Drury is on fire!'
And pallid consternation held the town,
From the mechanic upwards to the Crown."

Thus we see the same ridiculous and blind affection which made the ape in the fable produce her young one, when a decree had been published amongst the beasts, that the most beautiful offspring should become their king.

So much for the "ugly dogs," and we really know not that, amongst the whole pack (100 copies), there was a single pet, beauty, or real "King Charles" worthy perpetuating the Merry Monarch's patent for old Drury; or, in other words, a single address deserving the great occasion; but of this we are quite convinced, that it was intended from the very first that Lord Byron should be ultimately fixed on for the part, though Petrarch's crown had been so ostentatiously declared the inheritance of "him who was most worthy." Lord Holland managed this Drury affair—a management more adroit than many which followed beneath the same roof.

Under what was called an emergency, Lord Byron was applied to for an address. The following is one of many letters which the poet wrote to Lord Holland on the subject:—

"Sept. 27, 1812.

"I have just received your very kind letter, and hope you have met with a second copy, corrected and addressed to Holland House. As to remarks, I can only say I will alter and acquiesce in any thing. With regard to the part which Whitbread wishes to omit, I believe the Address will go off *quicker* without it, though, like the

agility of the Hottentot, at the expense of its vigour. I should like Elliston to have it, with your leave.

"As there will probably be an outcry amongst the rejected, I hope the committee will testify that I sent in nothing to the congress whatever, with or without name, as your lordship well knows. All I have to do with it is with and through you; and though I, of course, wish to satisfy the audience, I do assure you my first object is to comply with your request; and in so doing to show the sense I have of the many obligations you have conferred upon me. Yours ever,

"BYRON."

"The Address," by Lord Byron, is well known to most of our readers. A copy was forthwith forwarded to Elliston for study; some days subsequent to which he received the annexed from Lord Holland:—

"DEAR SIR,—I have referred to Lord Byron's copy, and find it agrees with my notions respecting the lines; and, with great deference to Walker, it should be so. Would you begin your *Hamlet* soliloquy with—'*Either* to be, or not to be?' There can be no question in the matter. The fact is, these grammarians hand down rules from other languages, or from their own theories, and then endeavour to reduce our English tongue to their own arbitrary standard, instead of making good idiomatic writers their rule.

"It has occurred to me, that by repeating the 22nd and 23rd lines a little more rapidly than you did this morning, you will relieve the passage somewhat of its solemnity, which, though striking and poetical, might be felt monotonous.

"But you will judge of this matter better than I can, and I only make the suggestion for the purpose of showing you how little fault I can find with your recital.

"I am, dear Sir, your humble Servant,

"VASSALL HOLLAND."

On the day preceding the opening, the following note reached him:— •

"DEAR SIR,—I have just received a letter from Lord Byron, and he is anxious, should it not be too late, that you should repeat the lines after 'Brinsley cease to write,' as thus altered:—

'Heirs to their labours, like all high-born heirs,
Vain of our ancestry as well as theirs,
While thus remembrance borrows *Banquo's* glass,
To claim the sceptred shadows as they pass;
And we the mirror hold, where, imaged, shine
Immortal names, emblazon'd in our line,
Pause, &c.'

"The alteration is so trifling, that although it reaches you at this late hour, I trust it will not embarrass you.

"Your humble servant,

"VASSALL HOLLAND."

Whitbread had also, at a "late hour," cut out of the Address the passage which Lord Byron denominated his "cavalry lines," these being a fling against the horses, at this time unduly attractive at the rival house, Covent Garden; and several members of the committee, also desirous of claiming some little suggestion as their own, all persecuted poor Elliston with trifling alterations, so that his embarrassment might have been well forgiven, had it really taken place. The alteration suggested through Lord Holland was the form in which the Address was subsequently published.*

On the 10th of October, the new theatre in Drury Lane was opened with the tragedy of "Hamlet"—*Hamlet* by Elliston—and the "Devil to Pay," preceded by

* Amongst the competitors for the prize Address, we find Wm. T. Fitzgerald, Ch. Masterman, Mary Russell Mitford, G. F. Busby, George Lamb, John Taylor, Joseph Hume, H. Jameson, Paul Jodrell, Horatio Smith, Wm. Linley, Ch. Brinsley Sheridan, J. Edwards (a sign-painter, who afterwards turned actor), and Wm. Burton (another painter and glazier), &c.

Lord Byron's occasional Address. The receipts amounted to £842. 12s., and the sum of the first six nights £3,541. 14s.; an average of £580 per night.

A somewhat singular occurrence took place, at the commencement of this season, in which Mrs. Bland, the justly admired ballad songstress, bore a principal part. Mrs. Bland had ordered a hackney-coach to be in readiness at the stage-door of Drury Lane Theatre, to convey her home, at the close of the evening's entertainment, at about midnight. In she got, and the vehicle was forthwith on its journey. After some considerable time, Mrs. Bland felt astonishment at the course the horses were making, being in a contrary direction to her place of residence, through a variety of streets, and occasionally retracing the line they had first taken. She pulled the check-string, but to no purpose—the driver heeded her not. She now became alarmed, under the apprehension that the man was drunk, and some serious accident might ensue. One or two efforts more she made to arrest the circuitous progress of her charioteer, but with equal ill-success.

Being now thoroughly terrified, Mrs. Bland let down the glass, and lustily cried aloud for help. The nature of her distress, very naturally, raised a variety of surmises among many who were witnesses to her exclamations, and sundry "ribald jests" were passed on her lamentations, by those who fancied our little singer was merely in company with too lively a companion.

At length, however, the horses were stopped, and on further examination of the case, it was discovered, that the poor driver had died upon his box. The man was still in a crouching posture on the foot-board, but life perfectly extinct. This event occasioned Mrs. Bland much disquiet and considerable trouble, as an inquest was consequently the result, at which it was necessary she should give evidence.

Mrs. Bland was deservedly a permanent favourite with the public—the best English ballad-singer on the stage. Her popularity rested solely on her professional merits, for we may perhaps be excused in saying, that personal

attractions had little to do with her success, and whatever patronage she had, she fairly won.

Mrs. Bland's maiden name was Romanzini. She appeared first, we believe, at Liverpool, about the year, 1789. She was a Jewess. Miss Romanzini was a great favourite with the Liverpool people, amongst whom were many Roman Catholics; and the mother of our vocalist, for the purpose of persuading the inhabitants of Liverpool that her daughter was not of Judah, compelled her to sit at her open window on every Saturday, occupied in needlework; and, in addition to this, she was usually sent by the politic parent, into the public market to buy a pig, and was compelled to carry it home herself, to give further confirmation as to this religious point. To such an extent did the mother employ this sort of evidence, that in the instance of her daughter taking a benefit, an advertisement announced that tickets were to be had at Miss Romanzini's residence, and also at a porkbutcher's, near the market."

Lord Byron's apprehension of "an outcry amongst the rejected," appears to have been very shrewdly entertained. An outcry did take place in various directions, expressed through the public journals, complaining of partiality in the tribunal of Drury Lane, and accusing the committee of "a job," as respected Lord Byron. The clamour thus raised, attended by much caustic criticism on the address which had been delivered, produced the following appeal from the conclave of the Drury committee. We offer a copy from the very original, in our possession, of the published letter:—

"Sir,—It is necessary to correct some mis-statements respecting the Address spoken at the opening of Drury Lane Theatre.

"No pecuniary reward was ever offered.

"Lord Byron's prologue was not among those submitted to the committee before the 10th of September last. It was not till those so submitted had been examined and judged unfit by the persons to whom the decision was

referred, that Lord Byron was *requested* to furnish the Address which has been spoken with so much success and criticised with so much acrimony. Lord Byron entered into competition with nobody. When *requested* to write an address, he undertook that difficult task, and executed it in a manner gratifying to the managers and, I firmly believe, satisfactory to the public. The committee acknowledged considerable merit in some of the rejected addresses, and have recorded, in a resolution, their favourable opinion of two.

" The scheme of competition failed. Recourse was had to a writer whose poetical reputation stands high, and a work was produced which, with some imperfections, is nevertheless remarkable for more novelty, as well as poetry, than could reasonably have been expected in so hackneyed a theme.

" These disappointed writers have it, however, still in their power to adopt the generous example of Dr. Milbourne, recently sanctioned by Dr. Busby's imitation, and to publish their own compositions. Such an appeal to the public may possibly reconcile the most fastidious to the Address which was spoken, and till it has been made, all censure on the committee for their condemnation of the works submitted to them, must be founded on conjecture only—Carpere vel noli nostra, vel ede tua.

" I am, Sir,

"PETRONICULUS."

This letter was stated at the time, to have been drawn up by a leading member of the committee:—by Lord Byron himself, there can be little doubt.*

* " Soon after the 'Rejected Addresses' scene, in 1812, I met Sheridan. In the course of dinner, he said, 'Lord Byron, did you know that amongst the writers of addresses was Whitbread himself?' I answered by an inquiry what sort of an address he had made. 'Of that,' replied Sheridan, 'I remember little, except that there was a phœnix in it.' 'A phœnix! well, how did he describe it?' 'Like a *poulterer*,' answered Sheridan, 'it was green and yellow, and red, and blue—he did not let us off, for a single feather.'"—*Byron's Letters*, 1821.

During this season Elliston played most of his first comedy parts, and acted throughout with remarkable spirit and success; amongst them, *Benedick*—*Don Felix*—*Archer*—*Young Mirabel*—*Leon*—*Mercutio*—*Don Alonzo*, in Coleridge's play, "The Remorse"—*Valentine*, "Love for Love"—and *Joseph*, "School for Scandal," for the first time.

CHAPTER II.

PHILIP ASTLEY.

IT was now that the eccentric Philip Astley, finding his Olympic Pavilion, in Wych Street, not quite the profitable concern it had previously been, felt a strong inclination for its disposal; and well knowing Elliston's omnivorous appetite for this species of prey, he contrived, in a circuitous manner (truly characteristic of an amphitheatrical), that the intelligence should reach the ears of our enterprising comedian. Elliston snapped at the bait presently—"The very thing for me!" cried he—"so near to Drury! Such a family *circle!* I'll set about it directly."

Straightway, on the very morning of his information, Elliston was under the lintel of Hercules' Hall, the seat of the redoubtable equestrian, and at once made known to him the nature of his business. "Father Philip," with well counterfeited surprise, listened to the suitor's proposal; and in the language of a fond parent, replied that, as he was certainly descending into the vale of years, he had felt a natural anxiety for seeing his child well settled before he died, and should not therefore be deaf to any honourable offer which might be made for the hand of his little pet; "for it is verily my own flesh and blood," added he; an observation well applied, for the pretty *Witch* was, in point of fact, the very offspring of Philip's labour, the theatre having been literally built with his own hands

The history is curious.

In 1805, Lord Craven granted a lease to Astley of a piece of ground in Wych Street, for a term of sixty-one years, at an annual rent of 100*l*. On this spot a theatre

was to be erected, and a sum not less than £2,500 to be expended, with other covenants.

The spot of ground so granted, was the most unshaped and unshapable *pied-à-terre* which can be imagined. In this space, however, the geometric Amphi-Philip proposed to describe a circle; for which purpose he collected about him a variety of workmen from a neighbouring public-house (which, by-the-bye, happened to be "The Compasses"), and immediately set to business.

Some old naval prizes being at this time on sale, Philip purchased the timber of what he called the "*Wheel de Parrey*," which being designed for the exercise of his horses, had perhaps its apposite accentuation; and with the masts, yards, and bowsprit of the shattered Frenchman, he formed the main props and support of his new play-house; evidence of which is to this day discernible in the rear of the boxes of the Olympic theatre.* Here Philip, in his one-horse chaise, which was constructed closely to fit the rotundity of his person, sat, day after day, like a prebendary in his stall, giving directions to his operatives around him, who carried on the process of the building. The brickwork was very trifling, the limbs of the *Wheel de Parrey* being principally pressed into this new service, clothed in tin and tarpauling, and bearing tiers of boxes from the identical joints which once carried tiers of guns.

Through favour of her Majesty, Astley obtained a licence for music, dancing, and equestrian exhibitions.

Thus, in the course of a short time, a tolerable theatre was erected. The audience part consisted of one tier of boxes, a pit, which surrounded the ride, at the back of which a space, denominated a gallery, was parted off by an iron grating, through which the crowd, like the untamed animals in Cross's menagerie, caught what they could, which was little enough. Here was no orchestra, but a small divided band of musicians occupied the stage-boxes, on each side of the house, and appeared very like one royal party fiddling at the other.

On the 18th of March, Philip Astley assigned his

* Destroyed by fire, March 29, 1849.

interest to Elliston for £2,800, and an annuity of £20, so long as he should procure for the new purchaser a renewal of the licence.

In 1803 Philip Astley had a riding-school in Paris, since known as Franconi's. Not being allowed to quit Paris, he applied to the Minister of the Interior for leave to go to Piedmont in consequence of ill-health. He thereupon proceeded leisurely to Frankfort-on-the-Maine, where he heard of the death of his wife, which made him the more seriously reflect on his captivity.

He determined now at all hazards to make an effort to return to his native country, and, embarking on board a boat on the Maine, he took the first opportunity of proceeding towards the Rhine, and presently found himself in the Prussian territory of Westphalia; from thence he continued his route through the northern countries, and at length reached the place of his embarkation. While here, felicitating himself on his near approach to his home, the news arrived of the disastrous conflagration, which had destroyed his theatre at Westminster Bridge, on the 2nd September.

A short time after his arrival, Astley laid the first stone of a new theatre. In addressing the visitors on that occasion, he said that the loss was beyond all calculation, and which was the more felt, being so soon followed by the seizure of his estates in a neighbouring kingdom, in consequence of a decree for the confiscation of British property. In 1814 he returned to Paris, where he died in his 72nd year, and was buried in the cemetery of Père la Chaise.

Philip Astley was unquestionably the best horse-tamer of his time. When in want of a horse he would go to Smithfield, and, relying on his judgment, purchase three, four, or five, to his liking. He seldom gave more than five pounds for each. He cared little for shape, make, or colour; temper was his only consideration. It was one of these five-pounders that brought him more than any other of his whole stud: the horse would take a kettle off a blazing fire, deliberately set the tea-table, and prepare for company. He would play like a kitten with

those he knew. There was not a person in the establishment who was not partial to *Billy*.

Saunders, of *Fair* notoriety, had been brought up by old Astley, who had a great regard for him, and occasionally lent him a nag. Saunders on one occasion coaxed the old gentleman to let him have his favourite *Billy* for a few weeks; but being always in difficulties, during this transaction, the whole stud was unfortunately seized, and *Billy* with the rest was sold to the best bidder. Saunders was now boxed in the Fleet, and all trace of poor Billy lost. Three years had now passed away, when Crossman and another of Astley's riders were threading a street at the east end of London, and the following scene took place:—

"I say, Jack, I'm a Dutchman, if there isn't our Billy."

"Vy, vhere?"

"Vy, there, in that 'ere cart."

"Unpossible!"

"I tell you 'tis Billy; and I'll bet you a pair of boots of it. And I'm a Dutchman, but I'll try him."

Now, Astley had always taught his horses by signs, and one was, clicking the nail of the forefinger and thumb together; this the men no sooner did, than Billy obeyed the signal, pricked up his ears; capered and curvetted in token of delight in meeting with old friends. The men now found the owner at an adjoining public-house, offered to purchase the horse, which he agreed to, "for," said he, "he is a monstrous good-tempered creature, but sometimes he has such odd capers, that we calls him 'Mountebank.'" The bargain was struck, and Billy that night returned to his old quarters, and was received by his venerable master with tears of joy. The next Monday night he took the tea-kettle off the fire, and continued his tricks for some time, and died at a good old age.

Abraham Saunders was almost as great a character as his master. He was well known to the public as a rider and showman for nearly three-quarters of a century. He experienced all the vicissitudes of an itinerant exhibitor; sometimes in the most prosperous circumstances, but more frequently in the greatest distress.

When George the Fourth went to Dublin, Abraham Saunders was intrusted with the care of the Hanoverian horses. During his absence, the Royalty Theatre was burnt down, by which he sustained considerable loss. But his own troop of horses, fifteen in number, perished in the Irish seas, the vessel being wrecked in a dreadful storm.

In his several speculations, poor Abraham was unfortunate; eventually he was reduced to great poverty, and procured a precarious subsistence by penny exhibitions; but even these he was compelled to give up. He was brought before a magistrate, at Worship Street Office, for being the proprietor and director of a penny theatre at Haggerston; the poor old man (for he had then entered his 90th year) came to the office in a sort of little box on wheels, drawn by a Shetland pony, himself inclosed in a bear-skin dress. He died at his apartments in Mill Street, Lambeth Walk, being in his 92nd year.

Elliston soon collected a company,* and on Easter Monday, 19th of April, 1813, the Olympic Pavilion, under the title of "*Little Drury Lane Theatre*," was opened by him. In the following May the house was abruptly closed by order of the Lord Chamberlain, as will be seen hereafter.

Elliston's new acquisitions were but fresh temptations to his "vaulting ambition." Our truly "Dramatic Napoleon" appeared scheming a Confederation of the Stage, for scarcely had he annexed the Olympic to his sway, than he was actually in treaty for the Dublin, the Edinburgh, and Birmingham theatres!—the last of which he finally secured.

Mr. Phipps, being at this time in Dublin, writes to him:—

"Jones, the proprietor of the theatre in this city, on finding you had purchased the Olympic in London, and

* When Wewitzer was appointed manager of the Royalty (1790), during Palmer's difficulties, he advertised for unemployed actors, and received letters from *seven hundred persons!*

hearing—like 'a wholesale dealer'—you were still in negotiation for playhouses by the gross, requests me to announce to you that he is willing to part with his interest in the Crow-street theatre, and that it would be by far the richest jewel in your managerial coronet. In the first place, Jones, by virtue of his patenteeship, is deputy-master of the revels in Dublin, and licenses his own pieces; a distinction which the dramatic monopoly of all England would not confer on you in that country. He believes there is but one man fitted to succeed to his palmy state—namely, yourself; and were it not that my advice to you would be to have nothing to do with the business, I should think so too. His interest in the concern is to the extent of three-fourths, for which he demands thirty thousand guineas.

"Conway has a good share of popularity here, particularly amongst the women; and where they go, the men of Dublin are very apt to be found. His height is six feet two inches, an evident consciousness of which, gives him an ungainly inclination of body, which, without diminishing the outline, disparages his manly presence. In acting, he is artificial and extravagant.

"Of low comedians, we have a Mr. William Farren, who has a great flavour of originality. He is already a good actor; but he has a hardness of style which yet keeps him in the rear of Munden; and the only term perhaps which could be used in dissent from Farren would be, that Munden is better.

"We have also a Miss O'Neil, who bears the greatest promise. She is most deservedly a high favourite with the Dublin audience. Her line is tragedy and leading comedy. Her performance, the other night, of *Mrs. Oakley*, was quite first rate. In sensibility, she is indeed 'for tenderness formed.' In the affair of the heart, she touches nearer than Mrs. Siddons; we may, with great truth, apply to her the language of the poet—

'Poor Monimia mourns,
And Belvidera pours her soul in love.'

I now believe in Thespis and his adventures, for this lady

first acted in a stable. Tell it not to the Covent Garden people, or they will plead it for their horses."

Notwithstanding the inhibition of Phipps, Elliston yet entered into a long correspondence with Jones on this subject, which, after a few weeks, was brought to a termination by Elliston abandoning the scheme altogether.

In the same month Elliston commenced a similar correspondence with Harry Siddons respecting the Edinburgh theatre. Managers and proprietors appeared unanimous on the extraordinary qualifications of Elliston for conducting theatrical affairs, all assuring him he was the only fit person to be placed at the helm of their adventurous barks. Mr. Siddons says—

"A heart-weariness of management could alone induce me to part with a property so really valuable; but myself and wife are of one mind, that a private station, with less means, would better suit our dispositions—a feeling with which your active temper mây have but little sympathy."

Here was another match broken off; not that the great dramatic polygamist had any hesitation of throwing himself into the arms of a new mistress, as will presently be seen, but the *divorcée* of Siddons appeared not so attractive in his eyes, to risk any of that "heart-wearinéss" which had occasioned the repudiation by her "lord Harry."

Within three weeks of the termination of the above suit, Elliston entered into a new courtship. The Birmingham theatre was to be let, and he became lessee for a term of five years, with covenants to keep open doors during twenty weeks in each year, and to act himself at least twelve nights in each season.

The earliest Birmingham theatre was built in 1740. During the day, the comedian beat up his volunteers for the night, scattering his bills, and proclaiming the merits of his company. In 1751, a party arrived in the town, calling themselves—"His Majesty's Servants from the Theatres Royal," and expressed a hope the public would not expect a drum about the streets, as being beneath the dignity of a London Company.

The two great London patentees now took alarm.

Elliston had opened his "*Little Drury*" on Easter, with burlettas and musical pieces under a licence for the whole year, which he had safe enough in his pocket, and the proprietors of Covent-garden and Drury-lane theatres now memorialized the Chamberlain to the effect that, when the licence had been originally granted to Philip Astley, they had been assured by his Lordship that it should be only for the period during which the Amphitheatre at Westminster-bridge was closed, and then only for equestrian exhibitions. Here certainly had been a great oversight in the Chamberlain's office; this promise had doubtless been made, and the patentees had a right to complain; but it is no less true that Elliston was officially armed by the power with which he had commenced operations, and could not fairly be disseised. He, however, received notice that, notwithstanding the statement he had made, the performances must be discontinued.

In the mean time, operations at the Surrey went on prosperously. A melo-dramatic piece, under the title, "Lewellyn," was produced, in which the chief performers were two extraordinary dogs. Like the old Lady's pet, they "could do everything but speak;" and sure such a pair was never seen, as *Gelert* and *Victor*, in Blackfriars-road. The poet has said—

> "Brutes are my present theme, what then?—
> I never said they equalled men;"

but in this instance they far surpassed the combined human force at the Surrey Theatre. *Gelert* and *Victor* were in larger letters in the daily bills, than Giroux and Taylor of the previous season, and certainly behaved far better.

The following public announcement was truly *Ellistonian*—

"A CARD.—In consequence of the extraordinary excitement into which the public mind has been thrown in respect of the two dogs, *Gelert* and *Victor*, now under

engagement at the Surrey Theatre, and exhibiting nightly instances of sagacity—it might almost be said, reasoning powers—Mr. Elliston offers no objection to respectable parties visiting the animals between the hours of one and three of the afternoon. Mr. Elliston requests that parties who may thus honour his establishment at the time above stated, will insert their names in a book left for that purpose, at the stage entrance."

Elliston was acquainted with (and amongst public men, at this period, who was not?) the eccentric John Taylor, or "*Jack Taylor*," or "*Sun Taylor*," or "*Oculist Taylor*," or "*Taylor the Punster*," with sundry other *cognomina*, all of which he had well earned by his versatility of fancy and employment. Of the "Sun" newspaper, Taylor was proprietor and editor, and had consequently ample opportunity for the indulgence of his wit in stanzas "pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical or tragical-comical."

Taylor was a punster—an inveterate punster—and extremely fond of the theatre, "a play," either on the stage or on words. He had a peculiar expression which he applied to most persons, at random—namely, "He's an odd man." For example, he would say, "I called yesterday on So-and-So—he's an odd man. Saw his wife—she's an odd woman; the young curate was at dinner—clever—but he's an odd man; saw the new *Juliet* last night, nothing remarkable about her—but she's an odd girl."

Going into the Green-room of the Haymarket theatre on one occasion, he was requested to subscribe a small sum to a distressed chemist, who had lived in Panton Street, and had been well known to Colman. "A broken chemist, is he?" said Taylor. "Well, there's half a crown for the exhausted receiver."

"On another night," says Colman, "Taylor being behind the scenes when a part, at a short notice, had been put into the hands of a certain lady, who was no great favourite with either actors or visitors, she said, 'Well, if I must go through it, I'll put a good face on it;' to which Taylor replied, 'If your acting the part has anything to

do with the good face you can put upon it, you'd better give up the trial altogether.'"

On a subsequent occasion, Taylor dining with Colman, the latter holding up the decanter, which had just been replenished, observed, "Gad! small bottles these, I fancy;" to which Taylor answered, "Ay, ay, as a poet, Colman, you ought to know better than to give us a false quantity."

Colman having accused him of uttering an old joke, "Well, well," replied Taylor, "there's nothing new under the 'Sun.'"

Taylor thus writes to our friend:—

"I thank you much for the entertainment you afforded me on Tuesday last—the first time I had been abroad since my illness. I fancy I am all the better for your fire and smoke; it got into my lungs, set me coughing, and gave me exercise. Your dogs are marvels.

"But, my good friend, why do you scatter yourself in this manner? We hear of you in twenty theatres in half the number of nights. And why do you give the meridian of your powers to nocturnal revels? You are ever dreaming, yet never asleep; in fact you are an odd man.

"I have read your pamphlet in answer to the memorialists of Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and am bound to say, you're a clever creature—a polemic of the first order.

"I thank you for your civilities; but till the weather improves I shall not stir out again. Like the poor gentleman, I may say, 'I have seen better days.'

"I wish you would send copies of your catalogues to Francis Freeling, of the General Post-office; he is a great purchaser of curious books. Should you not be acquainted with him, you may say that it was by my desire you sent them. He is one of the most liberal beings I ever knew; but he is an odd man. Yours ever,

"JOHN TAYLOR."

At the usual period for commencing operations at Drury Lane Theatre, Elliston returned from Birmingham to London, but did not open his Wych-street establishment until December, and was then compelled to designate it "The Olympic;" the title "*Little Drury*" being offensive to the great patentees.

Miss Tidswell, for many years an actress at Drury Lane Theatre, having about this time made application to Elliston for an engagement in favour of her nephew, Edmund Kean, the following correspondence took place:—

"Barnstaple, Oct. 2, 1813.

"SIR,—I have this moment received your proposals for the Wych Street Theatre—*id est*—Little Drury, and much deplore your letter not finding me.

"The terms Miss Tidswell, by your authority, mentioned to me, are the superintending the stage, the whole of the principal line of business under all denomination of acting, and an equal division of the house on the night of my benefit, with three guineas a week for salary.

"I place so firm a reliance on your reputed liberality, that on the proof of my humble abilities and assiduity towards the promotion of your interests, you will not be unmindful of mine; I accept, sir, your present proposal, simply requesting you will name what time you expect me in London.

"E. KEAN."

It appears, however, that on the 29th of the same month, Kean addressed a letter to Dr. Drury, requesting a reply to an application which he had already made to that gentleman for a situation at Drury Lane Theatre; saying, at the same time, that he had received offers from Mr. Elliston for the Wych Street Theatre.

On the 13th of November, Mr. Whitbread wrote to Dr. Drury, stating that the representations made by Mr. Pascoe Grenfell respecting Kean's talent were such as to make it desirous Mr. Arnold should see him on the stage, and suggested the actor's coming to London for a trial, the committee paying all his expenses, &c.

In the mean time, on the 11th of November, Kean had again addressed Elliston, saying, that in the event of his services being required before the time stipulated, he should be ready to make his appearance in Wych Street in ten days.

To this proposal it does not appear Elliston assented. He awaited only the time first appointed for the arrival of the country actor. But on the 19th he received the following, dated Dorchester:—

"SIR,—Since I last wrote to you, I have received a very liberal offer from the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre. It gives me unspeakable regret that the proposals did not reach me before I had commenced negotiating with you; but I hope, sir, you will take a high and liberal view of the question when I beg to decline the engagement for Little Drury. Another time I shall be happy to treat with you.

"I am, Sir, &c.

"E. KEAN."

This was verily taking the bull by the horns. Kean attempted neither to quibble nor fence with the fact, but confessing his engagement with Elliston, trampled all obligations at once beneath his feet, pronouncing only, "My reason 's in my will." Such a line of proceeding Elliston was but little inclined to take gently, and immediately addressed Kean to that very positive effect. But Kean was now in Cecil Street, London. He writes, December 6th:

"SIR,—The fate of my family is in your hands. Are you determined to crush the object that never injured you? In one word—are you to receive our imprecations or our blessings?

"Through your means I am deprived of my situation in Drury Lane Theatre, unless I produce a document from you that I am not a member of the New Olympic. How can you reconcile this more than Turkish barbarity? If you must display your power, direct it against

one more fortunate than myself. You have become a thorn in the side of my young fortune. I shall conclude by simply requesting you to inform me whether I am to become a member of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, or again, penniless, hopeless, and despised, am I to be cast again on the provinces, the rejected of this great city, which should afford a home to industry of every kind? With my family at my back will I return, for the walls of Wych Street I will never enter. In this strong determination, but with weakened respect for you, Sir, I am

"E. KEAN."

Elliston rejoins, December 8th :—

"To any man with the smallest gift of intellect and the dimmest sense of honour, it must appear that on the 11th of November, and previous to that time, you deemed yourself engaged to me, and that subsequently a more attractive offer having been made, you held it convenient to consider a pledge as idle as words muttered in a dream. All my engagements are made and fulfilled with honour on my part, and I expect an equal punctuality from others. Yours, &c.

"R. W. ELLISTON."

While this difference was pending, Kean thus addresses his friend, Manager Lee, of Taunton :—

"MY DEAR LEE,—I am in a damned situation, or, rather, in no situation at all. Elliston has claimed my services; but I will never join the toss-pot. The Drury Lane Committee have decided against me, and have actually withdrawn my salary. Not all the world, or the world's ills, shall force me into that feculent hole in Wych Street. So here am I in London, without friends, without money, and a brand upon me by which I can acquire neither."

But the Kean and Elliston case, with all its acrimony, was soon after brought to a settlement. The Wych Street manager consented to cancel the engagement, on the condition that Kean should compensate H. Wallack with three pounds per week to take his duties at the Olympic,

and the new hero of Drury entered on his career at a salary of eight pounds per week, January 26th, 1814.

Elliston possessed, in an eminent degree, the art of rendering himself mysterious; "and when the fit was on him," aided by the mystification of the grape, it was indeed marvellous.

Advancing from his room in the theatre, on a certain evening, where he had been honouring, peradventure, his own *symposium*, and walking mysteriously on the stage, he inquired for his manager, Russell, at the same time uttering, with earnestness, "*Violino obligato.*"

Russell, who was perfectly aware of the eccentricities of Elliston, merely waited for a solution; but Elliston fixed his eyes on him, and said, with gravity, "Do you understand me? *Violino obligato.*"

Russell, affecting to comprehend, sent the call-boy down to the orchestra for Mr. Mountain, the leader.

In the mean time, Elliston caught sight of the master-carpenter, and beckoning him to his presence, said, with an air of profundity, "*Violino obligato.*"

"What is it, sir?" asked the carpenter, touching his hat. Elliston put his mouth close to the operative's ear, and muttered, "*Violino obligato.*"

The overture being over, and the curtain about to rise, the prompter gave the usual word to clear the stage, when Elliston turned to him with an indescribable look, and said, "*Violino obligato.*" He then went off at the side, where Mrs. Edwin was waiting to begin the piece, and pressing her hand, repeated "*Violino obligato.*"

Presently Mr. Mountain came up, and asked what Mr. Elliston had to say to him.

"*Violino obligato*" was the only reply.

Mountain put several questions, in the hope of obtaining a direct answer; but he could not elicit anything else but "*Violino obligato.*"

The leader, who was a good solo-player on the violin,

[Edmund Elliston, born September 17, 1813; godfather, S. Rundall.]

now concluded that Mr. Elliston wished him to perform something of the sort; but he thought he would wait until the manager should be more explicit on the subject.

A new melo-drama was to be produced on the following Monday, but there had been some difference of opinion as to its title. Fairbrother, the printer, was in attendance with the proof of the play-bill, and he was waiting the decision of Mr. Elliston to insert the name of the melo-drama.

"What is to be the title of the new piece, sir?" asked the printer.

"*Violino Obligato,*" replied Elliston.

"Sir?" answered the printer.

"*Violino Obligato,* sir," said Elliston, in his most imperturbable manner.

The people who were about our hero were well accustomed to his oddities, and knew that when the fit was over, all would go right again.

At the end of the middle piece, Elliston brushed up his hair with his hand, and buttoning his coat, passed the prompter without saying a word, and walked on the stage before the curtain with his hat in his hand, and bowing stiffly to the audience, thus addressed them:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen, — I should consider myself an ineffective caterer for the public, and quite unworthy your patronage, if I omitted any opportunity in my endeavours to amuse you. I therefore most respectfully inform you that, notwithstanding the extraordinary attraction of the present novelties, I deem it imperative to produce on Monday next, an entirely new melo-drama of powerful incident, the title of which, for cogent reasons connected with the immediate interests of *my* property (this theatre), I must for the present withhold.

"All that I can, at this moment, venture to divulge, Ladies and Gentlemen, is *Violino Obligato.*"

The manager then made his bow and quitted the stage, leaving the audience in a state of mystification; he then determined to go home, and ordered Evans, his messenger, to get him a coach; while the man had gone out for it, Elliston wrote a note to his stage manager, in rather unsteady penmanship:

"MY DEAR RUSSELL,—Do not omit in the morning to remind me of '*Violino Obligato.*'

"R. W. E."

Evans returned with the hackney-coach.

"Where shall I tell the coachman to drive, sir?"

Elliston looking out at the window, replied "*Violino Obligato.*"

On the following morning, when questioned by Russell, Elliston had not the slightest recollection of the events of the preceding evening.

Under the various phases of Elliston's character, we must here exhibit an instance of forbearance and good nature. Amongst the persons employed at the Olympic was a scene-painter, who had the misfortune of not being highly popular with his fellow-labourers in the establishment—in fact, a most disagreeable fellow. One of the carpenters projected a trick to mortify him, and this was placing a vessel nearly full of red paint on the upper edge of his working-room door, as it stood ajar, which, on any one entering, would consequently be capsized, like "Prone-descending rain," right over his person. The vessel being all ready, the next purpose was to induce the said artist to make his way to the room in question, and receive his "*quantum meruit.*"

But by some mismanagement, at the moment, Elliston himself came by, and having business to transact in the scenic department, with his usual dignity of action, threw open the charged door, when the vermilion shower fell with a precision over his head and shoulders, which almost threatened suffocation. Consternation filled the minds of the skulking conspirators—and well it might. As soon as Elliston could recover his breath, in terrific accents he commanded that the whole establishment should be summoned before him; this was instantly obeyed. Red and fiery, like *Zamiel* himself, he yet sat down with imperturbed dignity, when, shaking his gory locks, or rather the cardinal's hat, with which he had just been invested,

he demanded instant explanation of the event, and the surrender of the offender.

The real culprit now stood forward, and at once confessed himself both the adviser and perpetrator of the plot, but thoroughly explaining for whom the revenge was intended.

"Ay!" said Elliston—"for Mr. ——, say you?"

"Upon my honour!" was the reply.

"Then I forgive you!" rejoined the manager, and off he marched to incarnadine the Olympic pump with the evidence of his dishonour.

The publication of the "Memoirs of Edmund Kean," and sundry Miscellaneous Recollections connected with that remarkable actor, having been for years before the public, render it unnecessary to say much on the subject in this place; but some few statements therein having been hazarded respecting Kean's infancy, we will venture to offer, amongst other probabilities, the evidence of one who took considerable pains to arrive at the truth—namely, Mr. Winston.

Edmund Kean was born, in all probability, in the year 1788. The question of parentage is altogether "buried in surmise," arising rather from contradictory statements than the absence of information; so that we must be content to place it amongst those "Mysteries" which were the parent of his own peculiar art, and, as a descendant of *Cœlus* and *Terra*, receive him at once as a divinity.

Kean himself, at times, would claim the parentage of the Duke of Norfolk; a West-India merchant, by the name of Duncan—and one Edward Kean, in the employ of a Mr. Wilmot, a builder. Thus, under the names *Howard*, *Duncan*, *Kean*, and sometimes *Clarke* (which latter he assumed from one of his early patronesses), he variously amused his own imagination, and completely mystified the fact to others.* But to this he was entitled, as, without doubt, he knew as little about the

* Joseph Trefusis, an actor who appeared soon after the Restora-

matter as any unwise child could be supposed; one person, Miss Tidswell, for many years an actress at Drury Lane Theatre, was understood to be in the secret; but as her accounts, like those of Kean, were not always homologous, she has still bequeathed to us as much doubt on the subject. Miss Tidswell sometimes called herself his aunt, and Kean sometimes saluted her as mother. These, however, might have been mere playful terms, "signifying nothing."

According to Miss Tidswell's general story, Kean was the child of Edward Kean, by Nancy Carey, an actress; and born in Gray's Inn, 1789. Scarcely was he two years of age, when his mother abandoned him; Miss Tidswell then generously took him under her protection, and brought him up in London.

This account the author of "Memoirs," &c., has selected as the most probable, because it was the more frequently repeated, but which Messrs. Hughes and Winston (the former, who knew more about him than any one perhaps, except Miss Tidswell, and the latter, always a great dramatic authority) were much inclined to doubt. Their persuasion was, that our subject was born at Arundel; of what parentage they wot not; but confidently assert he was not removed from that town until he was six years old.

Then it was that he was found under the protection of Miss Tidswell, who was sojourning with Moses Kean, a tradesman, who had acquired some notoriety by giving imitations of the popular actors. Moses was the brother of young Kean's reputed father, Edward.

Miss Tidswell, who in 1788 had some certain reasons for a short absence from Drury Lane, certainly took a maternal interest in the child; and, in 1794, obtained a place for him in the theatre, where he actually made his *début* at the opening of the new building, as one of the red spirits in Macbeth.

But young Carey was a wild, ungovernable boy—

tion, acquired the greater part of his fame by declaring himself a natural son of Oliver Cromwell.

frank-hearted, but wayward from his infancy — frequently would he " take to his heels and run " from "Aunt Tid," and was sometimes absent for a whole fortnight together. On one occasion, after an anxious search, he was found in a sad pickle, though good spirits, at a public house in St. George's Field's, collecting a few pence, as largess for the amusement he had afforded the company in the " tap," by reciting, tumbling, and singing. His protectress, at length, procured a little collar to be placed about his neck, on which was engraved — " *This boy belongs to No. 9, Lisle Street, Leicester Square.*"—So incorrigible was the lad, that "poor Tid" was frequently compelled to shut him up during her absence.

Liston—the incomparable John Liston—in 1800 held the situation of usher at Archbishop Tenison's School, St. Martin's. * During a temporary absence of the master (commonly called " Pownall the Pompous "), the lads petitioned their viceroy for permission to act a play, on a certain night in Whitsun week. The drama was quite original, entitled " Tippoo Saib," and written by one of the leading boys, who has long since been known to the world as a dramatic composer. This lad could write, but, like the great Dryden, could not personate his own conceptions. Something was to be done in respect of their chief actor, for the part of *Tippoo* was first-rate in its kind, and required an equal genius for its impersonation.

" I know a chap, young Carey," said one of the boys, " who does Cupids and Devils at Drury Lane—a regular *Tippoo* all over ; he'll come, I warrant you."

On one of his truant days, therefore, application was made to young Kean, or Carey, for his valuable assistance. The youth jumped at the proposal ; " but I must give Aunt Tid the slip," said he, " in good time— must run away—'tis finish weather—I'll be off to my

* We offer, in proof, the copy of an original document :—" Received of the Rev. Dr. Hamilton, this 2nd day of October, 1798, the sum of Three Pounds Fifteen Shillings, for half a quarter's salary, due to me on Michaelmas last, for attendance at the Free Grammar School, in Castle Street, Leicester Square. £3. 15*s*. — JOHN LISTON.

old lodgings, the trees in St. James's Park;" and the future *Richard* was as good as his word.

Descending from his rookery at stated times, young Kean attended the furtive rehearsals—painted a famous Seringapatam—worked away at the dresses—in fact, was both the van and flank of the mighty armament. The night arrived. Liston, the equally truant usher, occupied his own chair, as a kind of stage-box; the beadle of the parish was present; and sundry still minor functionaries of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. The business commenced most prosperously—all were delighted; but the ecstasy participated by the chief actor and the virgin bard was a sum of bliss which rarely falls to the children of this world.

Scarcely had a round of applause subsided into mute attention, when a growl, more startling and terrific than had ever awakened the echoes of Mysore, occasioned the affrighted party to turn their eyes in one common direction. *Pownall the Pompous*, the very aspect of Titus Oates, had returned unexpectedly to St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and was at this moment grinning a ghastly smile through an iron grating from the staircase, which commanded an entire view of the whole scenic effects. All was immediate consternation. A bull in a crockery booth, or a tiger springing on travellers in repose, could scarcely have surpassed this moment of dismay. Down rushed the infuriate pedagogue, and, armed with his well-known ferule, commenced laying about him with all the vigour which an extra glass had inspired, and all the malice which was so peculiarly his own. Sprawling fell the beadle over the already prostrate *David Baird*, while the *Marshal Harris* crept like a rabbit into the burrow of Liston's capacious pocket. Liston, a tithe of whose comic cast has since won him immortal honours, would have moved the gravity of a very wretch under the gibbet. *Tippoo*, so prematurely routed, had vaulted on a fragile book-case, whilst the poet himself bobbed, with agile evitation, under the reiterating bamboo, like a *Scaramouch* at Sadler's Wells.

Some very few years from the above event, the identical poet alluded to in the foregoing anecdote (who in the mean time had been converting old novels into new plays, as an huckster will turn you a worn-out surtout into a pair of small-clothes), linked with his new-made bride, was threading his way through the *Paphian* bowers of Bartholomew Fair; quitting awhile the austerity of letters to mingle the vacant laugh of the common herd.

In the act of gazing on the muscular contortions of two pantomimists, the visitors were standing in front of Richardson's well-known booth, persuaded that, in the dignity of their caste, they were secure from vulgar recognition, and might snatch a peep though the blanket of this "Mad world, my Masters." The manager of the company, a brawny north-countryman, in a large green coat, basket-buttons, and light leathern netherlings, had thrice announced, by the thunder of his speaking-trumpet, "Just going to begin—now's your only time!"—when *Arlecchino* himself, crouching, low and grotesquely, placing a hand on each knee, fixed his black, piercing eyes on the poet and his fair *Saccharissa.*

Somewhat disconcerted by so special an evidence of distinction, our visitors were about masking themselves under cover of the crowd, but our little merryman, with the agility of a squirrel, slipped down from one of the blue posts which supported the gigantic Roman capitals, RICHARDSON'S, and rushing through the open-mouthed auditory, pursued the fugitive bard, and seizing him round the neck, in nature's own ecstasy, smothered him with a thousand tokens of affection. Pale as marble was the poet, and almost as cold; affected, indeed, he seemed, with all the properties of stone, save that of firmness, for he was near sinking on the earth. As to the lady, a faintness came over her more deathlike than she had even exhibited ten days before at the Hymeneal altar; and in a twinkling, a thousand pair of eyes, which but now had been directed to the elevated dais of Richardson, were fixed on the unaccountable scene beneath it.

"What! not recollect me?—*me!*" exclaimed the

merry tumbler, "Carey,* your little manager Carey, and your own *Tippoo?*—the thrashing we both got, too? 'ods whacks!" continued he, good-humouredly rubbing his shoulders, at which the mob roared again, "I feel it now."

This was too much. Tippoo, even Hyder himself, would have cowered under so fierce an attack; and the poet, covered with shame and confusion, slunk away, literally like a dog in a fair.

Carey, of Richardson's Booth, became, in due season, "The Kean" of Drury Lane. The dynasty of *Tippoo* was not forgotten; but still more indelibly fixed on the memory of Kean was this last drama on the soil of Smithfield. In 1814, the poet and the player again met. Half fearful of the result, the former made his approaches to the tragedian; too soon did he discover his fears were not without foundation. Kean had, in fact, hugged the opportunity for his revenge, and in the full satisfaction of his indignant spirit, trampled on the advances of the playwright with the ferocity of a *Timon.*

On a certain evening, not very long after his memorable *début* at Drury Lane, Kean, accompanied by his old and faithful ally, Jack Hughes, dropped in, or rather dropped up, at Offley's *premier étage,* the cider-room, in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. Ensconced in a snug corner of the apartment, the two friends were enjoying their "nip," and as the conversation of the room was a right of common, they felt themselves no trespassers in nipping also the pasturage.

As it generally happens, in places of this kind, there is one certain personage who usurps the lead on all topics—one who would teach Hannibal the art of war; such was the case at this period at Offley's. This individual was a Mr. Woolson, or Wason, a red-headed wholesale tobacconist, and a charlatan, "warranted town made." But Woolson was a man who might have called Junius Brutus

* Woodward and Lee Lewis made their first essay on the stage as harlequins; and Baddely was brought up in Foote's kitchen.

himself a *pretender*, for Woolson was *really* a fool. At the court of Offley, however, he had obtained the *Cordon bleu,* and had a considerable tail, though there was not a wag in it.

"It is true enough," said he, stirring up the flaming forest which grew upon his poll, "Dr. Drury brought him to town [meaning Kean]; he talked with me on the subject,—in fact, we went together into Dorsetshire to see him act. I shall never forget Kean's gratitude when we proposed his appearance at Drury Lane."

Here Kean thrust himself forward like a ferret, gazing at the head of the speaker in perfect wonderment; and the "blood-red knight" proceeded :—

"I saw him to-day in Cecil Street,—he is in the very ecstasy of triumph; but I am afraid my friend has something yet to learn."

"How?—what is that?" demanded the whole tail at once.

"Why, he neglects—his wife," replied the oracle, "a most kind and amiable woman; and as the poet declares,—

> 'that one error
> Fills him with faults.'"

A murmur of applause followed this dramatic scrap, when Kean, having quickly passed from a ferret into a tiger, was only withheld by the gripe of Hughes from springing on the carroty tobacconist. The dealer in Virginia still went on :—"This was his," said he, carelessly, as he pulled from his pocket a little pebble snuff-box,—"this was Kean's—a slight token of his obligation to me, as he was pleased to say. I carry it for his sake."

"Do you, by the gods!" exclaimed Kean; and darting from his corner, he snatched the slight token from the table, and hurled it through the window-glass into the street.

Consternation seized the tobacconist, as though Cuba itself had been suddenly swallowed by the sea; but up rose his tail, like a water-spout, threatening annihilation to the undaunted little actor, who stood with his arms folded, like a graven image on a parapet.

"Behold! I am Edmund Kean!" exclaimed he, grinding his teeth. "Slanderer!"

The whole West-Indies seemed now in a state of insurrection. The company rushed in a body towards the sturdy tragedian, and verily believing him to be an impostor, assailed him with cowardly violence, and finally expelled him the house. Little Hughes came in for his share of the buffeting; and with a shoe less than he entered the apartment, accompanied his friend, to finish the evening and consult future proceedings, at No. 21, Cecil Street.

To Elliston's personal services at Drury Lane, the trifling responsibility of two theatrical managements were now added,—the Surrey and the Olympic.* During the short term these two were simultaneously open, the actors, who were common to both, played, as the occasion might demand, either at one, the other, or both, on the same evening.

Frequently the poor player, after exciting a roar of merriment in St. George's Fields, had to traverse the bleak granite of Blackfriars Bridge, to raise another burst of delight in the auditory of Wych Street. Stealthily behind some coach, and wofully behind their time, a pair of half-clad players would make this middle passage in "thunder, lightning, or in rain," Often and often, the exhausting pores which had been streaming in a Surrey atmosphere, encountered the treacherous bracing from the East, or chilled again on the centre arch, to take the febrifuge prescribed in fresh exertions at St. Clement Danes. Thus, at the hard brokerage of fifteen shillings a week, were health, labour, and ceaseless anxiety estimated; for, in theatrical life, sickness and disease pay the penalty of dereliction of duty.

* Ryder, the Irish manager, possessed the Crow Street, Smock Alley, and Capel Street Theatres. He was costly and extravagant in his house and equipage, and his end was like that of the tavern-keepers, who spend within the bar what is made in the coffee-room.—On Ryder's quitting his wife for a single day, she always made him take a vow of fidelity, and on his return called on him to swear to the truth of his obedience.

We mean not to shoot an arrow at the humanity of Elliston. On the contrary, we confess he was generally kind, considerate, and just; but such is the fate—the hard, humiliating lot of the poor players.

In 1834 (if for a general example we may be pardoned such anticipation of facts), when Covent Garden and Drury Lane Theatres were rented by the same lessee, occurrences yet more remarkable in this way, nightly took place. The managerial scheme was to work the two theatres with a company and a half. The actors who had performed in the play at one house, were usually required to bear a part in the farce at the other. Broad Court and Martlett Buildings, from about half-past nine at night, to a quarter from ten, exhibited a most extraordinary scene!

Actors half attired, with enamelled faces, and loaded with the paraphernalia of their art, were passing and repassing, as busy as pismires, whilst the hurried interchange of quaint words—"stage waits"—"music on"—"rung up," &c., would have perplexed the stranger with a thousand surmises. Double-basses, trombones, long drums, books, and wearing apparel carried on the heads of figure-dancers, apparently just started from their beds, might have suggested an event—

> "As when, by night and negligence, a fire
> Is spied in populous cities."

On one occasion, Bartley, whose business it was to play in the Tragedy at Drury Lane, had to begin also the farce at Covent Garden. The first piece, on this evening, at the latter house, had been short, and was brought even earlier than usual to a conclusion. After a lapse of some ten minutes, the audience became impatient ("unruly," as Elliston would have said), and messengers were accordingly despatched, demanding Bartley's instant attendance.

Bartley, considering that a per-centage on his tragedy might more easily be spared than the absence of his merry face in the farce of "My Neighbour's Wife,"

kicked off his buskins at Drury, and running to Covent Garden, was speedily in his dressing-room, where he instantly began pulling on his peach blossom pantaloons. But being somewhat agitated by the importunity of the prompter's boy, and in a considerable state of perspiration, he had more than usual difficulty, so that the pantaloons gave way in the struggle, presenting a most graceless "rent in arrear." However, within another quarter of an hour, Bartley appeared in his own respectable grey trousers, and went comfortable through his part.

At the season of Christmas, when the state of alternation was at its height, the female figure-dancers pattered from one house to another six times during the evening, and underwent the operation of dressing and undressing no less than eight.

In the old times, the Haymarket Theatre was opened some ten days before the close of the winter houses. During these ten days, there was but a skeleton company at the former, until the great patentees gave up their own flesh and blood, by which it was clothed. Many, and frequently ridiculous, were the shifts to which this anatomized body was subject, in the short interval. One circumstance occurred, which, at the first blush (and verily it was of a character to raise one), would appear positively impracticable. It was that of Farley acting an important part in the *play* of Covent Garden, and also at the Haymarket, on the same night; the two *plays*, be it remembered, being the *first* pieces of the entertainments at both establishments.

At Covent Garden the curtain rose at half-past six o'clock, and in the Haymarket at seven; at the former, Farley was cast into one of Macbeth's witches, and at the latter, in the part of *Sir Philip Modelove*, in the comedy of "A Bold Stroke for a Wife."

Having most emphatically, "with toil and trouble," gone through the mystery of the first scene at Covent Garden, Farley now "hovered through the foul and murky air," in the direction of the Haymarket, which he reached in ample time to equip himself for the baronet, who does not make his scenic appearance until the second

act of the play. The act being concluded, Farley, with due alacrity, returned to his witchery at Covent Garden, which being perpetrated, he again mounted his broom, and scud through the air a second time to the Haymarket, where he re-appeared, in full Protean mastery, *Sir Philip Modelove ;* for *Sir Philip* does not make his second *entrée* until the fifth act of the drama.

The dove-tailing of this remarkable night's performance was, in fact, thus accomplished :—A hackney-coach, during the evening, was in readiness ; this was furnished with a dresser, necessary habiliments, and a pair of candles. From the stage-door of Covent Garden the "weird sister" sprang into the jarvey, when the dresser, pulling up the mahogany blinds, commenced attiring the patient comedian for the part of the old beau ; this was nearly accomplished by the time they reached the stage-door in Suffolk Street, and what little remained afterwards to be done, was easily effected.

The first act of the comedy being over, in jumped Farley again with his man "Friday," and commenced the task of the double transformation. On returning, however, for his last scene at Covent Garden, the coach, in making the corner of Hedge Row (now called Whitcomb Street), came in contact with a post, and, immediately upsetting, poured its full contents—actor, dresser, candles, and all the heterogeneous mass—into the highway.

Half witch and half baronet, poor Farley was extricated from that door which fortune had thrown uppermost, and never actor surely made an appearance to more general applause. Next came "Friday"—that always unlucky *Friday*—to renewed, reiterated shouts. As to the goods which lay scattered around, the mob could make nothing of them, unless, as it was shrewdly suspected, it being about quarter day, the two wights were a pair of rascally Frenchmen running off with what they could pilfer, partly in disguise, and altogether in their landlord's debt. Notwithstanding this *maladroit* proceeding, by prompt assistance, and another coach, "*post tot naufragia tutus*," Farley reached Covent Garden Theatre in time and safety.

Charles Dignum, the soul of good humour, for eight-and-twenty years a faithful servant to the Drury proprietary, was now cashiered by the new committee. Dignum's father had been a tailor, residing in Little Wild Street. Charles, having a peculiarly sweet voice, officiated as acolothist at the Sardinian ambassador's chapel; it was here Linley heard him, and was so struck by his dulcet notes that he took him as apprentice.

Dignum appeared on the stage in 1784, in the part of *Young Meadows*, and soon after, in that of *Lord Ainsworth*, a character for which, in one particular, he was peculiarly unfit, as Dignum's form was the most complete "figure of fun" ever witnessed, being perfectly spherical, and, supported by a pair of misproportioned legs, had the appearance of an orange poised on two peeled almonds, and headed by a prize cherry. Strange as it may appear, Dignum, with this ludicrous figure, was one of Kemble's "stock lords" in all tragedies, his name being affixed to the *Earl of Essex*, in "King John," *Sir Walter Blunt*, in "Henry the Fourth," *Sir Richard Vernon*, and the *Duke of Burgundy*, in "King Lear," &c.; it was a stipulation with Dignum that he should be cast in no part in tragedy that had not a title of distinction.

Dignum was the first of the vocalists who started that trading scheme, which has since proved so lucrative and agreeable to his fraternity—namely, singing for hire at public dinners. Dignum has been frequently known, at the Freemasons' Tavern, to eat two dinners, sing half a dozen songs, drink twice as many bumpers, and be well paid for the whole miscellaneous duties.

The Duke of Sussex, presiding at a certain public dinner in the above hall, had been greatly delighted by the efforts of the vocalists present, and travelling a little out of the record of prescribed toasts, rose from his chair, and most graciously begged to propose the health of the corps musique. It became necessary that one of the party should acknowledge so gracious a compliment.

Dignum, who had quitted his place some minutes before, and was in fact absent during the Duke's short address, now returned, and totally unconscious of what had passed

in the mean while, rose up, and in rather an altisonant key, called out for a decanter of water. This very naturally occasioned a burst of merriment in the whole party, who immediately followed it up by the cry, "Dignum, Dignum!—speech, speech!" Poor Dignum found himself in no enviable position; his grotesque figure, the decanter of water, and his perfect unconsciousness of the *point de l'affaire*, all tended to his further confusion. At length, the matter being explained, Dignum, who had been some days previously supplied with an extra stanza to the national anthem, in compliment to the Duke of Sussex, very adroitly hit on the alternative; and instead of a speech, which he would have executed badly enough, he gave in exquisite melody the stanza in question. The effect was happy.

Vauxhall never possessed a more powerful attraction than in Dignum. He was, perhaps, the greatest favourite who ever sang at this popular place of amusement. It was positively a piece of fashion to know and converse with Dignum. He died in 1827.

In the spring of the year 1815, Elliston (to whom the stewardship of London itself would not have appeared too burdensome), entered into negotiation with Mr. Barrett, proprietor of Vauxhall Gardens, for the purchase of that property; and which was so nearly concluded, that a cheque for part payment was actually drawn. But, from some cause, the treaty, at the latest moment, was broken off.

He was now seized by a new and equally strange aberration of fancy. A Mr. Sampœman had just imported to London, for the purpose of public exhibition, a remarkable Dutch dwarf, Simon Paap, being only twenty-eight inches high, and weighing no more than twenty-seven pounds. Simon Paap was, in some respects, a more curious little object than "General Tom Thumb," for though not quite so small, he gave a more amusing impression of a man in miniature, showing himself "Prime in manhood where youth ended;" being, in fact, twenty-six years of age, whilst a marked quizzicalness and extreme self-importance

rendered his *ensemble* highly diverting. He was accoutred in the style of the old Dutch uniform at the period of the pensionary De Witt; and, surrounded by papers and writing material, he verily appeared to bear the states of Holland on his shoulders. Elliston entered into treaty, at the consideration of twenty-five guineas a week, for the liberty of exhibiting the little Dutchman, including the superintendence of M. Sampœman, a vast, hulky fellow, whose person bore a striking contrast to his cousin, the dwarf.

Elliston hired a room in Piccadilly, where Simon was to give audience to the public, and made a further engagement with a M. Louis Pyne, a nondescript, with a long-pointed moustache, like the antennæ of a reptile, to act as an interpreter between the Londoners and the little Batavian.

But the speculation turned out a failure. The Dutch ambassador's levees were but thinly attended; added to which, Simon Paap gave himself considerable airs, and, on one occasion, positively refused to appear, as some ladies, on the previous day, had greatly wounded his dignity by dancing him in the air, and behaving towards him very much as "Glumdalclitch" had treated our own countryman, "Gulliver." After about ten days, the agreement between Elliston and his Dutch friend was cancelled, the profits of the undertaking being as stunted as the little hero himself.

About a century ago, on the occasion of the nuptials of the Duke of Bavaria, at the court of Wirtemberg, a dwarf armed cap-a-pie, girt with a sword, and loaded with martial emblazonry, was concealed in a pie, and the dish served up at the royal table. A due secrecy had been preserved, and the *coup* was highly successful. "When the pie was opened, the dwarf began to rise," and stepping out of the dish, with the utmost gravity, drew his sword, and traversing the table sundry times, with great martial demeanour, retired again to the pie, and was borne off as he came.

To his other liabilities, Elliston suddenly added, the Leicester, the Shrewsbury, and the Lynn theatres, con-

triving occasionally to play at each of them himself! Like a bullet in the air, there was no discovering his track until execution.

The Birmingham exchequer was becoming shakey—a drunken account, which could hardly keep a balance; and it was here that Elliston played off many of those eccentricities by which his memory has been so signalized. Frequently did he hazard undertakings with the public, where there was scarcely a probability of keeping his word; and more than once has it been suspected he had advertised "stars" for appearance, with which he had never entered into the slightest consultation. He resorted to expedients in which the discreditableness was pardoned in the humour of the conceit, and the offence escaped in the merriment which followed. Knowing, if he lost popularity to-day, he could whistle it back to-morrow, Elliston hesitated at no exploit, however wild, to fill his building for a single night. In some instances, the public had their own credulity to blame as much as the manager's effrontery, for the "Bottle Conjurer" of Foote could not have outstripped some of his vagaries.

Of these *Fourberies d'Elliston*, one of the most remarkable was the manager's announcement of a "Bohemian, of unexampled Strength and Stature," who, amongst other evolutionary feats, would display his facile manipulation of a huge stone, of near a ton weight, which he was to handle like a tennis-ball! "The Bohemian" was stated as having been received with favour and distinction in various Rhenish States, and had actually felled an ox by a blow of his naked fist, to lighten the *ennui* of a German princess.

The *Bohemian*, "Begot of nothing but vain phantasy," being, in other words, the offspring of the manager's imagination, might indeed fairly have been denominated a prodigy. Typical of himself, the "Bohemian" was advertised in gigantic letters, while sundry portraits, which had been originally executed for the proprietors of the "Saracen's Head" inn, London, were placarded about the town, with the sub-lineation, "THE BOHEMIAN!" in the place of "Snow Hill."

The Birmingham people, who were beginning to sicken at tragedy, and had waggishly chalked on the stage-door of the theatre, "Mangling done here," were wonderfully revived by this extimulation; the Bohemian, with his fist, was certainly "a hit," and the edifice was as full on the night of his promised appearance, as though the Emperor of Austria himself had been expected.

The play, "Pizzaro," had but a poor chance. "The Bohemian! The Bohemian!" from the tongues of the spectators, completely drowned the words of the actors, which, with considerable foresight, they had only half, studied for the occasion. Down fell the curtain, and "The Bohemian!" instantaneously broke out with fresh violence. The fiddlers struck up "The Battle of Prague," and every nerve was now attuned to the pancratic efforts which had been promised.

At this juncture, Elliston, pale with consternation, which would have extorted pity from the original Saracen himself, stepped forward, and, with suppliant palms, addressed the assembly:—

"The Bohemian has deceived me!" said he—"*that* I could have pardoned; but he has deceived my friends—he has deceived *you!*"—at which he buried his face in his handkerchief; but to hide what emotion we will not hazard a guess. "The Bohemian, I repeat, has deceived us—he is not here;" a certain smouldering now agitated the body of spectators. Elliston went on—"And the man, of whatever name or nation he may be, who violates his word, commits an offence which—— " here an outbreak took place which completely annihilated the rest of his aphoristic sentence. He then proceeds:—

"Anxious for your gratification, I entered into correspondence with the faithless foreigner, who was this day to have appeared ——" a yell, which, in another place, would be denominated *ironical cheers.* "The correspondence, ladies and gentlemen, is in my pocket." An incredulous laugh. "I'll read it to you." Here he produced a variety of papers resembling letters. ("Read! read!—No! no!—Imposition!") "Here they are," continued Elliston, with one of his most cunning looks;

"does any gentleman present read German?—if so, would he honour me by stepping forward?" (A scream of merriment). "Am I left alone? Then I'll translate it for you." ("No! no! enough! Go on, Elliston!") "I obey; the correspondence shall *not* be read"—here he deliberately replaced the bundle in his pocket—"but, ladies and gentlemen," continued he, with a smile which could have levelled the Andes, "the *stone* is here! You shall see it!" (A volcanic burst). "You shall yet be satisfied; you are my patrons, and have a right to demand it. Shall the stone be produced?" (Cries of "The stone! the stone!") Here the manager winked his grey eye at the fiddlers, who again hastily betook themselves to "The Battle of Prague," when up sprang the curtain, disclosing a sand-rock, which, for weight and magnitude, would positively have made "Bohemia nothing!" and bearing a scroll, "*This is the Stone!*"

> "Then grasp'd Tydides in his hand a stone,
> A bulk immense, which not two men could bear,
> As men are now ———"

Good humour, even confidence, seemed restored. Here was indeed *the stone*, and imagination did all the rest.

It was during the same brief visit at this town that Elliston, on a certain morning, was interrupted by a smartish rap at his chamber-door, and a figure, with extreme pertness of mien, and that peculiarity of attire which only a genius has courage to exhibit, presented himself. His face was white as the poll of a Romford calf, over which a quantity of black hair perpendicularly trickled.

"You will pardon me, Mr. Elliston," lisped he, "this intrusion; but I have just ventured—I am, in short, an artist; my name is Charles Martel Tomlinson: I have been unprecedentedly happy in many portraits during my sojourn—and pardon my application for permission to give the world a portrait of Mr. Elliston."

"To paint *me!*" replied Elliston, throwing himself back in his chair, with appalling majesty—"to paint

me!" repeated he, calling up the dignity of the whole "acting drama" into his countenance.

"Such is my ambition," continued the youth, with the valour he had hired for the occasion. "I paint nature in the extreme! Permit me to lay before you a few specimens of my late successes." Saying which, he produced from under his arm a tawdry portfolio, and first parting his black tresses from his tallow visage, disclosed sundry daubs, which he laid, one by one, on the table.

"This," said he, "is the Rev. Mr. Cole, minister of the Baptist chapel in —— Street; this the lady of Mr. Knox, the brassfounder, who has published some pretty specimens, both in prose and verse; this, the likeness of a child who was found drowned in the Avon—life itself! Mr. Elliston;" and on he went chattering, till his ideas were completely lost, like acquaintances in a crowd.

Elliston, who was at this moment surrounded by letters on the question of the Drury Lane management, and being anxious to preserve copies of the same, with that quick *aperçu* both of humour and profit, was determined to turn the young gentleman to some advantage; —as the prisoner we have heard of at Algiers, who, being unfit for any kind of noble labour, was commanded to squat down, day after day, to hatch young turkeys.

Turning suddenly on the artist, as he held out the "Drowned Boy" at the extent of his arm, "Do you write a good hand?" demanded Elliston.

"'Tis part of my profession," responded the genius, with a shallying advance, like one trying the pavement on a frosty morning; "I consent to teach it at academies."

"Ay," replied Elliston, "that young ladies may wrap up their secrets in triangular billets, like an ounce of snuff."

Here the genius smiled, showed his teeth, and parted his hair.

"Could I intrust you with the autograph documents of a distinguished functionary?" again demanded Elliston, measuring with his eye the slip of humanity which stood before him. "Here are certain letters which require

attention, confidence, and despatch. Here, take my chair; this is no *bagatelle.* Sit down, young man; you will find writing material in abundance. It is necessary copies of these letters should be preserved," continued he, in a most pregnant whisper, "and you shall have the distinction of transcribing them." Having said which, Elliston took the genius by the hand, whose countenance displayed the most grotesque effects of unforeseen pleasure and excitement; and placing him at the table, at once fixed him to work.

"I am truly flattered," faltered the youth. "I—I am indeed sensible——"

"I hope so," impressively interrupted Elliston: "but, remember, confidence and despatch!" Having uttered which, and again assuring the puzzled painter it was no *bagatelle,* Elliston, with overpowering solemnity, strode out of the apartment.

Being now left to himself, the artist, it may be concluded, settled to his task.

In about three hours Charles Martel had finished the most extensive sketch he had ever undertaken; and as it was now about two o'clock, he began to look with some anxiety for the comedian's return.

Stretching his cramped fingers, and grinning under the ten thousand "pins and needles" which recalled his right leg from a long sleep, he ventured to hobble up and down the apartment, while he pleased his imagination by the variety of styles in which the actor might be painted. Three o'clock, and no return of Elliston: half-past three —four o'clock, and not the slightest indication of his approach. The artist became uneasy; for though his thoughts were full, his stomach was empty.

He approached the door, and venturing to lay his hand on the lock, found, to his dismay, that it was fastened. It was now nearly five o'clock; his bright prospects began to put on the nature of dissolving views. Under that all-potent sense which, it is said, will actually break through stone walls, the artist pulled courageously at the bell, when a voice from the other side of the door demanded, "What do want?"

"Want!—want! my good woman—I have wanted these three hours—to get out."

"Who are you? who are you?"

"Mr. Charles Martel Tomlinson, the artist. Pray, my good woman, open the door."

"Open the door!—lard, lard! Mr. Elliston has locked it and put the key in his pocket."

"Impossible! my good lady: when will he return?"

"It's very uncertain with him always, sir; but I don't think he'll be home to-night."

"Not to-night!—why, I am exhausted—starving, I tell you."

"I can't a' help you, sir: perhaps you can find something to do till master comes back."

"To do! why I have done it; and thoroughly exhausted I am, too. For mercy's sake, a sandwich—a cup of tea!" Here the youth listened for a reply; but, to his further dismay, heard only the retiring steps of his unseen visitor as she descended the staircase.

Six o'clock had already struck. The amanuensis was positively frantic, and fifteen minutes more had expired, when a step on the landing without announced the approach of some one. With a beating at his heart, and a bitter gnawing beneath it, he listened—the bolt was slipped back, and Elliston himself, with the same solemnity in which he had quitted, now stalked into the apartment.

"Well, sir," said he, "have you finished the job? This is no *bagätelle.*"

"No, sir—indeed," responded the whey-faced youth, "I had hoped—expected——"

"Hah! this is admirable!" cried Elliston, approaching the table; "you have fulfilled your trust worthily. I have not broken in on you prematurely?"

"Prematurely! not, indeed, Mr. Elliston,"—here the artist stroked his eyebrows by his habitual dash of finger. "Might I now suggest, Mr. Elliston," said he, "the favour of your fixing some morning for a short—brief sitting, which——"

"One, two, three," repeated Elliston, as he deliberately

seemed to count over the executed copies of his correspondence—" four, five——"

" A sitting—*en passant*, I might say," continued Charles Martel—" which should not interfere with your more ——"

" Seven, eight" — still continued Elliston. " This could not have been better accomplished. Why, your handwriting is very like Sir Benjamin West's."

" I know your engagements are abundant," persevered the limner, elevating his voice one octave, " but still——"

" Ten, and one more—ah! here it is—eleven, I declare."

" I was just now venturing to request ——"

" One moment, and we will enter fully on the matter," again interrupted Elliston, when, opening a side-door, he passed into another room.

Ten minutes—a quarter of an hour had again elapsed, and the dissolving views were once more busy before the mental vision of the famishing academician, when Elliston, half-dressed, as though preparing for a late dinner, abruptly re-entered.

" Do you think you could sew on a button?" asked he.

" A button, sir?" repeated the painter.

" Ay, sew on a button, as adroitly as Mr. Lawrence." Here Mr. Charles Martel Tomlinson smiled, showed his teeth, and parted his hair.

" I—I—never tried."

" Then you shall. Hark ye," pursued Elliston, lowering his tone; " I would not have put so much faith in the President of the Royal Academy as I have this day reposed in you. This is no *bagatelle*, Mr. Tomlinson. Thread—needle—the button; and here the waistcoat. I'll be painted in that waistcoat;" having uttered which, he placed the whole tailoring implements before the offuscated artist, and, gliding into his dressing-room, once more left his tailor-secretary at work.

The artist now cottoned to his new duty, and in five minutes this job also was completed.

Elliston reappeared. Taking his waistcoat, " Now, sir, to business," said he; " to save time, we will walk, and consult as we proceed."

Hastily picking up his specimens, the artist thrust the "*Rev. Gentleman*" and the "*Drowned Boy*" into his portfolio, and sticking closely to Elliston, who had now taken up his hat, prepared to follow him. Together they descended the staircase, and on arriving in the street, a carriage was in attendance, into which the comedian silently stepped, with an awe and majesty far surpassing any of his former exhibitions.

Without deigning a glance at his companion, whom he left in a state of wonderment on the pavement, Elliston was in two minutes completely out of sight, and within twenty, had altogether forgotten that such a being as Charles Martel Tomlinson was in existence.

Elliston was fond of relating the anecdote, yet always with the good taste of confessing it was an unfeeling exhibition of stage-play.

Amongst the heavenly bodies, which at this period were noticed in the Brummagem hemisphere, was the luminary Allsop, daughter of Mrs. Jordan. The lady certainly possessed dramatic talent, displaying

> ———— "the whole manner
> And copy of the mother—eyes, nose, lip,
> Trick of her smile."

During her sojourn at the above town, Mrs. Allsop took up her quarters at the "Hen and Chickens," and at the expiration of three weeks, her "little account" amounted to £40. Feeling "astonished beyond measure" at this sum total, for the mere necessaries of a lone woman, Mrs. Allsop applied to Elliston to tax the bill. On investigation it appeared the *ménage* had been ordered as follows:—Breakfast, composed of a roast chicken (one perhaps especially picked from the firm), ham, eggs, boiled mushrooms, honey, and Scotch cake. This was followed by a meridian lunch of cold partridge and noyeau, which two meals constituted the first act of the Lenten day, before rehearsal at the theatre. At four o'clock Mrs. Allsop dined—a repast, whereof "the order of the course" consisted of all delicacies of the season, and ex-

pensive specialties. The hot lobster was charged six shillings; the cool cucumber, four; the diurnal bottle of Madeira, ten; and the port wine, seven; fresh strawberries and preserved cherries had due consideration.

After the play, Mrs. Allsop supped—supper was her "favourite meal," for she had more time for its discussion. Broiled kidneys, grilled bones, and brandy and water, were deemed sustaining after the excitement of acting; and on one occasion, Mrs. Allsop having found herself indisposed, a few extra articles were in requisition.

The "Hen and Chickens" had also occasionally supplied a coach and horses for jaunts and excursions. Mrs. Allsop's chamber was daily adorned with exotics of the rarest quality, amidst which were scattered—

> ——— "Violets dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
> On Cytherea's breath;"

and at night the wasted actress entertained the blue devils of indigestion

> ——— "On a bed,
> On purpose trimmed up for Semiramis."

On a review of these things, Elliston looked rather gravely at the question of appeal. He sought, however, an interview with the landlord, with whom, if he did not raise any demur respecting Mrs. Allsop's debt of 40*l.*, he at least took the opportunity of securing a reciprocation of patronage for the lady's coming benefit.

It would be unjust perhaps to charge upon Elliston any participation in these sumptuary offences, from the fact of being on one occasion the lady's guest,—a friendly *tête-à-tête* after their mutual exertions in the "Honeymoon." The supper service was in all particulars multiplied by two; one dish actually containing eight lamb chops. Elliston, never a great eater, was soon satisfied; and although seven-eighths of the dish fell to the lady's share, he bore a more gallant part in the Madeira and Punch *à la Romaine.* Wine and the witching hour seldom failed in their effects

with our hero. The moment was happy, and the parties were of one mind to prolong it.

With a lady so liberal, it was scarcely possible to ask too much; and Elliston, who was inclined rather "to feast on the white wonder of dear Allsop's hand" than the fricassee chicken., was beginning to carve for himself. But the lady had been taught better; and some conversation having passed respecting dramatic operations to come, she rose up, and with considerable stage effect pronounced, "When you are eligible, Mr. Elliston."

"Eligible! madam," replied our hero — "Love is impatient of all stipulations, and makes a footman speak with the eloquence of Phœbus—eligible!"

"When you are manager of Drury Lane Theatre."

"Of that, madam, I'm resolved. In the mean time, take the security of my affections."

"You must first clear off some of the mortgages on that estate," replied she, laughing; "but may I trust you?"

"You may indeed," repeated Elliston, passionately, as he again seized the hand of the lady.

"Then it were ungrateful, were my confidence in you less warm. You, sir, may trust *me*. Will you lend me ten pounds?"

"Madam!"

"Let us open the account with that. Nay, nay—no consideration!"

"The *consideration*, madam, is positively indispensable," added he, with a twinkle.

"Well, then," said she, laughing at the rich comedy he threw into his address, "you will have more leisure to reflect, the sooner you advance the money. Recollect," added she with great gravity, "my credit has been at a greater risk in your company at nearly midnight, than a ten-pound note is likely to be in my pocket. But, look you—here is your security"—saying which, Mrs. Allsop produced a letter addressed to her by a gentleman, at that time highly distinguished in the brilliant world, announcing that a remittance of cash would be at her disposal within a few days. This promised despatch

Mrs. Allsop empowered Elliston to open, after her departure from Birmingham, and thereby repay himself. On these terms, the ten pounds were served up, with one more rummer at parting.

In the year 1820, this lady proceeded to New York, the American journals stating her to be the *grand-daughter of the King of Britain*. On the following year Mrs. Allsop died in the same city, by incautiously taking an over-potion of laudanum.

Elliston was subject, during this season at Birmingham, to furious attacks from the pulpits of certain chapels, very similar to those of Rowland Hill. Agitation of this kind certainly does good; Jeremy Collier realized a great deal of money from his book, in his day, and the playhouses were constantly full. Yet Collier, it must be confessed, did not write without some show of justice, recollecting the tendency of the drama in his time, and that Dryden was the principal object of his attack. It is curious, however, to recollect that Sir Richard Steele complains that one of his plays was nearly damned through its morality; and a recent essayist has said, "If I am to hear a sermon, let me have it from the proper place; but do not spoil my evening's pleasure by giving it from the stage."

Not content with merely preaching against the fancied evil tendency of stage plays, the Birmingham orator assailed our hero in the public streets, and, on one occasion, even threatened him with violence. Well might he have been designated the John *Knocks* of stage reformers.

Amongst other threatening notices forwarded to the manager of the Birmingham Theatre, the following extract from Baron Grimm's "Historical Recollections" was enclosed:— Beaumarchais' opera, "Figaro," had been advertised for representation, by Elliston.

The communication was as follows:—

"M. le Chevalier de Langeac thus speaks:

"I saw yesterday the extravagant novelty of the day, which, triumphing over the police, profanes the dramas of

the French. In this impudent play, every actor is a vice! 'Bartholo,' is *Avarice;* 'Almaviva,' *Seduction;* his tender rib, *Adultery;* 'Doublemain,' *Theft;* 'Marcelline,' a *Fury;* 'Basil,' *Calumny;* 'Fanchette,' *Innocence on its way to Seduction*; 'Cherubin,' *Libertinism;* 'Sason,' *Craft;* and as for 'Figaro,' the droll, he so perfectly represents his patron, that the likeness makes me start; in short, all the vices of humanity may be seen together, and the pit, with one assent, calling for the author!"

Elliston had been acting, during some part of this season, at the Leicester Theatre, which he rented at £157 per annum; and he now took leave of the audience by one of the most characteristic of his oratorical displays:—we give a fraction:—

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "the painful moment of our separation has arrived. That I have been indulgent to you, there is no denying—some say I have *spoilt* you. It was in this city, ladies and gentlemen, that that remarkable character, Cardinal Wolsey, laid down his glory and his bones. Can I do better than employ his words in honour of our present illustrious Regent? 'He is a prince of a most royal carriage, and hath a princely heart;' to this let me add, God bless him!

"I would remind you that your late worshipful mayor, Mr. Wilcox, and myself, were schoolfellows. The loss of him, you yourselves cannot deplore more than I do, and now 'beyond that bourne from which no traveller returns,' we have only to hope that he is happy!" (Here the orator wiped his eyes.) "Ladies and gentlemen, once again I bid you respectfully—affectionately, farewell!"

Elliston had always a notion that his presence inspired a certain degree of awe in the minds of his spectators; in fact, there was often an "afflatus" about him which positively enforced subjection and respect. It has been said of the celebrated Le Kain, that a Russian of great literary renown was so struck by the majesty of his appearance, that he actually rose from his seat, and bowed with reverence whenever he appeared on the stage.

It was during this short season at Leicester that Elliston, out of whim rather than necessity, played the part of *Harlequin* in a pantomime farce, hastily prepared.

> "Deserting wit for broad grimace and jest,
> Or showing Terence in a motley vest."

Elliston's impersonation was not merely of agility and dancing, but fun and humour. In the Italian comedy, *Harlequin* is an intellectual buffoon. "In France, Harlequin was improved into a wit," says Mr. D'Israeli, "and even converted into a moralist:" a hint taken by Colman, who introduced Mathews in the part of speaking Harlequin, at the Lyceum.

In March, 1818, the Drury Lane sub-committee, in conjunction with the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, made another attack on Elliston, but that it might not appear an *argumentum ad se ipsissimum*, in their memorial to the Lord Chamberlain, they made the Sans Pareil a co-defendant—an establishment at that time too insignificant for any serious consideration. The object of the memorialists was now not merely to curtail these minor theatres, but to cut them off entirely. To be expunged, like the kingdom of the Poles, from the dramatic chart, was a measure to which Elliston could not quietly submit; and, like another *Thaddeus*, he fearlessly vindicated his claims. This he did by the publication of a very able pamphlet in reply; and so clear a case did he make out, that with all the partiality by which the chamberlain was evidently willing to support the despots, he could not but grant the obvious justice to the oppressed; and the great potentates were consequently defeated.

Elliston soon afterwards resumed operations for his last season at Birmingham. In his formation of a company, many curious letters and applications were forwarded to him by country actors and other ambitious spirits. We give example in the following :—

[Mary Ann Elliston, born Nov. 10th, 1817.]

"SIR,—If you have a vacancy for a lady at the Birmingham Theatre for the heavy or motherly-speaking persons, I should be glad. I have played the whole of Mrs. Powell's line in the theatres royal, Cork, Weymouth, Belfast, &c.; can make myself useful; am well known to Mr. Bell, proprietor of the Weekly Messenger, and your most humble servant.

"M. EDWARDS.

"2, Herbert's Passage, Strand."

"N.B.—My figure is not quite so good for tragedy as I could wish; but my friends say I am worth my weight in gold in comedy."

Another:—

"Circumstances have driven me on the stage; I am resolved to make the effort—I say effort, because when we meet you will see I am totally inexperienced in the art; but I have youth, beauty, talents, and an engaging manner. I am driven, sir, on the stage—parental tyranny has done this; and the only revenge I shall now take is to live by the exercise of those faculties and advantages by which God has blessed me. You see my intentions, and, as to my merits, they must speak for themselves. I would rather surprise you by showing you what they are, than disappoint you by talking much about them.

"My name is Sullivan,—I am unmarried; but you must address to me 'Mrs.,' as I am at present living with a gentleman, and we think it would be more respectable; but I shall be 'Miss' in the bills.

"Direct to me at Mr. Brown's, shoemaker, St. Alban's."

A third!

"SIR,—I have Taken the liberty of addressing you a Few lines to know if you woud take A young man into y^{r} Company who can do amost any thing which lays in my power. I can sing a Good Commic song, and dance

a Good hornpipe, and do all the rusticks. I have sing at the "King's Head" for two years, and Mr. Saunders knos me well. He can do any thing which lays in my power. Plese to write quick, and direct for Mr. Steads, Swines Markit, Leicester. I am,

"W. STEADS."

"SIR,—I take the liburty of writing respecting my daughter Charlotte, who I think will suit you.

"She has danced on the Bath and Bristol Theatres for some time; she now can take parts—*Juliana*, in 'The Honeymoon;' *Miss Blandford*, in 'Speed the Plouh;' *Emily Tempest*, in the 'Wheel of Fortune,' and many others; also *Columbine* and other parts in pantomime; in respecting dancing she is complete mistress of, and can sing a little.

"My good friend, the late Mr. Williams, taught her to speke for near two years; and as she wishes to com out in the country, I think she would be generally useful to you; but of course you would wish to see her perform, which she shall do for three nights for your paying her expenses up, and if you approve of her, we then can talk of her salary.

"Direct for me, E. Jones, Music-mistress, at Mr. Barratt's, bookseller, Old Bond Street, Bath."

The theatrical world is replete with contradictions and strange anomalies. Within a few weeks of the contentious heat between the greater and lesser stage dynasties, we find Elliston actually engaged at Drury Lane Theatre, where he performed for ten nights, in consequence of the weakening attractions of Kean. The engagement, however, neither answered the purpose of the committee nor the comedian, the receipts averaging only £120 nightly, and Elliston's payment being a share after £225; so that the sum of Robert William's profits was something like the contents of *Parson Adams's* pocket, viz. £0. 0s. 0d.

The joint efforts of Kean and Elliston were unable to sustain the tottering fortunes of Drury Lane; and in

May of this year, the company were called together to meet the Duke of Bedford, the Earl of Essex, Lord Yarmouth, Peter Moore, and others of the committee. Mr. Moore declared that no substance was any longer to be found under the roof of Drury, and to prevent a crash, it was proposed that each performer whose salary exceeded £4 per week should take a reduction by a graduated per-centage.

A scheme like this, at the period of which we are speaking, was a new and startling proposition. The performers were amazed; each stared in his neighbour's face; became mutinous, as the Israelites in the very hour of deliverance. Lord Yarmouth then told them that unless the proposal was acceded to, the theatre must close.

"Then let it close!" cried Dowton, from the crowd; "my voice is but one amongst many; but I will never consent to abandon a single farthing. I am myself a theatrical proprietor, by some of which I lose £40 a week; but I should blush to call my performers together on such a question as the present. I will never consent to this."

A modification of the resolution was then offered; but Dowton still persisted. "No, no, no," repeated he; "we will have no compromise, we will have our bond. If you are in want of money, I will advance you a draft for £500, on security, and you can then keep afloat a little;" but this proposition was, of course, rejected.

The season still lingered on for thirty additional nights, Kean playing to £87 receipts.

In the course of this summer, the interior of the Olympic was rebuilt, at an outlay of £2,500. Elliston now acted here himself, and having collected a good company, the theatre became a place of fashionable resort. It opened this season by a new burletta, entitled "Rochester," and "Giovanni in London;" two of the most popular pieces of minor theatrical record.

A few evenings previous to the opening, as Elliston was mounting a staircase in his theatre, he was seized by

a severe fit; but by timely assistance was soon restored to his accustomed energies. The newspapers having announced this attack as apoplexy, and that the manager still continued in a dangerous state, Elliston addresses a letter to the *Courier*, which, being so highly characteristic, we cannot forbear inserting.

"SIR,—Although I should be reluctant to make unnecessary stir, respecting my temporary illness, you will, I trust, excuse my desire to quiet any public alarm which might arise from the perusal of the paragraphs of yesterday evening. My attack was not of an apoplectic description; but mere exhaustion, arising from the unremitting attention I have been compelled to give in the reconstruction of my theatre, which I pledge myself shall open on Monday next, the 16th, with *unrivalled attractions.*

"R. W. ELLISTON."

At the close of this season, Elliston presented his wife with a service of plate, for which he paid £400; a gift far more consistent with his sense of obligation to that excellent woman than any notion of common prudence; it was perhaps the most useless appendage which could have been offered, at this moment, to the Ellistonian *ménage.*

The period had now arrived for Elliston's resigning the Birmingham Theatre into the hands of his landlord; but this, it appears, he resolutely refused to do. The proprietors having declined taking some of the manager's scenery at his own valuation, he became highly incensed, and, by an odd kind of revenge, refused to give up the keys of the theatre; putting the law thereby completely into the hands of the other party, and rendering himself liable to double rent. Prevailed on at last to restore possession, he determined to remove his scenery to another theatrical tenement, and this the Leamington; which toy-playhouse could have lain *perdue* behind one of the "flats" he was about carrying away.

A day was appointed for the removal, and at consider-

able trouble the flapping frameworks of castles and cut-woods, drawbridges and dungeons, were elevated into an open van to travel many miles across country. All went on tolerably well for a time—slowly and surely; but it was "a raw and gusty day," and the canvass being set top-gallant high in the wind, threatened the safety of the vessel. Nor were these fears without foundation; for scarcely had the van proceeded two miles beyond a certain village, than a sudden squall took right aback the toppling pile, and fairly swept it from the vehicle into a neighbouring field. The whole stock appeared so comfortably bedded, that the driver made no effort to load his cart a second time, but drove quietly back to Birmingham to acquaint his master.

But the excitement of the affair itself being passed away, Elliston absolutely took no further notice of the matter; and almost three weeks after the occurrence, a boon acquaintance of his own was travelling the road, and beheld the identical ruins peeping from the sedgy glebe. Elliston, in fact, never removed a stick, till, at last, "Lord Osmond's Castle" being knocked to pieces for firewood, was literally brought to the hammer, and "Blue Beard's tower" quite as literally reduced to ashes.

It was during Elliston's last season at Birmingham that he met Mr. Howard Payne, the "American Roscius," with whom formerly he had had some intimacy. Elliston at this time, greatly pressed by a variety of undertakings, was advertised for playing the part of *Richard III.* on a certain ensuing evening, and was on his way to the rehearsal, when he encountered his friend Howard Payne.

"My dear Payne," said Elliston, "I well know your readiness in conferring favours, and, in the present instance, you can oblige me. I am on my way to the theatre: we have a rehearsal—*Richard III.* A rehearsal must be had for the sake of my company, who are a little wild in the play. You know not, my dear fellow, the whirl in which I am at this moment; country theatres in a state of insurrection, and no solid loyalty at home. Oblige me—run to the theatre—go through the rehear-

sal with my people—you know the business—put them to their work, and relieve me from this morning's annoyance."

"Why, 'tis so long since I played the part," replied the other, "that really ——"

"——No man living could have presented himself more capable of serving me than you—only put 'em right for Wednesday night. Show them how they flog us at New York," added he, with one of his slyest twinkles.

After a little further expostulation on the one hand, and amicable contention on the other, Howard Payne consented.

On entering the stage, Elliston introduced his friend to the principals in attendance, and bidding the prompter immediately call the rehearsal, once again whispered "New York" into Howard's ear, and vanished.

The manager now took the opportunity of gliding into the front of the theatre, where, placing himself in an obscure corner, he noticed all that was in progress on the stage. Having witnessed the very able manner in which his friend was conducting the rehearsal in one or two scenes, he left the house with extreme precipitation, and, making the best of his way to his printers', set the compositors immediately to work by striking off two or three hundred bills, of an extraordinary size, announcing "The arrival of the Celebrated American Roscius, Mr. Howard Payne, who would have the honour of appearing, on Wednesday evening next, in the part of *Richard III.*"

These bills were printed, and nearly posted, in various parts of the town, before the termination of the said rehearsal; and when, at about three o'clock, the actors were retiring from their morning's task, and with them, of course, Howard Payne himself, their eyes were saluted, at the corner of almost every street, with the "American Roscius for Wednesday evening!" Payne was thunderstruck, and became furious; refusing, of course, to play a part into which he had been so thoroughly entrapped, and went directly in search of the tricking manager. Arriving at Elliston's lodgings, he there learnt that unexpected business had called the manager suddenly away

to Leicester, but that he would certainly be in Birmingham again on Wednesday night!

Poor Payne now retraced his way to the theatre, where, at every step, "The American Roscius," in *Niagara* type, assailed his gaze. The actors here gathered about him, for should Payne still refuse to act, the theatre, on Wednesday night, would be closed, and all parties lose a night's salary. Payne, who had but lately arrived in England, knew that he had the public to conciliate; and it was now forcibly represented to him that, should he fail to perform, the Birmingham people would, naturally enough, suspect Payne of some breach of contract with Elliston, and thus look coldly on him for the future.

The whole company, therefore, with one common effort, entreated him to play the part, pleading their own necessities. Their prayers and other considerations finally prevailed. Payne consented—Wednesday arrived—"the American Roscius" was flattered by crowded boxes and pit—the actor was highly applauded—the receipts great—and Elliston, true to the Wednesday, returned to Birmingham, when all grievances were forgotten in the triumphant result of *Richard III.!*

Colman was now solicited by the committee of Drury Lane Theatre to undertake the management of that establishment. Increasing debt, decreasing receipts, *blasés* actors, and actresses far more engaging than worthy engagement, brought at length this band of Sybarites to their senses (if we may venture so much), by inducing them to apply to our friend George for relief. Colman, however, declined interference. To the vacant sceptre Stephen Kemble was then nominated; for the usual chair being positively too narrow for "Le Gros" majesty, orders were given for the construction of a new one. This, alas, was one of the most unfortunate reigns in the dynasty of Drury. Stephen's undertakings were to bring out a new piece every fortnight—good, bad, or indifferent; so he wrote a piece himself; but under which of the three denominations it fell, we will not pause to determine.

Disastrous, in fine, was the fortune of the theatre, and the doors closed full six weeks earlier than usual.

Disgusted with the whole affair, Lord Byron now made a public statement of the proceedings at Drury Lane, during the time of his co-operation in the management; of which we give a copy:

"When I belonged to the Drury Lane Committee, and was one of the Stage Committee of Management, the number of plays upon the shelves was about five hundred. Conceiving that amongst these there must be *some* of merit, in person and by proxy, I caused an investigation. I do not think that of those which I saw, there was one which could be tolerated.

"Maturin was very kindly recommended to me by Walter Scott, to whom I had recourse. Maturin sent his 'Bertram,' and a letter without his address; so that at first I could give him no answer. When I at last hit upon his residence, I sent him a favourable answer, and something more substantial. His play succeeded, but I was at that time absent from England. I tried Coleridge, too, but he had nothing feasible in hand at the time. Mr. Sotheby obligingly offered all his tragedies; I pledged myself; and, notwithstanding many squabbles with my committeed brethren, did get 'Iran' accepted, read, and the parts distributed. But, lo! in the very heart of the matter, upon some *tepidness* on the part of Kean, or warmth on that of the author, Sotheby withdrew his play. Sir J. B. Burgess also presented four tragedies and a farce, which I handed to the Green-room and Stage Committee; but they would not do. Then the scenes I had to go through! The authors and authoresses—the milliners and the wild Irishmen—the people from Brighton, from Blackwall, from Chatham, from Cheltenham, from Dublin, from Dundee,—who came in upon me!—to all of whom it was proper to give a civil answer, and a hearing, and, ah me! sometimes a reading.

"Mrs. Glover's father, an Irish dancing-master, of sixty years, called upon me to request to play 'Archer,' dressed in silk stockings, on a frosty morning, to show his legs,

(which were certainly good for his age; and very Irish). Miss Emma Somebody, with a play, entitled the 'Bandit of Bohemia,' or some such title; Mr. O'Higgins—resident at Richmond—with an Irish tragedy, in which the protagonist was chained by the leg to a pillar during the chief part of the performance. The author was a wild man, of savage appearances, and the difficulty of not laughing at him was only to be got over by reflecting on the probable consequences with such a ruffian.

"As I am really a civil and polite person, and hate giving pain when it can be avoided, I sent these applicants up to Douglas Kinnaird, who is a man of business, and sufficiently ready with a negative; and so left them to settle with him.

"Players are said to be impracticable people. They are so; but I managed to steer clear of any disputes with them, and excepting one debate with the elder Byrne about Miss Smith's pas de—something (I forget the technicals), I do not remember any litigation of my own. I used to protect Miss Smith, because she was like Lady Jane Harley in the face; and likenesses go a great way with me indeed. Then the committee—next, the sub-committee—we were but few, and never agreed. There was Peter Moore, who contradicted Kinnaird; and Kinnaird, who contradicted everybody.

"There were two managers, Rae and Dibdin, and our secretary, Ward. We were all very zealous, and in earnest to do good service, and so forth. Hobhouse furnished us with prologues to our revived old English plays, but was not pleased with us for complimenting him as the 'Upton' of our theatre (Mr. Upton is, or was, the poet who writes the songs for Astley's), and almost gave up prologuizing in consequence.—Farewell."

In June, 1819, it was agreed unanimously that the theatre should be let, and the conditions were publicly made known.

Kean was the first adventurer in the field. From Harwich, he thus addresses the secretary:—

"Put down my name for £100 in the Drury Lane Theatre subscription list.* I have received the conditions of the sub-committee, which nothing but madness could have dictated, or folly induce a man to read a second time. These are my proposals—I offer £8,000 per annum, for the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, and its appurtenances, scenery, dresses, chandeliers, books, &c. &c. In a word, I shut my doors against all committees, expecting an immediate surrender of their keys and all privileges in possession. I select my own officers, my own performers, 'my reason's in my will;' and can only be accountable to the proprietors for payment of the rent, and to the public for their amusements.

"This is my offer—if they like it, so: if not, farewell. Read this aloud to the proprietors, and as much in earnest as I write it. "E. KEAN."

This was presently followed up by another communication from the same, dated Leeds.

"SIR,—It was a saying of Aristippus that it is a foolish thing to eat more than we can digest; the truth of which I am now proving; for really the printed articles of agreement between the lessee and the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre appear to be so indigestible, that the more I read, the more I am constipated. They present a chaos from which my shallow brain—*talpâ cæcior*, perhaps—can extract nothing. To re-open Drury Lane, under an experiment so obligatory, would only plunge it into deeper involvements and more absolute contempt.

"The public has witnessed the mismanagement that has brought this magnificent theatre to ruin; its restoration can only be achieved by a popular professional man! I now stand forward to devote my property, reputation, and experience, to this great cause—to cleanse the Augean stable, and 'raise a new Palmyra.'

"I cross the Atlantic, should the proprietors reject my

* This subscription was for liquidating the debts incurred by the committee.

proposals, which are these—rent and taxes £10,000 a year. The committee may pay my watchmen and firemen (persons on whom they place so deep a trust) if they please; but no servant, except my own, shall have ingress on my property. I shall propose such securities as the committee cannot think objectionable. Now, sir, everything else I reject *in toto.* Read this to the committee with emphasis and discretion. I have seen and know their errors—the world has seen and knows them too. *Ex vitio alterius, sapiens emendat suum.* Let me hear from you immediately, that in the one case I may be making my arrangements for the restoration of Drury's monarchy, or be preparing for crossing the Atlantic.

"E. KEAN."

Mr. Thomas Dibdin and Mr. Arnold were also competitors for the lesseeship, and, amongst various others, Robert William Elliston!

Not an hour had elapsed since the publication of the notice for letting, when Elliston made a visit to his friend Winston: "Drury Lane Theatre is mine!" cried he; "for it is enough for me that it is to be had—the theatre is mine." Elliston now sat down with his confederate, and drew up a code of management, which, for clearness, foresight, equity, and spirit, might have been considered a model of theatrical jurisprudence; and which, had he himself carried out with decent observance, would have upheld for many years longer the glories of old Drury, and rendered his individual memory a more honoured example than it may be our part to transmit it.

Elliston now sent in his proposals—viz., to take the theatre for fourteen years—to expend £7,000 on the building during the time—to pay £8,000 rent for the first year, £9,000 for the second and third, and £10,000 for the remainder of his term. For security he proposed certain freehold, copyhold, and leasehold estates, in and about London, which had cost him £25,000.

Whilst the question was pending, he addressed Mrs.

Coutts, to the effect that, in all probability, he would be the new lessee, and concluded with these words:—

"I may, Madam, be asked for a further guarantee; in that case, dare I flatter myself Mr. Coutts would be my friend? I hesitate as I ask the question, and my pen falls from my hand whilst it traces "R. W. ELLISTON."

To this application the lessee elect received a reply from Mr. Coutts himself: "That it was impossible for him to comply, having refused on every similar occasion; that it was an obligation to which no banker should render himself answerable; but that his favour and patronage should not be wanting to the interests of Drury or the encouragement of the new tenant."

On the 7th of August, Elliston was declared the accepted candidate, and on that very day he forwarded a check for £2,000, the amount stipulated to be paid in advance of rent; which sum was a loan from his uncle Martyn, of whom we have so long lost sight, but rejoice again to meet him on so generous an occasion.

PERIOD THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

"THE GREAT LESSEE!"

ELLISTON, now the "Great Lessee," immerged in the spring tides of accruing consequences—letters, applications, contracts, appointments, &c. &c.—found yet leisure for visiting his favourite Leamington, where he had, some time before, opened a circulating library, in the name of his sons, William and Henry; the upper apartments of which Mrs. Elliston occasionally occupied as opportunities might afford her escape from professional duties in London. Here, also, in his baby-theatre, the manager felt peculiar pleasure in exhibiting himself. Like an emperor visiting the obscurest nook in his dominions, he pleased his imagination in the glowing prospect of the future, by the strong contrast with the present. Flattered and caressed, he now played off some of those eccentricities so peculiar to his disposition.

One morning, *en plaisantant*, he descended early into his shop, and looking round with the irresistible humour of *Tangent* himself, "It is my cruel fate," said he, "that my children will be gentlemen." And, on his two sons making their appearance, they beheld their father, in an old dapple grey frock-coat, dusting the books, arranging the ink-bottles, repiling the quires of "Bath post," and altering the position of the China mandarins, with the veriest gravity in the world. One of the first customers that came in was a short, dirty-faced drab of a maid-servant, who brought some books to be exchanged; and nearly at the same moment, a snivelling charity-boy, with

a large patch of diachylon across his nose, placed himself at the counter, demanding other articles.

"One at a time," said *Octavian*, with petrifying solemnity. "Now, madam?" pursued he, turning to the runt.

"Missus a' sent back these here, and wants summut 'orrible."

"The lady's name?" demanded Elliston.

"Wiwian," grunted the girl.

"With a V or a W?" asked Elliston, with the same solemnity; but the wench only grinned; when up mounted *Sir Edward Mortimer* the ladder placed against his shelves, and withdrawing two wretchedly-torn volumes, clapped them together, to liberate the dust, and placing them in the grubby claws of the now half-frightened girl —"There," said he, "a work of surpassing terror; and now, sir [turning to the boy], I will attend to you."

The lad, who by this time had nearly pulled the plaster from his visage, owing to the nervous state of agitation into which he had been thrown, could not at the precise moment recollect his mission; when Elliston repeated, with the intonation of a "Merlin," "And now, sir, I will attend to *you*."

"Half-a-quire of outsides, and three ha'porth o' mixed wafers," screamed the urchin, throwing fourpence-halfpenny on the counter.

"Outsides," repeated Elliston to his son William; "mixed wafers," said he, in the same tone, to Henry.

The young men, convulsed with laughter, instantly obeyed. *Doricourt* then demanded the paste-pot. Taking the brush, he first deliberately dabbed the lad's nose, thereby replacing the fallen diachylon; and then, seizing a watering-pot, much to the merriment of a few strangers who were by this time collected about the shop, began sprinkling the steps of his library door. Having played a few further antics, the "Great Lessee" retired to answer his numerous London correspondents on the stupendous affairs of Drury Lane.

It was about this time, that the author of the Essays

of Elia "met Elliston," as he says, "over the counter of the Leamington library;" and had it so pleased him, he might have gone on to relate, after his own agreeable manner, a slight characteristic trait of a veteran comedian, whom he also met here for the first time.

Charles Lamb, Elliston, and Munden, had driven over from Leamington to Warwick Castle, in one of the public carriages, for the purpose of seeing the wonders of Cæsar's Tower and the memorable relics of Earl "Guy." The party having gone through the customary discipline imposed by the old castle housekeeper, and having listened to the marvels of the giant earl, to the very echo of the stricken porridge-pot, were now returning to a late refection at Leamington, when, just as the shandery-dan was entering the village,

"Stay! stay! my dear boys," cries Munden; "I'll just step out here. Here lives my dear old friend, Mistress Winifred Watson; so I'll look in on the old lady. In her eighty-sixth year—her eighty-sixth year, Mr. Lamb."

On the driver pulling up, out tripped Munden, as nimbly as gout would permit him, and bidding his friends an abrupt "Good day," was presently across the road, when Elliston burst into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"Why, what is this?" demanded Lamb.

"Oh! you don't know him, my good sir," responded the other. "Much as you admire our incomparable Munden, you don't yet know him. Why, he has no acquaintance here."

"What? no Mistress Winifred Watson?"

"No—no—no!"

"No dear old lady in her eighty-sixth year?"

"A perfect myth," responded Elliston. "Heark'ye, in five minutes we shall have to settle for the hire of this jaunting-car and horses, and Joe Munden always keeps the stage waiting on such occasions."

Elliston, at this time, acted in his pet theatre. It was here that he told his audience, on taking his leave, that he had reason to believe it was the gracious intention of

his Royal Highness the Prince Regent to confer on him the honour of knighthood; and when next he should have the pleasure of playing before them, it would be the part of *Sir John Falstaff*, by Sir Robert Elliston!

One of Elliston's principal advisers at this time was Mr. Beazley, a gentleman whose active and intelligent qualities in his profession, as architect and dramatic writer, have gained him considerable renown. Mr. Beazley's social temperament was also well appreciated by one who was himself the best company; so that hours of business were by no means the only time they discussed together; and few things, either by day or night, came amiss to the available temper of our modern Vanburgh.

Applications for engagements now poured thickly on the new lessee; and "from the four quarters of the world, renowned suitors." But the first person to whom he himself made advances was Edmund Kean.

Kean, having been himself a bidder for Drury Lane Theatre, was a little soured by disappointment; and certain old asperities, '*in re Elliston*,' not being yet fined down, he not only exhibited a disinclination at co-operation with the new manager, but publicly declared he would never act under his authority in any establishment whatever; and that, in respect of Drury Lane, he would rather pay the forfeit of his bond—namely, one thousand pounds—than enter the house under the present lease.

On this, Elliston begged his reconsideration, offering him many concessions, concluding by saying, "I shall think it no degradation to perform *Cassio* to your *Othello*."

Kean again writes; but, as with Voltaire, we are frequently puzzled to know whether he is joking or in earnest. We give his letter before others of earlier date:—

"SIR,—I congratulate yourself and the public on your accession to the diadem of Drury Lane, wearied and disgusted, as all sensible people must have been, with the stultified dynasty of the last two seasons. The lovers of

the drama will hail with rapture a minister to their amusements so transcendent in his art and so mature in experience as *Robert William Elliston*. With regard to myself, I expressed my determination, at the close of the last season, to leave England. My arrangements are made, '*Cras ingens iterabimus æquor*,'—I quit the kingdom! This has not been kept a secret. On my return I may treat with you; but it will not be consonant with my feelings to act in any theatre where I have not the full appropriation of my own talents. But I shall allow the field open to my compeers, and heartily wish success to all aspirants—thus, for the sake of the drama, which should be immortal. I have prepared Mrs. Kean to answer any inquiries that may be necessary in my absence. *Richards* and *Hamlets* grow on every hedge. Grant you may have a good crop. Yours,

"E. KEAN."

"If I should go by water to the nether world, I shall certainly relate to our Great Master, you thought it no degradation to act his *Cassio*."

The next communication was from Mrs. Kean:—

"September 27th, 1819.

"SIR,—A letter arrived from Mr. Kean this morning, addressed to his solicitor, ordering him to tender the £1,000 penalty, and receive his client's articles. I take the liberty, however, of saying Mr. Kean's friends have prevailed on him to return to his engagement at Drury Lane. I therefore request a few lines from you, saying what time you wish to meet him.

"Your humble Servant,

"M. KEAN."

Amongst the numerous applications forwarded to the new manager was the annexed. It is somewhat of a curiosity—short; but to the point:—

"SIR,—Honesty is the best policy; it is also the rarest article. Do you want an honest man? In one word, I am he. I am just returned from the Continent, rather unwell, and have a painful swelling in my knee, but quite at your disposal. I will take care of your interests, put me in what trust you will. Honesty will be more valuable to you than ability; for without the first, the latter is dangerous: I am wanting in neither. When we meet, you will know and value me.

"ED. ARGLES.

"65, Great Queen Street, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields,
August, 1819."

Elliston also addresses himself to Mrs. Siddons:—

"MADAM,—I trust I shall not be deemed intrusive in laying before you a request which, if acceded to, will be indeed a public congratulation, and to me an earnest of prosperity. It was on the boards of Drury Lane Theatre, madam, that the splendour of your genius was first displayed and appreciated; and though I trust Providence has many years of life and happiness in reserve for you, yet of your professional retirement I may perhaps be allowed to speak. Might I petition that your last exertions should also be made on the same ground? If I may indulge the hope that we may yet witness a display of those talents which have placed you so eminently above all professors in the dramatic art, I will have the honour of waiting on you at your own appointment, and in the mean time beg respectfully to subscribe myself,

"Your humble Servant,

"R. W. ELLISTON."

To this the manager receives reply:

"Mrs. Siddons presents her compliments to Mr. Elliston, thanking him for his proposal and flattering expressions. In acting for a special benefit, or obeying the commands of the Princess Charlotte, Mrs. Siddons

had no thought of returning to the stage professionally, and begs therefore to decline Mr. Elliston's obliging suggestion."

In Elliston's anxiety, respecting actors, he was no less ambitious in his views of writers. To the first and greatest of his day, Sir Walter Scott, he forwards a request, and with it a liberal pecuniary offer, for a five-act play; leaving the time and subject altogether at the convenience of his correspondent.

Sir Walter replies in the following manner :—

"DEAR SIR,—I am favoured with your letter, and am obliged by your opinion of my supposed dramatic talents. But the time is long gone by that I could, or dared, have attempted anything for the stage, and I by no means feel disposed to risk any reputation I have acquired, upon so slippery and uncertain an adventure. It is not so much the power of conceiving dramatic character, and putting its expressions into the language of passion, which ensures success in the present day, as the art of constructing a fable, and interesting the spectators in a series of events, which proceed gradually to a striking conclusion. Now, if I had in my better days any talent of the former description, it is much impaired by a course of bad health; and of the last and most material requisite to success, I never possessed a shadow; for I never yet began a poem upon a preconcerted story, and have often been well-advanced in composition before I had any idea how I was to end the work.

"I wish you, my dear sir, every success in your new and difficult situation, and have the honour to be,

"Very much your faithful Servant,

"WALTER SCOTT.

"**Abbotsford, 3rd August, 1819.**"

John Howard Payne, of whom we have already spoken, —known more particularly in this country as the author

of the tragedy, "Brutus," in which Kean greatly distinguished himself—made a tender of his services, either as manager, actor, or dramatist; proposals which Elliston deemed expedient to decline. The representation of "Brutus," in the preceding year, had caused much newspaper interference; the plot, but more particularly the language, having been liberally, or rather illiberally, taken from a posthumous play of Cumberland, entitled "The Sybil."

There had been a prevailing report that Sir William Scott had complained to his brother, Lord Eldon, that this play contained inflammatory political sentiments, and ought to be suppressed.

Payne addressed Sir William on the subject, and received the following reply:—

"Sir,—Living upon terms of the most unguarded familiarity with my brother, I certainly did mention to him, accidentally, what I had heard in several companies, that the play of 'Brutus' did contain passages calculated to produce democratic impressions; but I added, that I had neither seen nor read the play, and therefore could say nothing about it but what was conveyed to me in common report. I was not at that time talking to the chancellor, in his *official* capacity, or *in the way of complaint;* but to *my brother*, in the idle style of private gossip,—meaning neither to express any opinion of my own, nor that what I said should go beyond himself and some other person who happened to be in the room. I think my brother said he had heard similar reports of strong passages in the play: the matter dropped entirely, and I am grieved that any such consequence as you describe should have resulted from it.

"I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

"WM. SCOTT.

"Grafton Street, 25th January, 1819."

Amongst other writers, application was made to Mr. Maturin, the author of "Bertram." He thus replies:—

"Within this year I have written two tragedies, four thick volumes of tales, a volume of sermons, and kept my engagements with a periodical work, which I hope will exculpate me from indolence.* I am *a writer for bread;* the subsistence of a large family depends on my daily exertions; 'My poverty, and not my will, consents.'

"I am willing and anxious to exert my utmost efforts for the completion of 'Osmyn,' which I conceive is not ill suited to Kean's peculiar and distinguished powers, and beg to know if I may draw upon you for the sum you have so liberally offered for my encouragement. [This was £50.] Mr. Ward has probably mentioned to you my wish, that the play should appear under *his* name, not *mine.* The author of two unsuccessful plays† must feel a dread of encountering an unfavourable prejudication, which is avoided by concealing his name till the event is known. With regard to terms, I had £500 for *Bertram,* for forty nights; and Mr. Murray, of Albemarle-street, gave me three hundred and fifty guineas for the copyright."

"Osmyn," however, was not acted, owing to Kean's objections. Elliston subsequently makes an offer to Maturin for a melo-drame; to which the latter says:—

"Though I am not very sanguine about my own productions, I have not the least hesitation in saying, my romance will be the most effective mixed drama, since the days of 'Blue Beard,' or 'Timour the Tartar.' With regard to Mr. Kean, he has conducted himself like what he is. Putting *me* out of the question, his respect for you should at once have determined him to comply with your wishes, and consult with a writer who did him the honour to sketch a character for him. I cannot but admire his sublime condescension in playing in melo-drame, when his very best acting is in *Sir Edward Mortimer*—in that melo-drame, avowed, 'The Iron Chest;' but what could

* Gregorio Leti, the historian, boasted that he had been the author of a book and father of a child for twenty years in uninterrupted succession.

† *Fredolpho,* and another, unsuccessful at Covent Garden, both by Maturin.

be expected from a person who rejected *Osmyn*, and plays *Brutus*? I had the satisfaction of seeing him heartily laughed at in that piece of radical rant, and of hearing him confoundedly hissed in the 'Roman Actor.'"

The next letter (addressed to Mrs. Elliston) is from the accomplished authoress of "Thaddeus of Warsaw"— Miss Jane Porter :—

"Huntercombe, September 30th, 1819.

"DEAR MADAM,—Not having the pleasure of being personally known to Mr. Elliston, though he favoured me with his pamphlet through you, I venture to make use of the same medium, to learn from him whether I may consider the free-admission to Drury Lane Theatre, presented to me by its sub-committee, as still a privilege under the proprietorship of Mr. Elliston. The invalid state of my health did not allow me to make use of my admission, last season; and I know not that I may be a more free agent this; but still I am reluctant to relinquish, without cause, any mark of honour conferred on me by the gentlemen of the committee, the perpetuity of which Mr. Elliston might not consider an encroachment on his interests.

"The drama deserts her high station, on which she was erected by Æschylus of the Greeks and our own Shakspeare, when she considers herself a mere deviser of 'blameless amusement.' Mr. Garrick had juster notions on this subject than Dr. Johnson ; and it is a matter of surprise how that great master in morals here saw so defectively. What school for loyalty, patriotism, and every noble lesson of public and private conduct, is so profound, so eloquent, as the page of Shakspeare? What Englishman can listen to the speeches of heroic patriotism in his historical plays, and not rise from his seat a better subject, and a happier man? glorying in his country, and feeling his own consequence as one of its sons? Some of the speeches in Henry V.—'Give a very echo to the seat where *Britain's weal* is throned!'

"With my best wishes for his prosperity, and that of the theatre— believe me, dear madam, very sincerely, much yours, "JANE PORTER."

Amongst other eminent artistes, Miss Kelly was retained. The words of her engagement we transcribe, as a specimen of the terms to which managers are frequently called on to submit :—

"For three seasons; with liberty for Miss Kelly to absent herself during the six weeks in Lent; to have the exclusive use of her dresses. Salary to be £20 a week, but to be raised to equal any other actress who may be engaged. To have the most desirable dressing-room, with not more than one other lady, of the highest rank and respectability; the liberty to decline any new part or character, and also such parts, in old pieces, as she does not consider adapted to her powers; to enjoy all privileges and indulgences granted to the most favoured performer; to be exempted from the condition of the sick clause, whenever sickness, &c., shall arise out of the exercise of her profession, or any consequence thereof."

On the 28th she wrote, wondering the preparation of her articles of engagement should have escaped the manager's recollection: "*At all events you must not forget, that it is my resolution never to set my foot within the doors of any theatre till the stipulations for my comfort shall be delivered to me, with the security of signature and seal;*"—and concluded by desiring the manager not to depend upon her at rehearsals till her proposed agreement was settled. Miss Kelly, in spite of her great talent, was always a bitter bargain with managers.

On the 30th September, about two hundred friends were specially invited to view the new decorations, &c., of Drury Lane Theatre. The house presented a striking and brilliant effect. The entrance, comprehending the grand staircase and vestibule, was restored to its primitive colour. Dixon's inimitable basso-relievo painting was renewed by his own hand, and all the architectural features resumed their maiden simplicity and beauty. The fronts of the boxes were chastely ornamented, and several new stage scenes were exhibited. A ball and supper, in the saloon, succeeded; and the morrow's sun had "reproved their lingering revelry" before the company dispersed.

On the 4th of October, the theatre opened by an address spoken by Miss Kelly. The play, "Wild Oats," with the after-piece of "Lock and Key." *

Old favourites and new candidates were severally welcomed on their appearance, by a most animated auditory; and on Elliston's entrance, in the part of *Rover*, the acclamations and distinct expressions of good wishes, confirmed him still a favourite child of the public. At the close of the play, he of course made a speech—not the least part of the evening's entertainment; for *Rover* was never more successful, nor Franklin more elated when he first drew down electric fluid from the clouds.

The receipts on this night amounted to £638. The season comprised 199 nights, and the sum of the whole receipts £44,053.

The newspaper and periodical applications for free admissions were more than usually pressing—one of them curious enough, which was as follows:—

"SIR,—Wishing well to you, and the vast concern you have undertaken, I am really desirous you should know Dr. Rose, whose *paragraphical* capabilities would be invaluable to you. He is a great card at Covent Garden, to which theatre he has a nightly admission for himself and *four* friends, independent of the privilege always given to the paper with which he is connected."

In Garrick's time, £50 was yearly remitted by the press

* The following is a list of the establishment :—

Tragedy—Kean, Pope, Holland, Powell, Foote, Thompson, Mrs. West, Mrs. Robinson, Mrs. Egerton, Mrs. Knight.

Comedy—Elliston, Dowton, Munden, Harley, Oxberry, Knight, Russell, Butler, Gattie, Hamblin, Barnard, Penley, Mordaunt, Hughes, Meredith, Elliott, Keeley, Mrs. Glover, Miss Kelly, Mrs. Edwin, Mrs. Mardyn, Mrs. Harlowe, Mrs. Orger.

Opera—Braham, T. Cooke, Thorne, G. Smith, Mackeon, Miss Carew, Miss Cubitt, Mrs. Bland, Miss Povey, Mrs. Austin.

Artists—Marinari, Andrews and Son, Dixon, &c.

The musical department under the direction of Kelly. Leader, Smart, &c.

to the manager for *the privilege of inserting his advertisements*, while in this day, far more than that sum multiplied into itself is paid by the converse party, and frank admissions also granted, equal to the demands of a corps of yeomanry.

Elliston was enjoined by his lease to pay £400 to Mr. Peake, as treasurer, for the first season; besides a considerable sum to his assistant in the same office.

Peake, a few years afterwards, became the victim to a cruel conspiracy, and was compelled, in consequence, to absent himself from England. He had been executor to a near relative, who directed a certain sum of money to be paid to his daughter, on her attaining the age of twenty-five years. She married soon after she was of legal age, and for the purpose of establishing the young couple in what appeared to be an eligible concern, Peake, at the earnest solicitation of both parties, transferred to the husband the entire amount which he held in trust for his wife. The husband, who turned out to be a mere adventurer, soon dissipated the property, and, jointly with his wife, commenced an action against poor Peake for neglect as trustee, and for the recovery of the original bequest. Ingratitude, and the inevitable result of the trial, drove this unfortunate gentleman from his country. He died at Boulogne in 1829.

Peake was forty years treasurer to Drury Lane Theatre, to which office he had been appointed by Sheridan. Such was the drought in the exchequer at times, that it was considered vexatious in an actor to apply, on two consecutive weeks, for his salary. In the old, or "Garrick's Theatre," as it was called, there was no retreat from the apartment of the perplexed treasurer, under circumstances of cash clamour; and Peake has often been kept a prisoner in his own insolvent territory for hours together, not daring to unbar the door on the rush of his assailants. But in the new theatre of 1794, matters were ordered more wisely; the window of the treasury was constructed to open on the colonnade in Little Russell Street, so that on blank Saturdays, when there was no money, the

sinecure cashier might make himself equally scarce, and leave the besiegers to do their worst, on the other side of the double-locked entrance.

When not under parliamentary protection, Sheridan constituted the houses of his treasurer and solicitor his sanctuary, where for weeks together he has remained concealed. At the residence of Peake, he not only took up his own quarters, but invited his acquaintances to the same indulgence; it being a kind of joke with him to offer his friends a dinner at "THE *Treasury*," where, beyond all doubt, he was First Lord.

Peake, in his official capacity, had almost daily applications for money from the Sheridans, father and son.

The father's letters were always for money,—very short; and though scarcely legible, yet intelligible enough for that purpose; and (except when very angry) signed with his initials only.

"DEAR PEAKE,—*Thirty* pounds by return of post, and I am with you in seven hours. "R. B. S."

"DEAR PEAKE,—Beg, borrow, or steal; but let me have thirty pounds, and send them by return of post. Fear nothing, be civil to all claimants. Shut up the office, and write to me directly. "R. B. S."

"DEAR PEAKE,—Without fail, and immediately, give the bearer five guineas to buy hay and corn for my coach-horses; they have not had a morsel of either since last night. I shall be with you presently. "R. B. S."

"DEAR PEAKE,—Give Johnston a little money to go on with—keep as punctual with Kemble as you can—borrow, and fear not. Put £60 in your pocket, and come to me directly. "R. B. S."

"Twenty pounds more will not break our backs. Let them go by nine in the morning to Hammersley's, to answer my draft given to-day to the St. Patrick's Society. "R. B. S."

Sheridan was always anxious that no disappointment should take place respecting his cheque given to St. Patrick's Charity. Peake was therefore told to have a person in waiting, who remained at the banker's counter till the draft was presented, that any money paid in, might not be appropriated to the over-drawings.

Sheridan's indolence was hardly to be credited. In the affair and duel between Matthews and himself, at Bath, respecting Miss Linley, through the influence of his antagonist with certain newspapers, Sheridan's character was greatly injured by the most gross misrepresentations; —he was strongly urged by a much-valued friend to reply to the attacks made upon him almost daily. "They are not yet sufficiently strong," said he, "for me to crush them; but, from the rapid progress they are making, they *will* be *very soon.*" "Then why not," said his friend, "do that yourself?" "What mean you?" asked Sheridan. "Why, abuse yourself, and then answer it." "A happy thought!—I'll do it." He instantly sat down and wrote a letter, abusing himself most abundantly. To his great delight, this appeared the following day in the paper: it was now "sufficiently strong;" but such was Sheridan's indolence, he could never *find time to make the reply.*

In February, 1820, Madame Vestris made her *entrée* on the English stage, at Drury Lane, in the part of *Lilla*, in the "Siege of Belgrade;" introduced by Corri. For the first few nights this accomplished lady did not appear to make any great impression on the audience, but, before the end of the season, she acquired that popularity which she has since maintained undiminished.

Kean also, at this period, made his first appearance in the character of *Coriolanus;* and we shall not be accused of harshness, in declaring it one of the worst pieces of acting ever witnessed on these classic boards. He had neither the ideal, the physical or mental qualities for the impersonation—the indiscretion of the attempt was as remarkable as the failure was without redemption.

Dowton being invited to join Elliston's standard, thus writes to him:—

"MY DEAR ELLISTON,—Knowing what your feelings are respecting this *big-letter system*, as well as the positive injury the continuance of it must be to the interest of the theatre, I am satisfied you will use every endeavour, for all our sakes, to abandon it. If the *little gentleman* has really an article with the old committee, in which it was stipulated he should be seen in *big letters*, I should suggest *great A*, to be the fittest character. I agree with you, that you are in honour bound to insult the whole profession by obeying the articles already entered into by the committee; but I am sure you yourself will never be a party to so contemptible an agreement for the future."*

In the beginning of April, Dowton was announced for the part of *Dr. Cantwell*, unfortunately in the "Kean" type. On the next morning came the following to the manager:—

"MY DEAR ELLISTON,—I am sorry you have done this. You know well what I mean—this cursed quackery; these big letters!—there is a want of respectability about it; or rather, a notoriety, which gives one the feeling of some 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!'

"Yours, &c., W. DOWTON."

By a singular coincidence and error of the compositor, Kean's name, just at this moment, appeared in the bills

* The words in Kean's engagement, dated January, 1818, were, "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. In defence of this absurdity, we remember somewhere to have heard of a lad whose grandmother pronounced him born for an atheist, because he spelt Jehovah with a small *j*.

in small letters. The tragedian played that evening, but the next morning an epistle reached Elliston from Kean's solicitor—*Pica versus Brevier*—announcing that the agreement between actor and manager had been thereby cancelled :

> "Then a quarrel arose, some aspersions were cast,
> But for decency's sake, we'll not mention what pass'd."

By a ready *amende*, however, on the part of Elliston, the offence was forgiven, and Kean was once again declared CAPITAL in his parts.

Elliston still found time for a trip into the north ; and whilst at Doncaster, during the grand meeting, great difficulty existed in respect of beds and accommodation for the numerous visitors. Elliston had to seek his night's fortune ; he had no bed in view—no chance of repose whatever. This state of things happened to become a subject of conversation at the house where he was then a guest, and his friend Mr. H—— vauntingly congratulated himself that he had been able to secure a "shake-down" at the "Old Angel." As the party assembled were likely to sit late, and Elliston felt himself really fatigued, he retired at an early hour, and making his way, bag in hand, to the "Angel" in question, boldly demanded the apartment which had been engaged for Mr. H.——. The landlady, by no means doubting he was the identical gentleman who had settled for No. 9, at once admitted him to the sleeping-room, when Elliston desiring, on no account, he should be disturbed by noisy companions, deliberately locked the door, and as deliberately went to bed.

At about two o'clock in the morning a thundering knock at the gates of the "Old Angel" announced a visitor, who, reasonably enough, happened to be Mr. H—, at that time of the morning, anxious enough to turn in. The state of ebriety, however, in which he was, and the precaution which had been given by our hero that he might not be disturbed by any rake-helly companion, were quite enough for our hostess of the "Angel" to give the

fancied intruder an ungentle reception. The upshot was, after a noisy altercation, in which the real contractor for the bed in question decidedly got the worst, he was compelled to retire, and embrace whatever fortune might turn up for him in the pious streets of Doncaster. By six o'clock the following morning, Elliston was on his way to London.

Measures were taken in the season for the revival of "King Lear" at Drury Lane. Kean had a passionate desire for playing the part, and in the scenic preparations was personally busy. Amongst other effects he had a surpassing notion for the storm. Kean had seen a mechanical exhibition in Spring Gardens (the remains of Loutherburg's "Eidophusicon"), in which very striking procellous effects had been produced, and which he fancied very available to his purpose. The proprietor was introduced at Drury Lane with this object, but he at once saw the impracticability of the scheme on such an immense area as the stage of Drury Lane. The storm, though given up on these grounds, was presently transferred to the bosom of the tragedian. To the magnitude and ruinous expense of the undertaking, Kean was positively deaf—there was either to be a storm on the stage, or no peace in the theatre. To meet his wishes, a great part of the scheme was carried into operation, and admirably executed by the artists of Drury Lane. The scenic trees were composed of distinct boughs which undulated in the wind; each leaf was a separate pendant rustling with the expressive sound of nature itself. The artists were greatly extolled.

> "Some carve the trunk, and breathing shapes bestow,
> Giving the trees more life than where they grow."

The very success of this scene was fatal to the fame of Kean, in undertaking the part of *Lear*. The storm carried away the greater part of the applause on the few nights "Lear" was represented; and public criticism pronounced that, amidst all the leaves in the forest, not a

wreath was to be found to crown the brows of the actor. *Lear* was one of Kean's failures.*

Elliston was much annoyed by a conspiracy in the Theatre, in the nature of "a strike" amongst the actors. This strike took place on the question of "the sick clause," a privilege which had been lately much abused, by *sick actors* not being able to play, whenever whitebait offered an engagement at Greenwich, or any part in their stage duty being deemed too heavy for the stomach. A meeting was convened on the subject, at which Mr. Calcraft presided; but nothing could be done for poor Elliston. The "ægrotat" was a stubborn disease, and there was no cure for it. Actors were armed with medical certificates under all kinds of indispositions, so that a clean bill was rarely seen within the walls of Drury.

Some few weeks after, a melo-drame, called "Therese," was produced, in which Miss Kelly was the heroine—and inimitable, indeed, was her acting. On a certain occasion, "Giovanni" having been advertised for representation, Madame Vestris is sick, and sure enough there is a medical certificate to declare it. "Giovanni" is consequently given up, and "Therese" put up. Within two hours Miss Kelly is sick, and there is another certificate, equally clear and satisfactory. "Harlequin versus Shakspeare" (a farcical drama taken from Garrick's Harlequin's Invasion) is the last substitute for the night's entertainment, when Munden (*Joe Snip*) has most unaccountably a sudden attack of gout—he is sick; on which all doubts are removed by a certificate to the direct fact. We have known a lady so cruelly affected with this endemic, that she could not act her part, but, on the very night in question, indulging her egritude behind the scenes, by contemptuously criticising her impromptu substitute in the character. "O si *sick* omnes!"

Montaigne relates a curious story, which he believes to

* A tree was prepared for "The Royal Oak," at the Haymarket Theatre, on which every leaf, to the amount of 9,000, was separate. It cost nearly one hundred pounds: the whole affair was ineffective.

have read in Appian, of one, who, to escape the proscriptions of the triumviri of Rome, counterfeited having but one eye, by wearing a patch over the other. But when he fancied himself safe, and removed the bandage, he found he had a little over-acted his part, for he had lost the sight of that eye altogether, through the incautious application of the plaster.

To those who have a perception of the variety of shifts by which the cunning ride downily on the shoulders of the credulous, the annexed letter will be only amusing: but to those less enlightened in the *grivelcries* of the town, its publication may be a timely hint. The following impudent attempt at extortion was made on our hero:—

"Mr. and Mrs. Elliston having acquired so much celebrity, may probably be desirous of that rank in society they are so well entitled to. Although knighthood was conferred upon the late Sir William Parson, and has been upon Sir William Stevenson and Sir George Smart, his late and present Majesty, notwithstanding their delight in the drama, have not conferred any honour or distinction on eminent histrionic professors. Actresses have been more fortunately circumstanced, and have attained nobility by marriage. The late king of Spain created the celebrated Italian, Signor Carlo Broschi, better known as Farinelli, a knight of the order of "Calatrava." The late Sir John Gallini, *maître de danse*, who married Lady Elizabeth Bertie, a sister of the late Earl of Abingdon, was a knight of the "Golden Spur," of which order the present Lord Clifford is a knight.

"The same rank and dignity may be obtained for Mr. Elliston in a foreign order, for a thousand guineas, if that sum be deposited with a banker (who would be ignorant of the purpose), in order to be paid upon production of the diploma of creation, under seal, and the gold enamelled jewel and ribbon of the illustrious order of St. —— ; out of which sum the fees of honour to the officers of the chancery of the order would be discharged. Or on payment of one-third of that sum prompt, Mr. E.'s

personal engagement would be accepted for the residue. The dignified object might be obtained in about two months. Mr. E. would, of course, become Sir R. W. E., and Mrs. E. would, consequently, be intitled Lady Elliston, which rank the elegance of her manners would dignify. Their chariot and seal would be decorated with the relative *insignia* betokening the rank possessed. As it is customary to announce promotions in the public journals, that proposed might be inserted without comment, or as follows :—'We understand that a foreign prince (or princess) was so enraptured with the histrionic talents of Mr. Elliston, that his Serene Highness obtained his creation as *chevalier de l'ordre très illustre de St.* ——, of which the late immortal hero, Lord Nelson, and other British nobles and men of rank, were or are knights. Our favourite, therefore, is now become Sir R. W. E.'

"The writer begs to assure Mr. E. that he is addressed by a gentleman and man of honour; and that he will, on a note being addressed to Mr. St. George, care of Mr. Tyler, stationer, Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square, have the pleasure of meeting Mr. E., in order to enter into the preliminary arrangements."

In May of this season, the manager produced the most popular and successful afterpiece of his whole management, "Giovanni in London;" Madame Vestris, the hero! The nightly half-price receipts for "Giovanni" averaged very nearly one hundred pounds.

Elliston, who had at this time on his hands, as appendix to Drury Lane, the *Leamington undertaking*, comprehending a handsome library, a magnificent ball-room with two contiguous private houses, a lawsuit respecting this very building, and a theatre in the same town, entered on a further speculation—namely, a provincial Vauxhall! which was to possess all the attractions of our metropolitan establishment, in a duodecimo form. The promised work certainly appeared; but, to use the language of the trade, it fell dead from the press. The singers, the suppers, the fireworks, all failed. The last desperate

effort was made in the form of a public breakfast; but this also failed—everything failed, but Elliston's spirits; and the Leamington-Vauxhall acres soon suggested to our minds the lines of Colman—

> "Promoting still the neighbourhood's increase,
> By 'Ground to let upon a Building Lease.'"

Kean was now preparing for his trip to America, and announced his benefit for the 12th of June. The great attraction of the evening was a new farce, as it was called, written by Dibdin, entitled "The Admirable Crichton," in which Kean impersonated the hero.

By virtue of this gallimaufry, Kean was to act, speak, sing, dance, fence, give theatrical imitations of various players, and perform a thousand "tumbling tricks," as *Christopher Sly* expresses it. The first act of astonishment was Kean at the pianoforte, on which he accompanied himself in an original song, which, by the bye, Crichton-like, ought to have been of his own composing. He then exhibited himself in an *assaut d'armes* with Mr. O'Shaugnessy, in which, of course, he came off victor, giving the Irishman his life by a graceful bow. He then danced a *pas de deux* with Miss Valancy, in which, on a clear stage and no favour, he was fairly the conqueror; for the lady, who was growing fat and scant of breath, pleaded earnestly in dumb show, against the importunities for an *encore*, whilst Kean himself came "crowing to the pit." An awful pause, however, transpired between the first and second acts. Mr. Russell then stepped forward, and explained that Mr. Kean, having sprained his ankle in the last *pirouette*, was undergoing the application of a little spirit, but would resume his extraordinary efforts in a few minutes.

The scene was presently raised, and discovered Drury's tragedian, like *Cato*, seated in a comfortable arm-chair, from which he gave imitations of sundry actors; and though, occasionally, we were reminded of Mathews' story, "Which is the lion and which is the dog?"— "Either you please, my little gentleman;"—yet all

passed off well, inasmuch as the house was crowded to the ceiling, and nearly £700 received under it.

Escourt was a great "giver of imitations." He was in the habit of "taking off" Lords Somers, Halifax, Godolphin, and others, for the amusement of Sir Godfrey Kneller. On one occasion, by a hint given him from Craggs, he mimicked Kneller, in his presence, whereat the painter, with sudden simplicity, observed, "Nay, nay —you're out there—that's not myself."

The pantomime which Elliston produced in this season, "Jack and the Bean Stalk," was, perhaps, the most successful of all his Christmas offerings. Now, it being the duty of "Jack" to mount this gigantic "stalk," which, reaching from the stage floor to the very roof of the theatre, little Miss Povey very properly declined undertaking. For this feat it was necessary to find a substitute, as similar to Miss Povey in figure as possible—the sex immaterial. On one of the rehearsal mornings, Winston, in passing Bedford Street, Covent Garden, descried near the coach-stand a lad, acting as waterman's devil, whom he fancied suited to the purpose, and carried him off *tout-à-coup* to the sanctuary of Drury Lane. The difficulty was now got over—the boy was retained,—he said, he believed his name was Sullivan,—and as Miss Povey's scandent "double," he nightly appeared.

In February, 1833, Madame Duvernay and M. Paul, with *M. Silvain,* as principal dancer from the "Académie Royale," Paris, appeared at Drury Lane Theatre — *M. Silvain* being no other than our little "Jack" Sullivan, the waterman's devil of Bedford Street. *M. Silvain* was subsequently principal dancer at the St. James's Theatre, and became an artist of considerable merit, and a highly respectable member of society.

Elliston had much readiness at repartee. George Robins, coming one morning on the stage of Drury Lane, after a first appearance of some young actor, observed to Elliston, "The youth bids fair to rise." "Yes, *Mr. Auctioneer,*" replied the manager, pointing to other

members of his company, "but there are other biddings against him."

On another occasion, some one observed to Elliston that a certain singer he had produced, without great success, had still a "fine *volume* of voice." "True," responded Robert William; "but I wish there were a few more notes to the publication."

During the recess, Elliston projected a portico, for the grand entrance from Brydges Street to his theatre, which, if carried into effect in conformity with his design, would have been useful, ornamental, and executed at a reasonable expense. The difficulties he had to encounter in the completion of the hideous covered way which now defaces the elevation of Drury Lane, were innumerable. First, the parish (for what earthly reason no one can tell) violently opposed the measure; the district surveyor next threw rubbish in the way. Mr. Soane then puzzled both the question and the district surveyor, and introduced a Mr. Spiller, who perplexed all parties. Between the latter two, the excrescence now protruding into Brydges Street from the face of the theatre, was fomented. Elliston had nothing in the world to do with it—except, indeed, paying the expenses, which literally amounted to the enormous sum of £1,050! A foundation was laid which might have supported a church tower, in which loads of gold returned to mother earth, but no mine of wealth opened to poor Elliston. The sum for which Mr. Hardwick would have contracted to execute Elliston's first design, was three hundred pounds.

Before Kean's departure for America he presented a plaster bust of himself to the proprietors of the theatre, on the condition of its being placed in the principal Green-room. Some doubts were raised as to the propriety of introducing the effigy of a living actor amongst the monumental *simulacra* of departed greatness; but Kean had "set his life upon a cast," and the cast was accordingly set upon a bracket.

The ceremony observed on this event was no niggard

affair. Russell, supporting the bust in question, led the way from Kean's dressing-room. The great living tragedian then followed. Elliston was next in succession; and the rear was brought up by sundry actors and gentlemen danglers at the theatre. On the procession reaching the Green-room, the bust was placed on its appropriate bracket. Elliston made a speech, and so did Kean; the former was extremely eloquent; modesty, perhaps, forbade an equal display on the part of the latter. An elegant supper on the stage closed the occasion; the result of which found many ready—at least in their places, if not in their senses—at the next morning's rehearsal.

In the early part of the same evening, a somewhat ludicrous incident occurred. Winston, observing a stranger passing off from behind the scenes, demanded of one of the porters, who and what he was? "Oh, sir," said the man, "it's the person who brought in the *lady and child* just now, for Mr. Elliston."

"Lady and child!" repeated the consterned deputy-manager. "We can have no lady and child here. Where are they?"

"In your room, sir," was the reply, "according to Mr. Elliston's desire."

Poor Winston began to fancy another of those cases was now thrown upon his hands, for extricating his associate from some thoughtless dilemma. At this moment Elliston himself was passing the scenes, on which Winston, approaching him, demanded, what woman he had thought proper to introduce into his apartment.

"Woman?" repeated Elliston, in amazement.

"Yes, and there's a child, too," whispered the acting-manager.

"Then, ''fore gad,'" cried *Charles Surface*, "I'll have her out!" and away he crossed to the chamber in question. In went Elliston, in unaffected ignorance of the case, when sure enough the woman and child stood, with unblushing impudence, directly in his path; the same being a painting which Elliston had picked up two days before at a sale, supposed to be the portrait of Mrs. Catherine Philips, the "Matchless Orinda," which he

intended to present to Charles Mathews, but had altogether forgotten the circumstance.

At this time, one of those chronic instances of popular infirmity took place, which the world is subject to, in the theatrical part of its organization. Elliston had made an engagement with Mr. Welsh, to receive his pupil, Miss Ann Wilson, as principal singer at Drury Lane. The terms were twenty guineas per night,—a benefit,—twenty free nightly admissions; and sundry other privileges.

Having made his bed, it was to be bolstered up, and no sooner was the agreement signed, than Elliston informed the public that he had engaged a young lady, whose vocal excellence the musical world had acknowledged beyond all precedent; and that Miss Wilson's first appearance would take place on Thursday, the 18th instant, in the character of *Mandane.*

Miss Wilson's reception was certainly (to use Elliston's favourite term) unprecedented. Her master presided in the orchestra at the pianoforte. By his skill, he contrived that this instrument, like charity itself, should cover a multitude of sins; for whenever the lady exhibited any indications of frailty, in stepped the charitable *forte*, and administered its remedies copiously.

Miss Wilson was presently the rage; what quassia had been remotely, and hydropathy is, immediately, so was Miss Wilson in the meanwhile—namely, a remedy for every sorrow; a "Wilson's drop," which completely superseded its vaunted predecessor.

One of Miss Wilson's panegyrists announced — "This lady combines the force of Grassini, the science of Billington, the execution of Catalani, and the sweetness of Stephens ! ! !"

On one of these nights, Mrs. Siddons was present at Drury Lane, and sat in Lady Harcourt's box. At the close of the performance, she was conducted by Elliston into the Green-room, "Where," says the *Morning Post,* "she complimented Miss Wilson in the most flattering terms that probably were ever addressed to a candidate

for theatrical fame. She said: 'I know not which to admire more,—your enchanting voice, or superior acting; but they form such a combination as surpasses any previous effort on this or any other stage.' Miss Wilson's second performance," adds the same authority, "was witnessed by Mr. and Mrs. Coutts, in company with Lord Erskine. When it was concluded, they went into the Green-room, with Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt, Lord Yarmouth, and others, and expressed their high admiration of her singing. Mr. Coutts, a theatrical amateur for more than sixty years, assured the fair *débutante* that she surpassed all the *Mandanes* he had heard during that period. Lord Erskine and Mrs. Coutts paid her similar compliments. The health of Miss Wilson was then drunk in sparkling Champagne. A few days after, Miss Wilson received from Mrs. Coutts a £50 bank-note, with which she purchased and presented to Mr. Welsh, a handsome silver tea-pot, sugar-basin, and cream-jug."

Miss Wilson's second character was *Rosetta*, and *Rosetta* was a failure. But illustrious, like the sun in decline; so, like him at that moment, she appeared to occupy a still greater space. The fact is, the public were most unwilling to confess they had been deceived. Miss Wilson next attempted *Clara*, in the "Duenna;" but the luminary was still sinking; and, fierce and fiery as had been her sudden fame, in the words of her only successful opera, it had now become but, "mild as the moonbeam."

Miss Wilson received no less than £1218 by her experiment, having sung on fifty-eight occasions. This lady was born in April, 1803, and was married to her instructor, Mr. Welsh, June, 1827.

In February, 1821, his Majesty George IV. made his first state visit to Drury Lane Theatre, the performances being "Artaxerxes," with Mr. Poole's farce, "Who's who." The king, accompanied by his royal brothers, the Dukes of York and Clarence, was punctual to the hour—a quarter before seven o'clock; but a considerable time afterwards elapsed before he thought proper to enter his box. This was the first occasion of his appearing in

public since his accession, and the uncertain result of his reception, was evidently a question of some disquiet to his Majesty.

The pause which the king had occasioned, was evidently embarrassing to his whole suite, of which his Majesty appeared suddenly to become conscious; when, with a movement, almost partaking of a rush, he advanced to the front of the royal box. In a moment all doubt was at an end. The king's reception was enthusiastic and general. The night passed off with the greatest *éclat*, and the few gracious words his Majesty vouchsafed to the manager, lost nothing in their value with him to whom they were addressed. The king, in descending, made some allusion to his sly enemy, the gout. "I have it myself, your Majesty," responded the manager, with precipitation; a coincidence in which the king was, without doubt, greatly interested.

Elliston, about this time, had in anger, dismissed from his establishment, at a moment's notice, a certain lady—a very handsome and attractive woman,—for some fancied or real cause; but of no matter here. On the following morning, there was a rehearsal at the theatre, and Elliston proceeded to the Duke of Bedford's box to witness one of the scenes then in progress on the stage. The interior of the building, during the morning, as every one may guess, exhibits but a dim religious light. Elliston having witnessed the scene, turned now about, and, by the religious light we have just mentioned, traced the form of a solitary nun, recumbent on a side ottoman, to whom his devout spirit would have acted as a ready confessor. "The mask of night was on her face," and he could not discover her features; but her form was palpable enough.

The holy friar, intent on the spiritual welfare of the lone stranger, soon began to unfold himself; and, meeting with a very frank response to the pressure of his hand, he improved the moments with that singular *savoir* which long habitude and natural temperament had made so thoroughly his own. The good "Father" no sooner ex-

claimed, "What, my sinning angel, can I do for you?" than the lady promptly replied, "*Restore me in the theatre; refund my fine, and raise my salary.*" It is needless to say, the fair *Ursuline* turned out to be the very lady who had lately been angrily discharged; and it is only in justice to Elliston to declare that he acted as a man of gallantry and honour.

On the 31st of March, Mrs. Elliston had retired to rest at an early hour; at about midnight she was suddenly seized by a spasmodic attack, and expired within a quarter of an hour afterwards.

The occasional tribute of respect which we have paid to this lady in the course of these Memoirs (for there was no action that she performed that was not entitled to respect), we feel will still fall short of her claims on the memory of her numerous friends, as a wife, a mother, and a member of social life. Towards her husband, Mrs. Elliston felt and cherished a conjugal affection of the most intrinsic kind. She was a wife jealous of her husband's honour, anxious for his solid happiness, watchful of his estate; and, though of a submissive temper, she possessed all the ability to direct. Her manners and her person were graceful; she had moral, if not intellectual, accomplishments; and her gentleness of disposition gave the last charm to her social character.

As a professor of her art, Mrs. Elliston was highly respected and patronized, whose example in all departments of life has since been so amiably studied in her surviving daughter, Mrs. Wilson.

The remains of Mrs. Elliston were deposited in St. George's burial-ground, Bayswater. She was forty-six years of age.

On the day of her funeral a knell was tolled in the Abbey Church, Bath, in which city her memory was highly respected, and a similar tribute of respect was paid to her name in the parish of Leamington.

A few days after the funeral, the following, written on a deep mourning sheet, was addressed to the widower:—

"Do not understand by this letter that 'Invisiblina'

is one at all inclined to fall into the ranks of your numerous correspondents, who may be now presenting you with condolences at the loss of your best friend—your inestimable wife. The friend you have lost you can never hope to supply. It is enough : I will not wring tears from your eyes by recounting her virtues ; but I would rather wake the sterner part of your nature, and implore you, by the conviction you must have that you did not sufficiently value her when living, you will imitate the example she has bequeathed to you. What is now due from you to your family, to your friends, and society, has become, indeed, a heavy debt, because you well know, hitherto, how small a part you have borne in these obligations. In all these instances, *she* herself has paid the demands in full, leaving you to the pleasanter paths (as they are sometimes called) of life ; so that by her death obligations have fallen on you which, if you neglect, will some day be the bitterest mortal pang the heart can suffer."

On Saturday, the 21st of April, Lord Byron's tragedy, "Marino Faliero," was published by Murray, and on Wednesday, the 25th, the play was represented by Elliston, in Drury Lane. This extraordinary march, so worthy of our dramatic *Napoleon*, was thus accomplished. The drama, sheet by sheet from the compositor's hands, was brought from the printing-office to the theatre, and the whole play, in fact, studied before publication.

On Wednesday (the day of representation), the formal license came from the Chamberlain's office—so far, so good ; but within half an hour afterwards, a notice reached Elliston, from the publisher's solicitor, announcing that the Lord Chancellor had, on application, granted an injunction against the acting of "Marino Faliero," and that the play must be immediately withdrawn.

Elliston was now in his element—namely, a perplexity ; and, with his wonted activity in such cases, he sprang into a hackney-coach, with the view of driving to Hamilton Place, that he might see Lord Eldon himself on the subject. The tardiness of the driver, however—" so

tortoise-paced to his fleet desires," ill suited his impatience. Out again of the vehicle he jumped, making far better way on foot to his lordship's residence. He was there informed that the Chancellor was in his private room at Lincoln's Inn. To Lincoln's Inn, therefore, Elliston at once proceeded, where, on arriving, he learned the Chancellor had just departed. Again was the manager on his return to Hamilton Place, where he arrived in very time to catch his lordship by the skirts of his clothing as he was mounting the steps of his own door. Here the "defendant" at once entered on the merits of his case, and his lordship declared the court sitting—Lord Eldon on the upper step and Elliston on the pavement—the one all patience, the other all animation. The Chancellor hesitated as to his previous order —Lord Eldon doubted—and Elliston redoubled the force of his argument. At length he so far succeeded that the judge suspended the injunction granted against the acting of the play for that night; but "Mind," observed he, "you appear before me in the morning of to-morrow." An interview, this, more extraordinary perhaps, than any recorded in Mr. Twiss's Life of his lordship.

This sudden new position of the question met with but little credit in the councils of Albemarle Street, and the following hand-bill was consequently in immediate circulation :—

"The public are respectfully informed that the representation of Lord Byron's tragedy, 'The Doge of Venice' (Marino Faliero), this evening, takes place in defiance of an injunction of the Lord Chancellor, which was not applied for until the remonstrance of the publisher, at the earnest desire of the noble author, had failed in protecting this drama from its intrusion on the stage, for which it was never intended."

The play was acted on the night in question, and so far a triumph had been obtained; but it was one dearly bought, or perhaps scarcely worth purchasing at all. The drama was neither fitted for the stage, nor was any

defection of this kind at all supplied by good acting. No public excitement took place in consequence either of the author's name or the circumstances of its announcement.

Elliston having imagined that Mr. Douglas Kinnaird had been partly instrumental in the opposition made to the production of "Marino Faliero" at Drury Lane, the latter addresses the manager as follows :—

"DEAR SIR,—I am uncertain whether I correctly discriminate between the serious and the jocular parts of our conversation last night. I understood you to state your belief that I had interfered on the subject of Lord Byron's tragedy in a manner inimical to your interests and that of Drury Lane.

"As soon as it was publicly known that Lord Byron had written (but had not then transmitted) his tragedy, I did, at your request, make application to Mr. Murray, in the event of his being the publisher, to give you the preference. To this offer I added such other inducements, arising out of Lord B.'s former connection with Drury Lane Theatre, as I thought would have weight with Mr. Murray, and such as I fancied would influence Lord Byron himself. Soon after this, the MS. arrived—I read it, and was decidedly of opinion it was unfit for successful representation. I told you so; and, if I mistake not, I added, at the same time, that Mr. Hobhouse's impression was different. From that hour, to the day before yesterday, I have no recollection of being ever spoken to, or even heard the subject of the representation of the play mentioned by any person whatever. From Lord Byron's letters to myself and to Mr. Murray, I knew that Mr. Murray *could not* be a party to its being acted; and I was so satisfied of the unfitness of the play for representation, that it was with the utmost surprise I learnt, for the first time, its having been announced by you, by Mr. Murray's bringing to me your play-bill *the day before yesterday*, when he came to obtain my signature, as Lord Byron's representative to the deed of

assignment of the copyright to him. With regard to Mr. Murray, he announced to me yester-afternoon having obtained an injunction, but that you would certainly proceed with the play. I then concurred entirely in his suggestion, that a public protest should be *immediately* made on the behalf of the author, before the experiment of acting his play was made, as, after its failure, such a protest would come with an ill grace. But I decidedly disapprove, and never contemplated Mr. Murray's sending hand-bills into the theatre. This is all I know of the matter."

On the 14th of May, Queen Caroline, attended by Lord Hood and two ladies, honoured Drury Lane Theatre by their presence. By her Majesty's desire, a box was prepared for her, immediately *opposite* the King's. Soon after the Queen's arrival, a cry for "God save the King" was raised, which the orchestra failing to obey, Mr. Wallack was assailed by missiles, in an interesting variety of form. Elliston was called for, and at length presented himself.

"I am arrived!" said he; "speak — what is your wish?" (Cries of "The Queen! the Queen!") "Ay?" responded the manager, with a most comic look of unmeaningness; "What, my good friends, am I to understand by '*the Queen?*'" "Why, God save the King!"—responded a voice.

"Satisfactory and clear," observed our hero, with a winkle: "You shall be obeyed."

Accordingly, on the fall of the curtain for the play, the company of actors—part in their costume of the tragedy, "Malino Faliero," and part prepared for "Giovanni in London," a mixture of Demons and Doges, Vixens and Venetians, made their appearance. Disassociated as were the characters, the Anthem was equally discordant, and, after considerable uproar, which the greater part of the auditory appeared especially to enjoy, the Queen retired and peace was restored.

Amongst many curious epistolary communications,

which, from time to time, were made to Drury Lane Theatre, under Elliston's lesseeship, the following was addressed to his stage-manager, Russell :—

"DEAR SIR, — I hope you will excuse me for thus intruding upon your notice. You must know, sir, that I am a young author—my age eighteen years, and I have composed a melodrama; and, although late in the season, I should be obliged to you if you would (if it is worth it) have it performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. The following is an extract from it.

> * * * * 'Yes, 'tis I have murdered her !
> Then what am I now ?—An horrid mixture
> Of the crimes of man ! A monster, blacker
> In guilt, than any that hell holds ! Why then
> This stay ?—I'll plunge into the infernal
> Streams of burning *Acheron !* Give me the
> Angel's clarion ! Let me awake the dead !
> But see the black *Cocytus* in smoky
> Circles, rolls its fiery waves ! Hark !—hear,
> The dreadful harmonies of woe ! Deep groans !
> Rattling chains ! All !—all ! Will not it die
> Away ? Ah, no, the din increases round !
> Ten thousand clanks, in dismal notes, clash mirthful !
> Roaring bursts of sighs and groans, strike horror
> To my soul ? But, lo ! the infernal hags
> Rush forth, and drag me before their master,
> With heads bedeck'd with fiery serpents.'

"If, therefore, sir, you, think, by the above speech, that the piece is worthy of being performed, I will send it to you. If you will simply state in the *Morning Advertiser* (as I see no other paper), that 'H. H. is requested to bring his piece to Mr. R. on—— ' (naming the time); or by saying so in the bills of the performance.

"Your humble servant,

"H. HUNTER."

On the 18th of June, a masque festival was given at Drury Lane Theatre, in commemoration of the battle of Waterloo—one of the most striking and dashing efforts of its kind ever undertaken.

A false ceiling was constructed, beautifully painted by Marinari: transparencies, admirably executed, being portraits of his Majesty, the Dukes of York, Wellington, and the foreign heroes, who had been distinguished in the common cause on the plains of the Netherlands. A moveable orchestra divided the stage from the audience part of the theatre; the entertainments commencing by a grand martial concert, assisted by Ambrogetti. A brief *vaudeville* followed; at the conclusion of which the barrier was removed and Chalon's "Magic Recreative Philosophy" was exhibited. The "French Hercules," Grey's Fantoccini, the Polanders, &c. &c., came duly on, in turn. The Champion, in complete steel, attended by two heralds, in their tabards, mounted on chargers, and richly caparisoned; two knights in magnificent armour, accompanied by a band of king's trumpeters, passed through a triumphal arch—a fac-simile of the one at that time in progress at Westminster Hall.

The *fête* was crowned with success, so far as the public were concerned. The only one who did not reap his full reward was the enterprising manager himself; yet his spirits and manner indicated no less than a triumph. Neither profit nor reward fell to the share of Elliston, who, under similar or more distressing circumstances, always appeared to have put a certain bean into his mouth, which old travellers speak of as growing in Turkey, which being sucked, has the quality of purging the memory from all disagreeable reflections.

A few days after this merry meeting, the messenger of the theatre announced to Elliston that two gentlemen were waiting for him in his private room. The manager immediately obeyed the summons, and, within a few minutes, the housekeeper, with looks of terror, rushed upon the stage, and, in piercing accents, cried out that a couple of ruffians were murdering her master. The actors well knowing that this thrilling effect was not precisely the one looked for, in the piece under rehearsal, were naturally alarmed; and, on some of them reaching

Elliston's room, Mr. Rodwell, the proprietor of the Adelphi Theatre, was observed bleeding profusely from the forehead, but Elliston apparently unhurt. One O'Callagan, an Adelphi actor, well fitted to challenge Mount Athos to combat, was also by, and, with all the characteristic clearness of his country, exclaimed—

"Oh, yes—here we are—and sure we came o'purpose—you've done it gallantly, Mr. Rodwell, though you've a little scratch over the sconce, I'm thinking."

It turned out that on Elliston entering the room, Rodwell inquired whether a note, he then held in his hand, was the manager's writing, and, on Elliston's assenting, the intruder struck him across the shoulders with a whip, which he had brought, according to the Irishman, "for the purpose." Elliston was not tardy in reply, and with the prompt impingement of his "night preserver," levelled his antagonist to the earth. The *Milesian* O'Callagan, on the part of the Adelphi invader, now interfered, but Elliston still continued cock of the walk; and such was the picture when the terrified rehearsalists entered. The facetious Tom Brown has said, "that a woman who vows she'll cry out, and a man who threatens to cut your throat, will neither of them be as good as their words." The latter portion was certainly proved in this case,—Rodwell was less than his word; as to the former, we can offer no opinion on the matter.

The origin of the above *fracas* appears to have been this. Elliston wishing to engage Chalons for his grand masque *fête*, had gone, with that intent, behind the scenes of the Adelphi Theatre, of which Rodwell was proprietor. On the following morning, the Adelphi manager forwarded a remonstrance to the "Great Lessee"—a remonstrance, more in the rough tones of Ajax, than the mild accents of Ulysses.

To this Elliston replied :—

"RODWELL,—I have heard of a puddle in a storm, and a puppy in a passion; at the one I am unmoved, but at the other, I laugh outright. "R. W. ELLISTON."

At the July Westminster sessions, the Adelphi defendants, Rodwell and the redoubtable O'Callagan, pleaded guilty. By the advice of Alley, their counsel, they apologized to the court for their rupture on the public peace, and Rodwell making an overture of £20 to the common cause of the Drury Lane and Covent Garden Funds, the same was accepted — and each and every party returned to give his own version, publicly, of the story.

> "Thus often at the 'Temple Stairs,' we've seen
> Two Tritons of a rough Athletic mien,
> Stoutly dispute some quarrel of the flood,
> With knuckles bruis'd, and face besmeared with blood;
> But at the first appearance of a Fare,
> Both quit the fray, and to their oars repair."

Mr. Mackay, an actor of considerable celebrity in his own city of Edinburgh, arrived about this time in London, bringing with him letters of recommendation from Sir Walter Scott.

Mackay's line was low comedy, and his foremost impersonation, *Baillie Nicol Jarvie*, in Scott's dramatized novel, "Rob Roy." Mackay made his first Drury appearance in this character, and on which occasion was received with much good feeling. For his second character he selected *Dominie Sampson*, in which he had acquired almost an equal fame amongst his countrymen, as in the *Baillie*.

If Mr. Mackay did not produce that great sensation which his friends had anticipated, he had, perhaps, the higher gratification of knowing that though he could not command success, he had at least deserved it; for there is no doubt that many points of nationality in his acting, were lost to the perceptions of his southern auditory, who, having been accustomed to see their own Liston, in the identical characters, would fain persuade themselves he was the better delineator, because he had caused them, perhaps, to laugh more heartily. Certain it is, the Mackay shoot did not flourish on the Drury stock; the actor, like his native whisky, was far more relished and understood on its own native soil. The *Mackay*, "neat as

imported," did not command a sale, while the *Liston*, "prepared for the English market," was again in demand.

The annexed is from Sir Walter Scott, addressed to Mrs. Coutts, and thence forwarded to Elliston:—

"My dear Mrs. Coutts,—As you are kind enough to allow me the interest of a cousin, will you permit me to beg you will countenance with your presence and Mr. Coutts', the performance of a Scots actor, named Mackay, who goes up to perform the part of *Baillie Nicol Jarvie*, in the play of 'Rob Roy.' He has drawn great audiences here, and continues to attract whenever he performs the part, which, indeed, is one of the very best personifications of national character (Irish Johnstone not excepted) which I ever saw on any stage. I fear, indeed, the English may not think it so broadly ludicrous as Liston's playing; but I hope a good number of Scotch folk will attend, as they must be (at first at least) the more competent judges of the nice and well-drawn shades of their own provincial peculiarities. I intreat your interest with my distinguished countryman, Lord Erskine. I am spending two or three days here with the Lord Chief Commissioner and Lord Chief Baron, well known to his lordship as William Adam and Sir Samuel Shepherd, who send their respects. I beg my own respectful compliments to Mr. Coutts, and am, with great regard, dear madam,

"Your most respectful, humble servant,

"Walter Scott.

"Blair Adam, 11th June, 1821."

London was now in a state of excitement at the approaching ceremony of the coronation of George IV. The Drury Lane company still retained their designation, "his Majesty's Servants," under which holding, Elliston was now desirous they should be recognized, as in ancient times, and occupy their station at the ensuing pageant. Every exertion was made to this end, and not without hopes of success; but the privilege having so long been in abeyance, the scheme was finally defeated.

As his actors were not permitted to play their parts in the out-door drama of the King's coronation, Elliston was determined to bring the coronation itself within his own edifice, and with his accustomed alacrity, set immediately to work on this fresh speculation.

Application he now made to Lord Gwydyr, Sir George Nayler, and other gentlemen especially concerned in the arrangements; all of whom conceded every facility to Elliston and his artists, by giving them free access to the preparations, and allowing drawings and models to be taken at the will of the parties.

Of these privileges Elliston personally and unremittingly availed himself; and it was in the course of these "notes of preparation" that the first indication of that amusing idiosyncrasy was developed, which, in the after-stages of the theatrical pageant, gave rise to so many anecdotes respecting him. Daily interested in all that was in forwardness for the inauguration of "King George upon the throne," and pleased with cajoling his own imagination, he became, at length, a firm believer in the story he had so often repeated to his own ears; more firmly accrediting himself a king than many real monarchs have absolutely found themselves. In fact, he began to look not only on the Drury preparations as movements in his individual glorification, but all that was going on at Westminster also; so that his senses positively reeled under the weight of this potent sirup.

A moral rebuke, quite worthy a place amongst the myths of ancient sages, transpired just at this moment. Amongst other things to which Elliston was permitted access, was an inspection of the coronation robes, which were at this time deposited at the house of Mr. Myers, in Conduit Street. The king's grand robe was spread out on the floor of Mr. M.'s drawing-room, which had been prepared for the purpose, to the full extent of twenty-five feet. Elliston was ushered up-stairs for the inspection by the master of the house, when, on entering the apartment, they were horror-struck on discovering a cat giving nourishment to a recent brood of kittens, bound in one family embrace, and reposing on the downy selvage of the

robe of royalty, valued at six thousand guineas! A lesson to human vanity, without doubt; but in this instance completely lost in the terror of the whole assembled party.

But now we arrive at a piece of inconsistency which will be scarcely credited. The king's coronation took place on the 19th; tickets having been furnished to Elliston for the Hall, the Abbey, and all objects of interesting inquiry. On the day after this brilliant event, Braham entered Drury Lane Theatre, where, meeting with the "Great Lessee," he asked which newspaper account might be deemed the most correct history of all the fine doings of the previous day.

"I have seen no paper," replied Elliston, with a mysterious, or rather wool-gathering aspect.

"Well! what of the proceedings at the Abbey? You have made your minutes?"

"I was not in the Abbey."

"Indeed! The ceremony in the Hall, then?"

"I was not there."

"Neither the Abbey nor the Hall?" repeated Braham, with evident surprise. "You gave your whole attention, then, to the procession?"

"I did not see the procession," answered Elliston, in a measured tone, as though he were uttering the profoundest sentiment of Locke himself. "*I had some important business at Walworth*," added he, in a tremulous whisper.

The fact is, such had been the unpardonable levity or indiscretion of Elliston, that after all the bustle and commotion, of which we have spoken, every chance had been thrown away of doing anything in the matter. Elliston had been indulging one of his truant fancies, and had absolutely seen nothing. The project of the coronation at Drury Lane was, for a time, entirely given up, and all the workmen about to be dismissed, when a letter arrived from Kean, dated—

"Liverpool, Coronation-day.

"MY DEAR ELLISTON,—With those feelings which an Englishman can alone understand, I have touched once

again my native land. I shall be at the stage-door of Drury at noon, on Monday next. Do you think a few nights now would be of advantage to you? I am full of health and ambition, both of which are at your service, or they will run riot. "E. KEAN."

This letter was "favoured by a friend," who, on delivering it to Elliston, suggested to him that it might be gratifying to Kean, at this period of pageants, if his entrance into London were marked by some token of professional respect.

Elliston was not slow in taking this hint. Play-bills of an enormous size were, in a few hours, posted over London, announcing Kean's return from America, and his re-appearance on the ensuing Monday, as *Richard III.* An impetus being thus given to the truant and slumbering spirit of the manager, Elliston, on the same sheet, advertised his "Magnificent representation of the Coronation," which only the day before had been positively abandoned.

On the Monday, at about noon, a special courier announced the progress of Kean towards the door of Drury Lane, and within a quarter of an hour, the cavalcade was in sight. Six outriders, in a medley costume of all nations of the earth that do not go absolutely tattooed, constituted the vanguard; then came Elliston himself in solitary grandeur, in his own carriage, drawn by four greys. The hero of the triumph next—Kean himself, likewise in his own carriage, supported by Russell and Hughes in cocked hats, drawn by four blacks. John Cooper, in the simple majesty of his undecorated form, followed, drawn also by four skewbald or piebald. A troop of horsemen formed the flank, composed of bruisers, jockeys, tavern-keepers, dog-fighters, and other friends of the drama; and the whole was brought up by the heterogeneous rabble which the progressive affair had, from pillar to post, enlisted in its service. *Alexander* alighted from his car at the ostiary of Drury Lane Theatre; escorted by two firemen, in flaming liveries, he entered the building; and as he disappeared from the street, the

"vast vault of heaven" re-echoed with the shouts of the wondering multitude.

> "Bow Street and Brydges sound with quaint alarms,
> Though raw in fields the rude militia swarms;
> On seeming arms they make a stout essay,
> Then hasten to the tap—the business of the day."

The same was repeated on Kean's entering the building. The hero played on this evening *Richard III.* A supper, in the theatre, with usual consequences, closed this memorable night.

> "Fruges adde, Ceres—et frugibus adde racemos—
> Vitibus et vates, vatibus adde diem."

But all was once again bustle, bustle, in pursuance of the "Coronation." Elliston's energies were strengthened by the rebound, and night and morning he was indefatigable in personal exertions for this mighty purpose. With the descriptive *Morning Herald* in his hand (his sole guide), he gave all directions necessary, and on the first of August the pageant was produced.

As a piece of theatrical effect, this was perhaps the most complete ever represented on the English stage. Faithful in its delineation, gorgeous in its appointments, replete in its auxiliaries, and profuse in its expenditure, the "Coronation" at once attracted the attention and admiration of the whole town. Nearly two hundred men, in the employ of the India Company, were engaged at Drury Lane on this occasion. Each man was known in the theatre, by the office or character to which he was appointed; and, on a certain occasion, one of them being taken ill, and thereby unable to attend in his place, at night, thus wrote to the manager:—

"*The Lord Chancellor* presents his compliments to Mr. Elliston, and regrets that a sudden attack of the bowels prevents his fulfilling his duties this evening."

During the unprecedented run of this spectacle, various amusing characteristic anecdotes were in circulation respecting the "Great Lessee." There is no doubt that the extraordinary success of the piece, the crowded assembly,

the heated atmosphere, and his own highly rectified temperament, not unfrequently qualified by more material alcohol, produced the transmutation of his wits, or perhaps drove him completely out of them. That there were moments in which he verily believed himself, not the shadow, but the substance of monarchy, there can be no question. He felt not, indeed, with *Macbeth*, that—

> "To be king
> Stands not within the prospect of belief."

And when, amid the acclamations of hot-pressed Drury, threading his way through the "upturned wondering eyes" of all London in the pit, he exclaimed, "Bless you, my people!" he believed himself no less than "The Lord's anointed."

> "A strong conceit is rich—so mortals deem,
> If not to be, 'tis glorious yet to seem."

A coronation medal was now struck by instruction of the Great Lessee, and specimens were presented, for several nights, to the first two hundred persons who entered the theatre.

The Queen died on the 8th of August, and the day after the memorable funeral, reports were very generally in circulation, that her Majesty's death had been occasioned by poison, administered to her in a cup of coffee at Drury Lane Theatre, by the connivance of Elliston.

That the Queen partook neither of coffee nor refreshment of any kind, was no refutation of this wild report. A portion of the public was determined the bantling rumour should not be strangled in its birth, and nursed the imp with unremitting attention. The buz was a well-flavoured, spicy, piece of *sucreries*, and highly relished. "*Elliston had poisoned the Queen!*" The *caquet*, like the "quarrel," as *Sir Lucius* observes, "was a very pretty one as it stood," and was "not to be spoilt by any explanation." *Elliston had poisoned the Queen!*

One of the earliest intimations Elliston received of this act of Queen-murder was from his facetious friend, "Jack Taylor."

"Are you aware of a strange report in circulation, respecting yourself and the Queen? They say,

> 'That thou hast kill'd the sweetest innocent
> That ere did lift up eye!'

Are you not content to be yourself nightly crowned, but you must kill your Queen for pastime? But so runs the tale, from one end of the town to the other. I have written a paragraph for to-night, calculated to stop this absurdity—for it is not every absurdity that is amusing.

"Yours, JOHN TAYLOR."

See another. A man really in earnest always excites an interest:—

"SIR,—I am in a public way myself, and it is my duty to let you know all know you. You have poysoned the queen, and she knows it, and all the world knows it. Her majesty drank something you put into it, and everybody knows it. Shame upon you, you traytor!—but you shall be brought to justice. You know very well that you was employed by government to do it, and this is the way how the people who pay taxes are paid. But, as all knows it, your reward will be different from what you think of—the gallows—and well you deserve it.

"I am, "A TRADESMAN.

"P.S.—When are you going to pay your ironmonger? I know something about that, too."

Innumerable were Elliston's anonymous correspondents on this mortal subject; few offering hope or religious consolation to the sinner; but most of them consigning him to that place not to be mentioned to ears polite; and one of them concluding, by observing that, as he must be hanged, it would be a good opportunity for Mr. Kean's taking the theatre! Elliston received also a letter from "Invisiblina" on this terrific occasion:—

"MY FRIEND,—The report of your having poisoned the queen was a strange one; but another equally strange, is

going about—namely, that the report was of your own raising. I can believe almost any absurdity of you; to be accused of poisoning a crowned head, is no common piece of reputation, and will make another glaring patch in your harlequin jacket."

These repeated mysterious communications from this unknown correspondent, as we have had occasion elsewhere to observe, frequently hurried poor Elliston to a state of frenzy. The accuracy of her statements puzzled him exceedingly, whilst the pointed accusations, though having, perhaps, but a momentary effect, yet touched his conscience nearer than any reproaches he was elsewhere in the habit of meeting.

Elliston was absolutely fond of *vagabondizing*. We are not sure that he did not, at times, prefer embarking in a small theatrical scheme, to the splendour of the monarchy of spacious Drury.

At the close of his season at Drury Lane, he left London and opened the Coventry Theatre.

The play was O'Keefe's "Wild Oats," in which Elliston enacted his favourite part of *Rover*, and Keeley was *Sim*.

The absurd shifts occasionally made in country theatres are scarcely to be credited.

In the first scene of the second act of "Wild Oats," it is essential that a shower of rain should as distinctly be heard by the audience, as a shower of applause should catch the ear of the actor; but as the "*drop*" came down to finish the first act, the prompter informed Mr. Elliston that there was not a drop of water in the house.

"Then open a bottle of wine," said Elliston. True genius is never at a loss, and Robert William instantly sent out to the nearest chandler's shop for a new sheet of brown paper: how this was to be used we have yet to detail.

There is an adage—"If you cannot snow white, you must snow brown," and at the exact moment that the shower was to be heard, without, Elliston, with prodigious energy, commenced rubbing the back wall behind the side scene, with the new sheet of brown paper. This produced

a something of a sound; an admixture of scratching and hissing.

"*Exeunt Sim and Jane. (A shower of rain.) Enter* ROVER *hastily.*"

Upon this, Elliston put the sheet of brown paper into Keeley's hands, saying, "Rub away, Bob! as much like water as you can."

Then Rover rushed on the stage, buttoning up his coat at the collar, and uttering the words of the part:—

"Here's a pelting shower and no shelter. Poor Tom's a-cold. I'm wet through!" (*Elliston aside.*) "Louder! louder!—rub the water, Bob!"

Keeley rubbed the sheet of paper against the wall to the uttermost extent of his little arms.

(*Aside.*) "Quicker, Bob! rain! rain!"

"Hear! nature, hear! If ever you designed to make his corn-fields fruitful, change thy purpose; that, from the blighted ear no grain may fall to fat his stubble goose!"

(*Aside.*) "Not a bit like a shower! But, pelt away, Bob!"

On the 5th December, Elliston, having quitted Drury-Lane Theatre earlier than usual, was returning homeward in his carriage, when he was seized by a sudden impression that some person was sitting at his elbow, whispering in his ear. His nerves had been overwrought for some days by excitement of every description, and the consequent debility was increased rather than removed by further stimulants. The present "cup too low" was, in fact, the consequence of the cup too much, for he was too apt to borrow health, as he had been in the habit of borrowing money—namely, on usurious interest, and leaving the question of liquidating the debt to the will of Providence.

The whisperer in the coach still continued to torment him. Elliston called to his driver to pull up, and having jumped out of the vehicle, desired peremptorily the intruder to descend also. After some short expostulation on the part of his servant, Elliston was induced

again to enter the carriage, when the man very judiciously drove him to his friend Dr. Pearson.

Fortunately the doctor was at home, and having succeeded in quieting the mind of his patient, the lessce, once again, was on his way to his own house.

It appears, however, that no sooner had he again placed himself in the vehicle, than the fit returned, and so powerfully was he impressed with the truth of what he had asserted, that on his arrival in Stratford Place, candles were brought from the house, that the interior of the carriage might be thoroughly searched.

Elliston continued for two hours under the alarming influence of this attack. On reaching his bedroom, he exclaimed that he was wet to the skin by water pouring down from the ceiling, and again were the attendants called together to examine the roof of his chamber. He was at length persuaded to enter his bed, where he soon fell asleep, and at ten o'clock on the following morning he was in his own room at the theatre, as well as ever—a full hour before other persons engaged in the business of the day! On his table lay a note of tender regard from "Invisiblina!"

The great success of the "Coronation" induced the experiment of another "Superb Spectacle," namely, "Giovanni in Ireland." This piece, originally projected by Moncrief, was sent to Mr. James Smith, the Hon. G. Lamb, and others, for the benefit of their suggestions. The gallimaufry passed through half a dozen hands; and, like the knife, which one while had a new handle, and at another a new blade, its identity at last was entirely lost; and the result was, by the consent of all parties, a restoration to its pristine form.

During the time this drama was in rehearsal, the King made his visit to Ireland, and was present at the "Installation of the Knights of St. Patrick." This coincidence was deemed fortunate. Elliston determined to embody, in his new piece, a representation of this imposing ceremony.

"Giovanni in Ireland" was produced in December.

The first act gave a representation of the Kilkenny Theatre, the most complete scenic *ensemble* ever achieved; here was an entire theatre, two tiers of boxes, beautifully decorated and filled with veritable flesh and blood; an orchestra, musicians, and a pit blooming with the very flower of Kilkenny. To the Drury Lane spectators the scene was emphatically, "*Veluti in speculum.*" *Giovanni* was seated in his stage-box, whose counterpart, no doubt, could have been pointed out in the corresponding place of Drury itself. Dandies and flirts contemplated their own likenesses, whilst the growling critic was face to face with his second self. But the piece, alas! was a failure, and unequivocally condemned.

In February (1822) Elliston left London for Paris. His object being the acquisition of foreign novelty for the current season at Drury Lane. Indulgence—excess—had materially invaded both his health and estate; the reparation of both he now suddenly resolved on undertaking. He "took the pledge," and faithfully kept it, as though he had bound himself, not by the name, but the very gospel of "Matthew," for two months—"not so much, not two"—and we again find him but little the better for this sickly smattering of fortitude.

In these matters, Elliston had a most happy knack of juggling with his conscience; and under some pious fraud, came off acquitted in the tribunal of his own judgment *sans tache, sans reproche.* We remember to have heard of a traveller in Italy who on his journey fell in with as good a Catholic as any in the Pope's dominions, but was yet enjoying plenary indulgence on a general fast. "How is this?" demanded the Lutheran.

"We have a dispensation to eat what we please when we are on a journey," was the reply.

Some few weeks, however, afterwards, the same traveller fell in with this holy man at Ferrara, where they were both sojourning; when on a *jour maigre,* he again beheld his friend over a fat capon, a venison pasty, and a flask of wine.

"Holloa! my friend—how now! I know you have a

dispensation when on a journey; but surely you are now sinning."

"Nay, not so fast," rejoined the round, fat, oily man of God, "*all life is but a journey*, and, St. Anthony grant, I have a good many miles to travel yet!"

> "There is a kind of conscience some men keep,
> Is like a member that's benumb'd with sleep—
> Which, as it gathers blood, and wakes again,
> Shoots out, and pricks, and feels as big as ten."

If not advantage, Elliston reaped considerable pleasure in his journey to Paris. He had been well received and entertained by Talma, and much fêted both by strangers and his own countrymen. In March, the lessee returned to England, and in May his Majesty again visited Drury Lane Theatre.

Amongst Elliston's many correspondents was a lady, who, within a short time from the period of which we are now speaking, became still more celebrated. *Wilson* again! "Of the same name; but one of softer nature." *La belle Harriette!*

She writes as follows:—

"DEAR MR. ELLISTON,—I think you wish me well; but you know I am very poor. The farce of the 'Deux Jaloux,' which I send you, you will recollect to have seen. I have altered it, and adapted it still more to the English taste. I have cut out the original songs, and supplied their places by my own poetry—impudent enough, you will say. In one word, the piece is yours for ten pounds; and I think you will allow I part with my favours at a price low indeed—*new poetry* for an 'old song.' If you accept this, have the civility to enclose the cash, addressed to me, Mrs. Harriette Rochford, Post-office, Dublin, or leave it for me in Stratford Place, and I will send. Mr. C. Kemble has seen the comedy, I confess, and rejected it for want of tact—a pretty charge, in faith! but he behaved very handsomely respecting the

privileges of his theatre. As for you, you owe me some little kindness; but I do not presume on this.

"H. R."

Scarcely anything succeeded this season at Drury Lane. Kean brought a play to the theatre, entitled "Owen, Prince of Powis," in which he acted the principal part. This drama was but a scrofulous subject, and expired of the disease on the third night. Kean next attempted the character of *Sir Pertinax Macsycophant*, which we might be inclined to say was about the most miserable exhibition ever made by a great actor; but, as Dryden has observed of his rival, D'Urfey, "You don't know my friend, he'll do worse yet."

After a service of forty years on the boards of Drury, Miss Tidswell, who, as we have before noticed, was, perhaps, the only person positively in the secret of Kean's parentage, took her final benefit at this theatre. Kean played on this occasion *Don Felix*, which our readers may, peradventure, suspect was the "worse yet," which we have hinted above. Bad, it certainly was; but "benefit" vagaries are not rigidly to be criticized; and as the actor, by this attempt, was really paying a debt of gratitude to his respected protectress, he is so far entitled to our approbation, and more particularly as he also defrayed the *expenses of the benefit*, amounting to nearly one hundred pounds.

This season, though disastrous to the lessee, did not find him behind-hand in any of his engagements with the proprietary of the theatre. At the annual meeting in August, Elliston was highly complimented by the chairman for an implicit fulfilment of all his obligations.

Preliminaries having been entered into for very extensive alterations in the theatre, a model of the intended improvements was sent to the King, and the previous work of demolition was at once begun.

Within a few days the whole interior of the building was one chaotic mass of rubbish, the walls being laid bare to the very back of the boxes. The reconstruction of the

theatre was from the designs of Mr. Beazley, and the despatch and ability which he exhibited in completion of the work, was a subject of just encomium. The parapet of the new boxes was brought forward five feet, contracting the pit, consequently, to the same limits. The entire ceiling was lowered, bodily, fourteen feet, an operation which excited great interest and some apprehension—the work was, however, most successfully accomplished. The saloon, to the full extent, was lined with looking-glass, the pilasters representing Sienna marble. The cost of the whole amounted to £22,000.

During the progress of the work, the "Great Lessee" found opportunity for frequent visits to his beloved Leamington,—the "Petit Trianon" of Drury's monarch.

"You should have seen, sir, how we received the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester," said Charles Elliston, addressing his father on a certain morning.

Elliston's eyes glistened, and he said, "Proceed."

William went on: "We were aware, sir, that the royal couple would arrive on Thursday; so, by the side of the bowling-green we erected a triumphal arch, with scaffold poles, flags, and laurels, and Charles painted on a paper frieze, in large letters,

'WELCOME TO LEAMINGTON SPA.'

"Well, then we sent over to the Birmingham Theatre for the twelve muskets, which I duly loaded. Henry told the work-people employed on the new buildings, that the royal family were coming—that they must put on their Sabbath clothes and welcome the party with three cheers. He then ran to the girls' Sunday-school, and informed the mistress that the duchess would fully expect to see all the girls, also in their best attire, ranged in a line, with their Bibles in their hands. In the meantime, Charles had the seraphine moved from the library behind the shrubs in the bowling-green, and was ready to play 'God save the King.'"

"Excellent fellows!" said Elliston.

"In due time the travelling carriages came in sight,"

continued William. "I had got my twelve loaded muskets on the roof of the house, and proceeded to discharge them one by one ; the report of the guns brought every body in Leamington out of doors ; the children scampered from the school, and Henry arranged them on each side the way ; the workmen and labourers assembled ; I kept firing the salutes, the men huzzaing, which their royal highnesses acknowledged to be highly complimentary. Presently Colonel Higgins popped his head from the carriage window, and requested that there might be no more firing, as it startled the horses. I then loudly gave the word of command, 'Stop the salute.' It was very lucky that the Colonel spoke just in time, for I had discharged all my twelve muskets. Charles now played the national anthem on the seraphine. The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, with great urbanity and condescension, bowed."

"Bless their royal hearts," said Elliston with emotion.

"And now," added William, "in the sight of the august visitors, I threw up two or three pigeons, to give the notion that the news of the safe arrival of the royal party was to be conveyed elsewhere—they were our own pouters."

"Admirable—admirable!" said the delighted father.

"The little girls kept bobbing their best curtseys, and Henry, going closer to the carriage window, produced an address, which he had written the previous night, and which he was about reading, when his royal highness looked out of the window, and interrupted the sentences of the address by saying, 'Ay, ay ; very well, very well, very well!' Colonel Higgins now ordered the postillions to drive on ; and off they went with three cheers from the workmen."

The little band of *Leamingtonians* were now engaged at Coventry, in which they acted four nights out of the six ; but the manager not deeming it expedient to close his "Spa" bandbox, he was considerably puzzled in his representation of plays at both places, with one imperfect company. The Leamington visitors, however, he had

long been in the habit of treating just as his humour suggested; and, with his accustomed nonchalance, he advertised "Three Weeks after Marriage," and the "Wags of Windsor," with only himself, one lady, a couple of amateur tradesmen, and the doorkeeper's son, to sustain the several parts.

On another night, he acted the "Liar," and literally played, or rather spoke, the words of every character in the piece! *Miss Godfrey* and *Grantham* were certainly dressed for the parts, and so, after a fashion, was *Papillon;* but the two former being lodging-house keepers in Leamington, and the latter, the aforesaid door-keeper's son, could not be supposed to know much of the author's text, and as little perhaps of the plot of the drama. Elliston enjoined them only to say nothing, an injunction they obeyed, if we may venture the pun, to the very *letter*, whilst our hero repeated the whole dialogue, sending the dummies off, or beckoning them on, according to their proper exits and entrances. The tact and cleverness with which he accomplished all this gained him, beyond doubt, greater applause than if the piece had been soberly acted.

Elliston returned to London. Mr. Moore writes:—

"My dear Sir,—I have, as usual, a thousand apologies to make for not sooner answering your letter. After all, I had nothing to say, which (though some authors, as well as orators, seem to think differently) is the best excuse in the world for not attempting anything.

"I still dream of the stage, but whether the dream will ever be realized, is a very, very doubtful point. At all events, just at this moment, other tasks forbid me to think of it.

"I am happy to find that both you and old Drury are so stoutly on your legs again. With every wish for a continuance of your prosperity, I am, dear Elliston,

"Very truly yours, T. Moore.

"September 5th, 1822."

In September, the ceremony of "striking the scaffold,"

at Drury Lane, took place—a strike amongst the workmen, of a far more amicable nature, than many which may have passed under our statistic observations.

On this occasion an eccentric party, well suited to the singularity of the case, assembled on the scaffold, vibrating within five feet of the ceiling and about fifty from the pit. On this spot a rump steak collation was actually dressed for a dozen persons—Elliston presiding, and his architect, Beazley, facing him.

Suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth, the undulating scaffolding appeared to produce the sensation of ebriation, without the pleasure of getting drunk; but more faithful to the bottle than the prophet, the present party had too great a respect to the doctrine of the cause and effect to be so idly convinced, and consequently "availed themselves of the pleasure" of the good old system.

"It is amazingly cold here," remarked Elliston, shivering.

"That is easily accounted for: we are near the poles," said the incorrigible Beazley.

And, again, the waiters, treading heavily round the table, put the whole party in motion.

Elliston was evidently nervous; but he endeavoured to carry it off with a joke, muttering, "This is at present our board, I should be very sorry if it were our lodging."

"It is your proper place," said Wallack; "you hold the highest situation in this theatre."

Elliston here accidently dropped his carving-knife—it fell between two scaffold-boards, and went down below—the knife was snapped.

"There — there's a blade in the pit," said Elliston.

"And Handel in the orchestra," replied Beazley.

"The health of Mr. Elliston" was now proposed, "and success to him in his adventurous undertaking."

This being drunk with enthusiasm; Elliston rose to return thanks; but at the same moment there was a peculiar jarring on the floor on which they were perched, which caused the chairman to make an inquiry, what it meant?

Mr. Grissel, the builder, imagined "that it was only the *Irish* labourers, who were beginning to *untie the cross pole* to strike the scaffold."

"In that case," remarked Elliston, "the sooner I return thanks for the honour you have done me, the better, for I now think it high time to descend." *

On the 16th of October, the theatre was re-opened, with an address written by Colman, and spoken by Terry.

The play was "The School for Scandal," the heir-loom of this house, and well chosen as an omen of the dramatic excellence which the theatre made such resolute promises to realize. Terry played *Sir Peter* in place of Munden, who was "sick;" and Elliston, *Charles Surface*. The actors as they successively came forward, were received with plaudits; Dowton was peculiarly welcomed. Elliston, on his appearance in the chair, as *Charles Surface*, was called to the front, and made his bows amidst much applause and congratulations.

Previous to the commencement of the season, an official letter was sent to Kean on the subject of his future services; who makes the following reply:—

"Your treasurer has written to me, by which I find Mr. Young is engaged for thirty nights to act with me. Now this is what I call an impudent proceeding. The throne is mine!—*mine*! I say—no one shall come near

* To commemorate the almost incredible expedition with which the work had been accomplished, a brass-plate was deposited in the centre of the pit, bearing the following inscription:—

George IV. King.
Theatre Royal Drury Lane.
The interior of this National Theatre was entirely pulled down and rebuilt, in the space of fifty-eight days, and re-opened
on the 12th of October, 1822,
by
Robert William Elliston, Esq.

On the day of the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, this season, Mrs. Garrick died. She was dressed for attending the play, on this very evening.

it; and I will maintain it even at the expense of expatriation. To whatever quarter of the globe I may sail, all shall acknowledge me the first English actor. *Nil ortum tale, fatentes.*

"When I come to London, Elliston, I open in *Richard the Third*—my second character, *Othello,—Hamlet—Lear;* and so through my principal cast. If Young is ambitious to act with me, he must commence with *Iago,* and when the whole of *my* characters is exhausted, we may then turn our thoughts to 'Cymbeline' and 'Venice Preserved.' If you think Young will answer your purpose better than Kean—take him. "EDMUND KEAN."

After a few days came the next extraordinary composition.

"Rothsay, Isle of Bute, October 28.

"ELLISTON,—I cannot be in London till Monday, the 11th of next month. Advertise me for *Richard,* on that night; you must forgive my being jealous of my hard-earned laurels. Young has many advantages that I have not—a commanding figure, sonorous voice, and above all, lordly connections: I kick all such pests to the devil, for I hate a lord. I am, therefore, coming to meet an opposition made up of my own enemies (which, like locusts, almost darken the sun), Mr. Young's friends, and his very great abilities—with nothing but humble genius to support me,—a mere ephemeron, at the command of caprice—the same breath that nourishes the flame this day, to-morrow puts it out.—*Aut Cæsar aut nullus,* is my text. If I become secondary in any point of view, I shrink into absolute insignificance.

"I have taken a house in Scotland, for the purpose of retirement with my family at the termination of my engagements, and all I ask of you is, to let me go with my reputation undiminished. As the Covent Garden hero comes upon my ground the challenger, I have doubtless my choice of weapons; he *must* play *Iago* before I act *Jaffier.* I am told he is wonderfully great in *Pierre;* if so, I am beaten. This must not be. I cannot bear it.

I would rather go in chains to Botany Bay. I am not ashamed to say, I am afraid of the contest. Will you take the THOUSAND POUNDS, and dismiss me?

"ELLISTON, my *dear* Elliston, I *know you.* I see the deep entangled web you have extended for me; but that Providence which has guided me through all the perils of worldly chicanery fights for me now, and will defeat the plot, though *Coutts's Bank* flowed into the coffers of my enemy, and its suite composed of lords and auctioneers.

"Yours, &c.

"E. KEAN."

On the 27th of November, Kean and Young met on the boards of Drury Lane in the parts of *Othello* and *Iago.* Whatever "attraction" these two bodies might have possessed, they had certainly no cohesion. On Kean's part the meeting was a distempered, jealous, and vindictive occurrence; a *foiblesse* to which the "lordly mind" of Young was superior, whose only temperamental display was that of calm indifference.

The pantomime for this season, entitled "Gog and Magog," the composition of Mr. T. Dibdin, was unfortunately condemned on the *third night;* and on the 6th of January, an *entirely new harlequinade,* under the name of the "Golden Axe," was produced, with considerable success; an achievement scarcely credible when we recollect the old language of "underlining" at Christmas, viz., "On the 26th will be presented the new, grand pantomime, which has been in rehearsal ever since the summer!"*

A new period had now commenced in the dramatic annals, by which the stage acquired a brilliancy in decline, which will render it as memorable in its peculiar feature as in its pristine days of intrinsic glory.

* Yet there is nothing which may not be surpassed. Our readers may remember, it has been said, that Sir J. Throgmorton actually sat down to dinner, dressed in a coat which had, that very morning, been wool on the sheep's back.

Stanfield and Roberts had already given to the scene some beautiful specimens of dramatic painting; but it was now that the public witnessed evidences of art of which they had hitherto no conception. The masterly delineations and exquisite effects of these two artists became deservedly the admiration of the whole town, and placed them at once in the road to the highest professional honours.*

The following critique, *en passant*, of performances, appeared in a number of the *New Monthly Magazine*, written by Mr. Talfourd :—

"It would be ungrateful not particularly to notice the dramatic exertions of the enterprising manager. His *Tag* (in 'The Spoiled Child') was highly fantastical—in his happiest style of farcical whim. His *Walter*, in the 'Children in the Wood,' on the other hand, was an admirable representation of rough honesty and manly sorrow; nothing could be happier than his valorous resolution, springing naturally; or the mingled humour and feeling of his triumph over the assassin—or his efforts to appear composed when the fate of the children was doubtful—or the broken accents of joy when he folded them in his arms.

"In 'Wild Oats' and 'The Dramatist' he has played as vivaciously and as whimsically as ever; the gentle stroller, who goes about rejoicing to catch that pleasure which is 'spread through the earth to be caught in stray gifts by whoever will find,' and the enthusiastic play-

* Hogarth painted a camp-scene for the private theatre of Dr. Woodley, Dean of Winchester. Richards, the secretary to the Royal Academy, was many years principal scene-painter to Covent Garden Theatre; his coadjutors were Messrs. Bowles and Carver. Michael Angelo Rooker was chief scene-painter to Colman's theatre, in the Haymarket. Walmsey, French, and the younger Catton, were also scene-painters. Hodges, the pupil of Wilson, was appointed scene-painter to the Italian Opera House, held at the Pantheon, after the fire of the old King's Theatre, in the Haymarket. Signor Hovosielsky, the architect, who rebuilt this theatre, was also scene-painter to the new and splendid stage; and De Loutherbourg, the greatest of the corps, was scene-painter to Drury Lane Theatre, during the management of Garrick.—*Somerset House Gazette.*

wright, seem, indeed, to touch answering chords within his own bosom; he is evidently born to none of this world's common business, but to his own imperial art: the stage to him 'a kingdom is.' In the arrangement of grotesque farces, of gloriously fleeting melo-drames, and of majestic tragedies, he is in his right place, and fitly exercises the pleasantest of this world's dignities.

"Let not the public desert him, who loves him even as a personal friend! Let him not on this his greatest enterprise, the keeping alive antique revels in old Drury, utterly fail! There Garrick spread the electrical sympathy from heart to heart in days of yore; there Siddons first 'came sweeping by'—tragedy's divine priestess; there Kemble first waved his majestic hand, and walked with the triumphant step of a Roman senator; there Jordan restored the world-wearied heart to its joyous spring-time, by a cordial laugh—it will be an undying disgrace to our age if this spot, sacred to old joy, be deserted and silent."

In January, 1823, Elliston was seized by a fit of epilepsy as he was passing the threshold of the theatre. He remained in a state of insensibility for many hours, and it was not until the following day Dr. Pearson permitted him to be removed to Stratford Place.

On the last of the same month, another fit seized him; but of a far different character. Barnard, "Poor Barnard," as he was familiarly called—an actor in the Drury Lane company, essayed a benefit at the Croydon Theatre, on which occasion the Drury manager volunteered his services. Elliston had taken up his quarters at the "Crown Inn," and the accommodations at the theatre not being quite so perfect as he could have wished, he equipped himself at his hostel for the part he was to play at night. The approach to the theatre was by a rough and dirty lane—six o'clock was at hand, and no conveyance readily to be obtained—it rained, moreover, at this precise moment, a pelting shower. Elliston, dressed for *Belcour*, was presently to appear on the stage. Throwing over his shoulders a thick blanket, he summoned the

ostler to his presence, who being a pretty steady fellow, appeared well to answer the intended purpose. Jumping on the man's shoulders, and binding his Witney coverlid tightly round him, Elliston turned his beast of burden into the lane, and holding an umbrella over the two heads, commenced his journey towards the stage-door of the playhouse.

The grotesque exhibition of our hero on the ostler's shoulders—his silk stockings peeping from beneath the dirty blanket, and his head surmounted by a huge cocked hat, could not fail to excite all the native merriment of a few surrounding chaw-bacons who were loitering about the place. In fact, the horse-laugh soon mounted to a startling halloo, and many were the casements and cottage-doors which now flew open at the unaccustomed sounds which broke on the ears of the inmates. But Elliston felt that he was in for it, and no doubt would have gone through his martyrdom with a fortitude which would have entitled him to a place, not only amongst the *acts,* but the " monuments " too ; yet Joe, not having quite the patience of his master, became sensibly indignant at such outrageous jeering, and deliberately flopping down our hero in the mud, scampered after the ringleader of the rioters, threatening the most summary vengeance.

Poor *Belcour* was now verily up to his ankles in mud, and the moisture having sucked off one of his shoes in his attempt at escape, the result might have been fatal indeed to the " West Indian," had he not been rescued by one more humane than his fellows, and carried away a second time towards the theatre, where he was at last safely deposited.

Buoyant, active, and dauntless as was the temperament of Elliston, he was subject, nevertheless, to moments of depression ; but there was an eccentricity attending even these, not less remarkable, perhaps, than his exuberant vagaries. The Easter piece at Drury Lane, " The Chinese Sorcerer," was in rehearsal. It was Saturday—everything went wrong ; machinery, scenery, actors, all

were at fault. In the evening, another rehearsal was appointed, when, to the surprise of his stage-manager and prompter, on walked Elliston to the stage, equipped in admirable character for a journey. Approaching the latter officer (Wilmot), Elliston whispered him in an earnest manner :—

"Business of the greatest importance calls me from London to-night ; I must travel one hundred miles before I sleep ;" having said which, he marched as mysteriously out of the theatre as he had entered it.

The rehearsal went on this evening as well and pleasantly as it had before gone harshly and disastrously—all of which our nocturnal traveller was secretly apprised of —when, on the Monday morning, he again walked on the stage in the precise travelling costume, and approaching Wilmet, after the same fashion as before, whispered him—

"*I've done it—the business is settled.*"

The fact is, Elliston, so far from journeying a hundred miles, had not been as many yards from the theatre during his vagary ; and, as to sleep, in the language of old *Jarvis*, in the play, "his nights had nothing to do with sleep."

A somewhat curious incident arose out of this Easter piece. The production, in its literary character, was but a dull and pointless affair ; the actors, however, by a little infusion of their own mother wit, contrived to raise an occasional laugh, and some evidences of applause. But the author, far from seeing the secret of this partial approbation, was extremely indignant that his dialogue should be so invaded by clowns, whose duty it was to "say no more than what was set down for them," and caused a notice to be fixed up in the Green-room, that it was expected every actor should keep implicitly to the text. The mandate was obeyed; but so dull and heavy was the next night's representation of the "Chinese Sorcerer," that the public nearly condemned it to that place which is said to be the Sorcerer's own element. The author's "notice" was now withdrawn, the actors were permitted to "gag" again (according to the thea-

trical term), and the "Chinese Sorcerer" had a protracted existence of twenty nights.

Elliston was now subject to further annoyances by the increasing irritability of Kean on the "Young grievance." Young was advertised for *Hamlet*, and Kean was furious —Young was called on to play *Macbeth*, and Kean was like a chained lion. By the letter of some clause in his agreement with Elliston, Kean was actually vested with the power of altering the announcement of plays which the manager might have advertised for certain night's representation. Of this power Kean availed himself, and the "sixes and sevens" into which he threw the affairs of Drury, may be well imagined.

Both Young and Kean had their partisans. Thus was it with Quin, who, when he found Garrick admired by the town, said that he (Garrick) was a new *religion*, and as Whitfield was followed for a time, people would return to *church* again.

Amongst other annoyances, Elliston was also a party (plaintiff) in an action about to be tried in the Court of Common Pleas—Himself *v.* Webster—the defendant having deserted Drury Lane for Birmingham. Many of the actors were served with "subpœnas," and were consequently in attendance at Westminster, expecting the cause to be called on. A new piece being at this time on the eve of representation at the theatre, several of the scenes were actually rehearsed in the passages, lobbies, and waiting-rooms of Westminster Hall.

Doctor Kitchiner, in his good-nature, imagined that he had found the means to settle the disputes of Drury Lane, Covent Garden, Haymarket, and the English Opera House.

Doubtless, the worthy Kitchiner, who at that period was preparing an enlarged edition of his capital work on cookery, thought that, with the aid of his magazine of taste, he might be enabled to amalgamate the overpowering grandiloquence of Robert William Elliston with the easy and good-humoured *nonchalance* of Henry Harris,

the subtle and persevering calculations of Samuel James Arnold with the positive plans of David Morris. This was no easy task; but the Doctor imagined, if he could get them together, and let them simmer gently, not to boil over, carefully taking off any scum that might arise, that there should not be any disagreeable flavour, stirring gently, and gradually adding wine at discretion, that he should effect his desired object. He invited, therefore, the conflicting parties to dinner, and, by way of settling the differences comfortably, he did not ask any one else to meet them.

When the managers met in the Doctor's drawing-room, their common surprise may be imagined. Harris was somewhat embarrassed on encountering Arnold, but they both had tact enough to understand Kitchiner's well-meant mistake; but when Elliston arrived, and saw the party, he assumed some exceedingly magnificent airs, quite worthy of the lessee of a principal patent theatre. Arnold at once adverted to the oddity of the belligerents meeting in that manner, and begged to propose, under the circumstances, there should be a distinct avoidance of all conversation on theatrical affairs. This was immediately agreed to, much to the mortification of Doctor Kitchiner, who had predetermined that all animosities should be settled that night, at his hospitable board.

It is erroneously supposed that Kitchiner conducted the affairs of his table in a superb style; on the contrary —he would give soup, fish, poultry, roasts, vegetables, a pudding and tart—all dressed as accurately as it was possible to put them on the table; but he did not trouble his party with what are called "made dishes;" the relays of plates, knives, and forks, were at once placed before each guest; the candles were affixed in low flat candlesticks, that every one might see what was in his plate. The Doctor himself usually kept his own individual tankard of malt underneath his chair. When the cloth was withdrawn, Kitchiner, who was loyal to the chine, invariably volunteered to sing "God save the King," which he executed with graces peculiarly his own.

The wine circulated briskly; theatrical managers, generally speaking, are not abstemious, and the Doctor's port was, according to his received notions of that which he considered correct, always able-bodied. "You drink wine," said he; "to exhilarate you: and the most potent draught better accomplishes this purpose: if your object is to get drunk, the sooner you are so the better."

The Doctor endeavoured occasionally to introduce the subject of the theatrical disputes; but Harris and Arnold immediately changed the conversation at the very moment Elliston was about to reply at full length, with becoming importance; and thus all hostile allusions were avoided, until, at a later period of the evening, a certain tipsiness having crossed Elliston's brain, he saw his patent dignity, double. He suddenly arose, and walking majestically between Harris and Arnold, placed a hand on each of their shoulders, and sententiously pronounced, "Harris—Arnold! I will crush you!—the plough shall pass over your possessions, and in twelve months you will be forgotten!"

One morning a tap at the door of Elliston's private room, in the theatre, announced a stranger, and the messenger introduced a "French gentleman," desirous of an interview with the manager.

"A French gentleman!" responded Elliston—"pray admit him," which he had scarcely uttered, when a little deformed being—a kind of apode (for neither feet nor legs were discernible), but with arms almost measuring the body's length, vaulted into the apartment, and, making two entire somersaults, sprang first on the writing-desk and thence to the roof of a neighbouring book-case; from which situation he sat grinning at the bewildered manager. Elliston, who had lately been subject to a little mental wandering, began to suspect the state of his own senses; but when he perceived his trusty doorkeeper in even greater consternation than himself, he was convinced the scene before him was no illusion; and, drawing himself up in that air of majesty so peculiar to

him, demanded to what purpose he was indebted for the visit of so distinguished a foreigner?

A squeak in the key of *Polichinello,* and another *pirouette* from the summit of the book-case, were all the reply the interrogation received; when Elliston was not long in discovering his visitor was a candidate for dramatic honours. This person was a M. Gouffe, the celebrated baboon; one who had shaken off his humanity, in which he had hitherto starved, and taken up the beast for a livelihood:

"Simia quam similis, turpissima bestia nobis!"

But Elliston being unwilling the prophecy should be yet fulfilled, when the stage should be reduced to a degradation far more ignoble than its earliest origin, was by no means inclined to treat the little wretch with caresses, but to serve him as the father did his atheistical son, who, declaring his religious opinion to be that he "should die like a dog,"—"Then, by my honour, you shall live like one"—and so cudgelled him down stairs. To evade this, however, in the present instance, the little imp, after one or two further evidences of luxation at will, made his final *pirouette;* fully convinced that "one good turn deserves another," and so sprang out of the room as nimbly as he had entered it.

Harley returned about this time to his duties at Drury Lane Theatre, having been absent on a provincial tour. He had the luck of adventure wherever he went, and the "Harleian Miscellanies" were always in request.

Harley had just arrived from Dover, where "the business" had beçn unprofitable to the actors, and disastrous enough to the local manager.

On a certain "non-play" morning, one of the actors, in his stroll (to all intents and purposes a "walking gentleman") on the London road, was accosted by the Dover carrier, pursuing his way into the town, who, pulling up his horse, demanded if young *Doricourt* had a mind to purchase a pair of nankeen small-clothes?

"A pair of nankeen small-clothes!" repeated the actor, in a merry vein.

"Ay, master," responded the carrier, untying a brown paper parcel; "they will just fit you—you're but a lean 'un—and shall have 'em for half a crown."

The actor, not a little amused by the *rencontre*, was strongly tempted by the offer; for the small-clothes in question were of the best light-comedy fashion, and perfectly new; the only hesitation he had to the purchase being, that he was possessed but of five shillings in the world.

Having, however, turned the articles in and out sundry times by the road-side, and compared the dimensions with his own length of limb, it was arranged, that if the nankeens fitted, the half-crown should be forthcoming. For this purpose, the chapman retired to a neighbouring field, where, behind a hay-rick, the habiliments were duly tried by the strolling gentleman.

The "light comedies" fitted admirably, and with an alacrity which quite startled the vendor, the half-crown was paid down, when away he went, not without some regret that he had not demanded three shillings for the purchase. No sooner, however, was the carrier once more on his journey, than a brother Thespian, passing the same road, happened to spy our hero in his new attire, and demanded the history of his smart summer gear.

"All in good time, my fine fellow," was the reply; "but for the present," continued he, "you shall remain here and dine with me."

"*Dine with you!*" repeated the other, in a tone of astonishment.

"Yes—a roast fowl, bacon, and a bottle of as good port as my friend 'Double-chalk' can supply us."

Without waiting for a reply, young *Doricourt* mounted the stairs of the "Black Lion," and having summoned up the landlord, ordered the dinner immediately to be cooked, and the wine to be decanted with special care.

The stranger looked on with astonishment, which had almost amounted to apprehension that his brother actor had suddenly lost the only estate by which he lived,

namely—his wits. In due time, dinner was supplied—the fowl, the bacon, the port—all excellent, or at least highly relished by the two companions, whose gala days had scarcely exceeded a dipping in the pan.

Our invited guest now looked still more anxiously for some explanation, but young *Doricourt* only pulled up his small-clothes and called for another bottle of port.

By this time the consternation of his friend was at its height. What was to be the result he could not guess, and the only consolation he felt, was that the affair was wholly his friend's look-out.

The second bottle being now pretty well discussed, the invited guest gave sundry side-long glances at the door; for a timely escape was positively the question which now occupied his thoughts.

"A tolerable house this," cried the entertainer, carelessly, "for a road-side inn; and now let us have up 'Doublechalk,' for we must pay the bill."

"*We!*" responded his friend, aghast, "as Heaven's my judge, I'm not worth a shilling!"

The comical look of dismay, with which he uttered these words, was verily too much for the gravity of our nankeen hero, who burst out into an immoderate fit of laughter. He then began to relate the history of the small-clothes, which the reader is already acquainted with, and concluded by saying, "I was no sooner equipped, than, on stooping, I felt something extremely hard and uncomfortable about the right knee, when, loosening the lining, out fell——"

"What?"

"A couple of guineas, my fine fellow! and you and I are as much entitled to them as any one else in the world."

"Doublechalk" now made his appearance; one of the pieces was speedily changed into paler coin, and off went the two comedians, as happy a pair as any in the county.

Arriving one evening at Colchester Harley proceeded to the coffee-room of the inn, where, having supped, he

requested to be shown to his bed-room. It was now about a quarter to eleven o'clock.

"The chambermaid directly, sir," responded the waiter, as he placed a rummer of Hollands-and-water before our son of Mirth, into which he flung a spoon, which he had just taken from the empty tumbler of some departed guest.

Appetite having already been taken away, without hunger being satisfied, Harley stirred his poison, and with a calmness which would have become Socrates himself, tasted the liquor. Having waited some twenty minutes longer, our traveller again rang the bell.

"My bed-room," exclaimed Harley, in a more peremptory tone than was his custom.

"The chambermaid directly, sir," again replied the attendant, placing the *Ipswich Gazette* before his guest, and away he ran.

Harley turned patiently to the "County News;" but the yolk of egg, together with sundry beer-stains, interrupting the progress of his studies, he threw down the sheet, not without certain misgivings of the pair he was about to turn into. Another twenty minutes had elapsed.

"This is not to be endured," cried the angry comedian, and he rang the bell with violence. "The chambermaid, waiter!—your inattention is unpardonable."

"Directly, sir," responded the slipshod serving-man, as he handed to our friend a thick octavo—"Patterson's Roads"—with but one cover.

"My road is to *bed—bed*, I say!" vociferated Harley; but the waiter was off again.

Ten minutes more had elapsed, during which Harley, with his hands thrust into his pockets, had been pacing the coffee-room, in strides which might presently have brought him into a neighbouring county, when, seizing "Patterson's Roads," he hurled it violently on the ground, and off flew the other cover.

"Chambermaid—chambermaid!" roared Harley, when in came the "Boots."

"Send the waiter, you rascal."

"Directly, sir," replied the man, when, stooping down, he placed the boot-jack at the comedian's feet.

Here our friend lost all patience, and kicking over the "Boots," as he was curled up, like a woodlouse, Harley again rushed to the bell, and pulled it with a violence which actually did him good.

The waiter again appeared.

"Well, sir," demanded Harley, attempting calmness and dignity, "when am I to see my chamber?"

"Why, sir," responded the man, in an apologetic and confidential tone of humility, "Long Tom, the guard, is just getting up—the mail will be here in ten minutes—and *Tom's bed directly at your service!*"

Poor Harley could hear no more; the bill was called for, wherein, if there had been any deficiency of supplies, it was amply made up by the charges; and, having once more put on his great coat, was ready to start with "Long Tom" on the first stage to London.

Knight was remarkable for extreme formality of word and action—but he was shrewd and cunning. On the occasion of his benefit, he had obtained the assistance both of Kean and Young, on certain pecuniary terms.

On the morning after, Knight waited on Kean with twenty guineas in his hand, but with a set and formal speech in his mouth, by which he promised himself no slight advantage. The words he delivered with true emphasis and discretion, in which every term of adulation was employed. Knight then tendered his twenty guineas, which the o'erweened tragedian refused accepting. Away trotted the delighted Knight with the identical guineas and speech, to make the identical experiment with Young. Having delivered his address as blandly and as impressively as before, he began languidly to count down his money—a mere matter of form, as he deemed—but perceiving Young inclined to consider "Knight service" not quite as a dead letter, but was really about to draw the tender into the vortex of his pocket, the agitated comedian, in faltering accents, announced that

Mr. Kean had refused—refused, he repeated — a similar amount, only two hours before.

"And that is precisely our contract in this theatre, Mr. Knight," responded the tragedian; "Mr. Kean has here the choice of parts, and what he refuses, I have undertaken to accept; he has had his election in the present case, and I am *compelled* to take your money."

The annual meeting of the proprietors took place in July. The chairman, Mr. Calcraft, said it was impossible to withhold his warm commendation from Mr. Elliston, for the great punctuality which had been observed in the discharge of his contract; for not only had he paid the rental stipulated, to the last farthing, but he had actually trebled the sum which he had undertaken to lay out in the improvement and embellishment of the house; the sum agreed upon was £6,000, he had spent upwards of £18,000.

These and the previous encomiums so justly bestowed on the lessee, should be borne in the recollection of the reader, when he arrives at the summer of 1826.

For the season 1823-4, Bunn was engaged at Drury Lane Theatre, as stage-director; but quitted it before the time of his agreement had expired. As *director*, he was scarcely long enough in the theatre to display the full extent of his powers of management, but as "*conductor*," a more powerful one to the electric fluid of Robert William's temperament could not have been selected. After sundry scenes of experimental philosophy, the bodies separated.

Reynolds, the dramatic writer, was also engaged for this season at Drury Lane. When asked by Boaden why he had given that establishment the preference—"Because," said he, "at Covent Garden there are four madmen; whilst at Drury Lane there is but one!"

On the 1st of October, the season commenced, with a sketch, entitled "Stella Leatherlungs," for the purpose of introducing the versatility of Miss Clara Fisher. The

author's name was for a time concealed, and well had it been for his reputation had the disclosure never been made; for the affair was altogether unworthy George Colman, and was rendered still more discreditable to him, as he had only a short time before disclaimed all intention of writing for "the precocious little lady." It will be curious to observe the nightly family *free admissions* stipulated for, during Miss Clara Fisher's engagement :—"Mr. John Fisher, Mr. Charles Fisher, Miss Jane Fisher, Miss Caroline Fisher, Miss Amelia Fisher, Miss Clara Fisher, Mrs. Fisher, and Mr. Fisher, and three double orders for those nights on which Miss Clara Fisher performs." Alas, poor manager !

In October, Macready made his first appearance at Drury Lane Theatre, in the character of *Virginius*. His reception was highly flattering, and throughout the whole of his engagement his attraction was greatly beneficial to the treasury. "Caius Gracchus," a play by Sheridan Knowles, written expressly for Macready's powers, was also produced in this season ; but its acting duration was but seven nights.

"The Cataract of the Ganges," a successful melo-drame, was a considerable half-price attraction of this season—the horses "drawing," and the cataract causing the "overflow." This seems not to have been the first attempt of the kind at Drury Lane. Garrick, in an epilogue, writes,

> "And thirsty Islington laments in vain,
> Half her New River rolled to Drury Lane."

Kean's unfortunate intimacy with the lady of Alderman Cox, having become "the common chat of gossips when they meet," her lord and husband felt that it had become necessary he also should know something about the matter : for strange is it that in affairs of this kind, the person most deeply interested is the last to be enlightened. On the 7th of April, 1824, the day fixed for the annual dinner at the Freemasons' Hall, in aid of the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund, Kean, as "Master," was waiting the arrival of the chairman, the Duke of Clarence,

in the appointed committee-room,—when Alderman Cox presented himself at the entrance, and with suitable violence demanded instant admission to the presence of his wrong-doer. The tragedian being apprised of what was going on, drew from under his coat a pistol; for it is not to be supposed that the busy world had kept him in ignorance of the threats of the Alderman. The whole party was of course thrown into great consternation; when fortunately the gentlemen of the committee, with Elliston of the number, actively interposed to avert mischief, and fairly carried off the enraged city functionary, thereby preventing further interruption. The Alderman had, however, acquitted himself well in the part it was necessary for him to act, and recollecting perhaps that Cæsar, Pompey, and Antony had been pretty well in a similar predicament, he now retired—perhaps to peruse the old dramatists, in which he would also discover how old a story it is for a London alderman to be so abused.

Not long after the above event, Kean having been absent from the theatre for several days, on alleged illness, a messenger was despatched to Clarges Street, to learn the true state of his health, when he was informed that Mr. Kean had quitted London, having left no address nor any indication of his place of retirement. No sooner, however, had the commissioner turned from the house, than the actor's trusty door-keeper communicated with his master, who was at this very time at the Regent Hotel, Brighton; a fact which Elliston soon after discovering, addressed a letter to him accordingly. This letter was returned to Elliston by the next post under cover, from the equally trusty landlord of the "Regent," announcing that Mr. Kean had certainly been his inmate, but had set sail from Newhaven two days before for Dieppe.

A friend of the Drury lessee was now deputed to start for Brighton, and ascertain more particularly the movements of the wayward tragedian; Kean having been publicly announced to act on the following week, at Drury Lane, with Macready.

On the arrival of this confidential friend at Brighton,

he had an interview with mine host of the "Regent," but could gain no additional particulars respecting the flitting meteor, than that he was probably at Dieppe, where he had intended to remain quiet, during a few weeks, for the restoration of his health. At this moment, confused sounds of merriment, evidently of a high convivial character, assailed the ears of our suspicious interrogator, and from certain accents, which he more distinctly caught, he felt convinced he had discovered the roysterer, and that Kean was at this very moment in the house. Judiciously keeping these "thick-coming fancies" to himself, our wily emissary appeared satisfied, observing only that, as he could gain no further intelligence of Mr. Kean, he was anxious to return to London by that night's mail.

The tactician now quitted the house, but felt something more was to be done, before he took verily his departure from this invigorating watering-place. Within a short time he found an agent, and having instructed him in the part he was to play, the man was forthwith put into action.

It was arranged that this person should go to the "Regent" — declare himself to the landlord, both by manner and words, thoroughly in the secret of Kean's being still in Brighton—to affect extreme caution, and to beg a note, which was of course prepared, should be put instantly into his hands.

"Double-score" was now completely outwitted—the look of roguish freemasonry which the man assumed on reaching the hotel, was at once responded to by the fraternal ken of our host, who, first treating the messenger to a mug of his best beer, received the note, and, with a confidential whisper, declared the little document should be delivered within five minutes. The note in question enclosed a card with these words—

"Mr. Elliston, with friendly inquiries after the health of Mr. Kean!"

On the second day from this event, Elliston received the following letter, dated Brighton:

"ELLISTON,—I hate a trickster: you have employed unworthy means to disturb me in my solitude. This was neither manly nor open. It was necessary I should have repose—my health has suffered materially. You have pursued me by a trick, and I should deign you no reply; but I am here, Sir, under the direction of Sir Anthony Carlisle, and will not stir from this place until I have gone through all the routine of medicine and sea-bathing prescribed for me by that great man. The medical gentlemen of Brighton declare also I need repose—'Kean must have repose.' If I am pursued, either by tricks or openly, I shall retire to 'La belle France,' for some weeks.

"I leave you in no distress—you have Macready! Macready, Elliston!—why should you be anxious about poor Kean? Yet, a breath—a breath, I say, of Kean shall confound a generation of Youngs and Macreadys. "I am,

"E. KEAN."

Thus the "Young fever" had been succeeded by the "Macready jaundice;" and as the day approached for Kean's appearance in the part of *Hastings*, he still pronounced that he wanted repose, and was unequal to professional exertion. Kean did not return to Drury Lane this season.

No actor on record had ever acquired so brilliant a fame, with so few complete successes, as Edmund Kean. His pedestal was narrow, but it was of the purest gold. In the characters of *Richard III.*, *Shylock*, *Othello*, and *Sir Giles Overreach*, he was unsurpassed; and those who had witnessed his acting in these instances, in his best day, may be assured they had seen the highest achievements of histrionic art.

But there is no doubt that now his health was materially invaded; and although in certain few old parts, to which we have alluded, and fragments of others, his extraordinary genius seemed to lose but little by this defect of physical power, yet the sweetness of his lower tones was altogether gone, and his level speaking had become hoarse and inharmonious.

In May, Munden took his farewell benefit at Drury Lane, in the parts of *Sir Robert Bramble* and *Dosy*.

Joseph Shepherd Munden was the son of a poulterer in Brook's Market, Holborn, where he was born in 1758.

He made his first appearance at Covent Garden, on the 2nd of December, 1790, in *Sir Francis Gripe* and *Jemmy Jumps*. Quick was a great favourite in *Sir Francis Gripe*; and *Jemmy Jumps* was a part in which the sprightly Edwin was considered to be unrivalled. Munden's attempt, therefore, was a bold one—but he succeeded. Prejudice, however, was so strong, that he did not make at first, great way; the friends of both Quick and Edwin being busily in arms against him.

Towards the latter end of his second season, it was intimated to Munden that his services would be dispensed with at its close. "The Road to Ruin" was at that time in preparation. Quick had rehearsed *Old Dornton* more than a dozen times, but by no means affecting the part, he begged to be relieved from it altogether. Harris had no opinion of the comedy itself, and carelessly gave to Munden the part of *Old Dornton*, and Quick took *Silky*, which the former had previously rehearsed. With but four days' study, Munden was ready; from that moment, he was completely established, and re-engaged at an increased salary.

Sir Robert Bramble, in the "Poor Gentleman," and *Dosy*, in "Past Ten o'Clock," were the parts which this celebrated actor selected for his farewell benefit; and it was announced that, in the course of the evening, "*Mr. Munden would attempt to take leave of his friends and the public.*" The audience were exceedingly numerous, and manifested, throughout, their warm sentiments of regard for one of the most highly-gifted comedians that ever trod the stage.

Munden played on this interesting night with his wonted feeling and energy, but the excitement of the occasion, and a little fermented indulgence, completely overcame him, before he was *functus officio* with the audience. At the conclusion of the play, he approached the lamps for the purpose of delivering an address—a

poetical "*vale*," written expressly by Mr. Talfourd. Poor Munden faltered very early, both in metre and matter; when, deliberately pulling out his spectacles, he commenced reading a production, the spirit of which was the spontaneous outpourings of gratitude and affection. This little *maladroit* proceeding somewhat perplexed the sentiment of the night; but as the "veteran comedian" made his final bow, there was not a single person of taste or intelligence present, who did not feel the stage had that night lost one of the most brilliant comedians that had ever adorned it.

Munden's eccentricities, and his tendency to parsimony, are well known. The following is a little amusing trait of his besetting *foiblesse*.

Not very many years before his retirement, Munden fancied himself in love; the object of his sly passion being a country actress. The *rôle* of a lover on the stage of life is always, more or less, an expensive part to play—a feature as unpalatable to our friend, Joe Munden, as to any perhaps who had stepped forward in the character. Amongst other things, he announced to his mistress that he was anxious to possess her likeness, in the form of a miniature, and requested she would make him happy by giving the limner a sitting.

But the history of the portrait was this: Munden had had in his possession, time out of mind, a little old miniature of some obsolete relation of his own, in the costume of the year '45. This miniature was liberated from its thin wiry frame, and put into the hands of a young friend, an artist,—"just to alter the features," as poor Joe observed, to resemble the lady who would sit to him. This order was given with great secrecy, and duly executed.

The article being now replaced in its fragile frame, and brushed up a bit, with the finger of an old glove, Munden carries it, in topping ecstasy, to his lady-love.

"See!" cried he, "here it is! and what a likeness! My friend is a genius, I assure you—only one sitting! and see how perfect!—what a likeness! The old

costume," added he, cunningly, "is more picturesque than the silly attire of the present day, so I have had you painted as one of the beauties of the court of George the Second." Munden died in February, 1832.

*

His Majesty having ordered his own box to be prepared for the royal strangers, "The King and Queen of the Sandwich Islands," the illustrious Indians made their appearance at the theatre in June. The serious parts of the night's entertainments seemed particularly to excite their risible nerves, whereas the broad farce elongated their visages to every indication of woe. The affair, therefore, to them was just as "broad as it was long;" so that, true to the nature of our antipodes, they had their day and night precisely at opposite seasons to our own.

A new piece, entitled the "Enchanted Courser," written by Croly, was at this time in rehearsal at Drury Lane, for which Elliston had engaged Ducrow's stud of horses. On the day appointed for rehearsal, the truly magnificent stud in question was in readiness on the stage; but no Ducrow! Elliston was, naturally enough, chagrined at this disappointment, as nothing could be done with the horses in the absence of their master. Elliston now despatched a note to the truant equestrian, begging his instant attendance, and within an hour Ducrow was at the theatre.

"What, Mr. Ducrow, is the meaning of this?" demanded the angry lessee.

"Anan! Mis t'Elliston"—was the only reply.

"Why, sir, have you not been here to your engagement?"

"'Gagement, Mis t'Elliston—*I* have no 'gagement——there's the osses—punctual creatures."

Elliston at once saw he had been jockeyed. The Newmarket Club would have given the verdict against him. He had the bow of Ulysses, but the arm of the mighty archer was wanting; for the stud of horses was about as useless, without the aid of Ducrow himself, as a conjurer's dog away from his keeper. "The Enchanted

Courser" was emphatically at a stand; and Ducrow finally engaged to superintend the rehearsals.

Amongst Elliston's numerous correspondents appears Mr. Thomas Wooler, whose inquisitive mind, not merely directed to the political and social interests of his countrymen, makes an occasional excursion into the fields of literature and art. We give an example of his eccentric trip into the territories of Drury Lane.

"Sir,—I hold myself so greatly indebted to Old Drury, and indeed yourself, for so much past pleasuré, that I cannot refrain from offering you a hint, which I fancy may be useful to you. To be brief—you have engaged these horses! There is a class of persons, once on horseback, will ride to the devil; of that exigent denomination, I believe you are not one: yet you may find yourself a good way on this gloomy journey, unless you take timely advice.

"Your new piece of *sorcery*, which was certainly not devised by a conjurer, will greatly injure the reputation these four-footed actors have acquired in another place; and out of respect to their abilities, now they are at Drury Lane, they should appear in consistent characters. What think you of mounting Shakspeare's heroes, as the bard himself would rejoice they should be? Why not allow the wand of Ducrow to aid the representation of his dramas as well as the pencil of Stanfield? 'Saddle white Surrey' in good earnest—and, as from '*The Surrey*' you once banished these animals, and have taken them up at Drury Lane, think of doing them justice. I fancy your giving up 'the circle' in St. George's Fields, and bringing your stable into a Theatre Royal, a little inconsistent; but no matter, it is done, and reminds me of a friend of mine who swept away his poultry-yard from his suitable villa at Fulham, and yet kept cocks and hens in Fleet Street.

"But to return. Instead of niggardly furnishing *Richard* and *Richmond* with armies that do not muster the force of a sergeant's guard, give them an efficient

force of horse and foot. Your two-legged actors would be in arms against this project; but disregard their jealousy, and remember that four to two, are two to one in your favour. *Richard* should march to the field in the full panoply of all your cavalry, and not trudge like a poor pedlar, whom no one would dream of 'interrupting in his expedition.' He might impressively dismount in compliment to the ladies; and when in the field he cries 'My kingdom for a horse,' the audience might fairly deem such a price only a fair offer for the recovery of so noble an animal. The audience would wish *Hotspur* to manage his 'roan' as well as his lady, and though amongst your spectators there might be, perhaps, a 'grey mare,' yet she would be content that *Hotspur* should be the 'better horse' for her night's amusement.

"Think of the thunders which would echo from the vaulted roof of Drury, when 'Falstaff' should attempt to mount his cob! for surely he must have ridden, or we should find him even to this day on his road to Coventry.

"There may be some hypercritics who would tell you there were no horses north of the Tweed in the days of 'Macbeth,' because Shakspeare has fallen into some anachronisms about guns and so forth. But you must be above all this. Let them ride their own hobbies; but for you, you must mount your horses; and give me leave, sir, to say, there is no one who would become the equestrian order better than yourself; and if, in your beloved red letters, you would only advertise yourself, 'This present evening, Mr. Elliston on horseback,' the whole world would cry, 'When next he rides, may I be there to see!'

"Believe me, with sincere regard, your Friend,

"THOMAS J. WOOLER."

Some sharp personalities passing about this time between Elliston and certain members of the committee, that body consulted their solicitor, whether their tenant, not having paid the sum of £2,000 in advance, on the 1st of July, had not forfeited his lease. They were soon satisfied that he had; and a notice of ejectment was actually in forwardness, when Elliston sent in his cheque

for the money, and nothing more was, for the present, heard of legal interference.

A furious fanatic now assailed our hero by means of anonymous communications, threatening destruction to his theatre, and overthrow to his whole company of sinners, somewhat in the language of the letter to Lord Monteagle in the time of our first Stuart, "you shall receive a terrible blow, and yet not see who hurts you."

Repetitions of these threats, though in a feigned hand, yet evidently executed by the same person, induced Elliston to apply for advice to his friend Sir Richard Birnie. Persons were employed to watch the delivery of letters at the stage-door; for some of these were conveyed through private means, yet no discovery of the emissary took place. Destruction to the theatre was threatened by fire, unless the doors were closed against dramatic exhibitions, and anathemas poured upon the head of the ill-starred manager, which, at this stage of his increasing mental infirmity, had visible effect on his whole personal demeanour.

From all we can collect, the Glasgow Theatre was set on fire by a party of enthusiasts, and the greater part of the building consumed, about the year 1760. This took place on the night before the arrival of two celebrated actresses, Mrs. George Anne Bellamy and Miss Wordley, who were to have performed on the ensuing evening. A Methodist preacher, who had held forth in that city, told his auditors that he had dreamed he was in the infernal regions at a grand entertainment, where all the domestic devils were in attendance, and that Lucifer gave for a toast, "Long Life below, to Mr. M——," who had sold the ground on which to build the theatre. The poor enthusiasts hearing this godly information, being themselves inflamed, ran off to communicate a great part of their disease to the playhouse, and actually set it on fire.

Towards the end of June, Elliston offered terms to Madame Catalani, for her brief services. The engagement was concluded, and the speculation, on the whole,

turned out profitable to the manager. On the strength of this first experiment, a second was entered into between the parties, and this, on the other hand, was as disastrous to the exchequer of the lessee, as mortifying to the self-esteem of the vocalist.

The plan of engagement was a sharing scheme, between manager and performer, after a certain sum had been received at the doors; and, on one occasion, Madame Catalani's dividend amounted to something less than ten pounds.

In pursuance of the lady's request, the nightly receipt was regularly enclosed on the following morning, and carried to her residence in Pall Mall. The sum of £9. 6s. was of course so enclosed, but not sealed, and the messenger, as usual, was despatched with the money.

Arriving in Pall Mall, the emissary announced the ignoble amount to Catalani's footman, who was either so ashamed of it, or fearing he might be charged with embezzlement, actually refused to carry it to his mistress. The messenger was therefore compelled himself to proceed up stairs, and produced his money accordingly. Madame Catalani happened, at this moment, to be surrounded by a little circle of visitors, before whom the account stated was produced. This *maladroit* proceeding so thoroughly disconcerted her, that she sang no more at Drury Lane Theatre.

We submit the literal copy of a card, which was invariably transcribed for Madame Catalani, whenever she was called on to sing in "God save the King."

Oh Lord avar God
Arais schaeter
Is enemis and
Mece them fol
Confond tear
Politekse frosstre
Their nevise trix
On George avar hopes
We fix God save the
Kin.

The ill success attending Madame Catalani's second engagement, brought the season somewhat abruptly to a termination.* Like Scipio or Lælius, Elliston now sought retirement from the field of strife, and at his favourite Leamington breathed some moments of repose. At this place the Irish bard addresses the manager of Drury:—

"Bowood, Sunday Evening.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I am most flattered and gratified to find that you mean to promote my 'Fire-worshippers' to the boards of Drury, and only trust that they will not bring another conflagration in their train.

"*Gheber* is pronounced, as you supposed, with the G *hard*. I shall most certainly run up for a peep.

"Yours very truly,

"THOMAS MOORE."

Elliston having formed an acquaintance with Sir Charles Morgan, now made application to him, that he would use his influence with his lady to induce her to write a play for Drury Lane. In consequence of which, the manager receives the annexed:—

"Dublin, 25th Oct., 1824,—35, Kildare Street.

"DEAR SIR,—I am extremely flattered by your confidence in my talent, and regret that my own pursuits and *principles* of authorship do not lie in a way which *you* (I have no doubt) would render available to us both. In now addressing you, therefore, on the subject of dramatic authorship, I do it on behalf of my sister Lady Clarke.

"A few years back, Lady Clarke brought out a comedy in the Dublin Theatre, called 'The Irishwoman;' but, notwithstanding its unbounded success here, she withdrew it (in *utter disgust* at the conduct of the then *proprietor* of the theatre, Mr. Jones), after *the ninth night!* She has

* After a concert given by this lady, at Liverpool, one of their papers said, "Such was the torrent of sound she emitted at one moment, that the glass globules pendent from the centre chandelier were powerfully agitated, and struck against each other!!!"

since reduced it to a short musical piece, in three acts, with some excellent *characteristic* songs. It at present lies in her desk, but *I believe* she means to give it to Mr. Abbott.

"She is now occupied on a *musical* farce; her talent for comic song writing is very considerable; and here (in private society) very celebrated. As she is an excellent musician, she has hitherto *adapted* the music herself to all she writes and sings; and the airs are generally old and popular Irish melodies.

"You will confer a particular favour on me by letting me know if you feel disposed to treat with Lady Clarke for the musical farce on which she is now occupied. I have made it a point with her that you shall have the *refusal of her first attempt* for the London stage. I am fully aware she could not fall into better hands.

"I am, dear Sir, very truly yours, &c.

"SYDNEY MORGAN."

With the following short, laconic correspondence, we conclude the present chapter:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—Will you have the gooodness to state explicitly whether I am to understand you hold yourself engaged at Drury Lane Theatre, for the ensuing season? It has become necessary I should be informed within four-and-twenty hours. "Yours, R. W. ELLISTON."

"T. R. D. L., July 22nd, 1824."

REPLY:—

"69, Baker Street, July 24th.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Your note of the 22nd I have only *this* day received; and as you limit my answer to four-and-twenty hours, I presume your necessities are supplied.

"Yours, JOHN BRAHAM."

CHAPTER II.

"DER FREISCHUTZ."

In the spring of 1824, Mr. Brockenden, the artist, who had recently returned from the continent, brought with him a copy of Weber's opera of "Der Freischutz," which he proffered to his friend, the Drury Lane manager. The musical score was immediately placed in the hands of the director of the establishment, when, after some deliberation, the piece was declared *unfit for the stage*, and totally abandoned. Arnold having procured a copy of the same, produced it at his theatre, which he designated in his bills "An eccentric vehicle for music and scenic effect." "Der Freischutz" succeeded greatly, and made that season the most profitable he ever had. The opera was acted forty-three nights. Covent Garden brought it forward at the commencement of the following season with good results, and it was there repeated fifty nights. It was left, however, to Drury Lane to justify the full claims of this celebrated opera.

When "Der Freischutz" was originally produced by Arnold, Mr. Bennett sustained the part of *Caspar*, but being unable to sing, the music incidental to the character was sung by Mr. Phillips, who was at that time a member of the chorus. This imperfect arrangement was also adopted at Covent Garden Theatre, the part of *Caspar* being played by the same Mr. Bennett. To any one who may have witnessed the opera, as subsequently represented at Drury Lane Theatre, the above substitution must appear highly detrimental to stage illusion; and such, indeed, was the case.

Elliston, though late in the field, was determined to be the greatest, and produced this opera with its entire music, as arranged and composed by Weber himself. Horn was the *Caspar*, the best that has ever attempted

the part; T. Cooke quitted his seat in the orchestra to play *Adolph*, which exactly suited his powers; and Mr. Mountain was engaged to lead the band. One great feature in this opera was O. Smith's *Zamiel*, which he dressed with striking effect; the almost imperceptible movement by which he covered his victim, and the manner in which he disappeared, greatly added to the illusion of the scene; but the incantation scene far exceeded anything that had been witnessed on the stage. The gradual increase of terrific objects in various directions, and the horrific abruption, in which two gigantic figures (admirably conceived by Stanfield) rose to the whole height of the stage, formed a phantasma never surpassed in the history of dramatic mechanism.

Novelty ever found considerable favour with Elliston in his scheme of management; but eccentricity was absolutely german to his being.

For the pantomime of this season, "the Great Lessee" had engaged a troop of glass-blowers, who were to pass, in procession, over the stage, in some particular scene, as they have been witnessed a thousand times in the streets of London. What effect this was to produce, beyond the mere transporting a dull and dreary party of clubbists from their accustomed ground, no one could imagine, unless indeed the failure of the enterprise, which was obvious enough to every one.

The glass-blowers, with their lenses, chandelier-drops, salt-cellars, spun feathers, salad-bowls, glass eyes, inkstands, and (what was indeed a fresh phenomenon to the Drury manager) empty wine-decanters, made their transit from O.P. to P.S., on the first and only night of that year's harlequinade; after which, like meteors, they were seen no more.

This vitreous enterprise, in fact, was smashed. Elliston now dismissed his prismatic friends; but they, insisting on their engagement—namely, for the whole run of the pantomime, refused to take their discharge. A considerable altercation now ensued between the parties, the glassmen, blowing "like furnace," threatened immediate

destruction to the manager's chandeliers; but recollecting, that "they who live in glass houses should not throw stones," removed their complaint to the sitting magistrate at Bow Street.

The van-guard blower, who carried a glass-spun barrister's wig on a pole, was selected to open the case, which he did with considerable ability; the gentleman who poised the salt-cellars followed on the same side, and a case, which we might fairly call "splendidior vitro," was made out against the manager. Elliston, as usual, relied upon his speech; but, though not of the glass party, he was as easily seen through; for the worthy magistrate, considering his defence altogether in the light of an evasion, gave judgment against him. The affair was, however, compromised, and the glassmen, true to the motto, "*frangas non flectes*," retired peacefully to their own homes.

But the horizon of Elliston was becoming hourly more gloomy. Disaster alone was the fortune of the Olympic Theatre. Tenant after tenant failed; no money reached the thirsty exchequer of the still buoyant comedian; and before February, it became necessary for Elliston to sell some property which he held at Vauxhall; ground-rents to the amount, of £60 per annum and also sundry leasehold houses in that neighbourhood.

In January, 1825, Kean was announced for the part of *Richard III.* at Drury Lane; three days previous to which Sir Richard Birnie came to the theatre, by the directions of Mr. Secretary Peel, and represented to Elliston the ill-judgment and indelicacy of the dramatic measures, as Kean's trial in the Court of King's Bench (Cox *versus* Kean) had so recently taken place.

Elliston deemed it prudent to take the hint, and immediately started off for Croydon, where Kean was sojourning, for the purpose of discussing the matter with him. The manager was told the tragedian was reposing, but would see him. Elliston then proceeded up stairs, and opening the door of an apartment, discovered Kean, sitting on a couch, with a cigar in his mouth, and a glass

of brandy and water before him. At the further end of the apartment stood a "broom-girl," in picturesque attire, who had just concluded one of her characteristic melodies, accompanied by an itinerant tumbler, who was in the act of vaulting over the chairs and tables for the tragedian's amusement.

Elliston we believe might have been startled—as to blushing, we apprehend those days had long passed away—and, entering at once on his purpose, proposed some brief postponement of the tragedy; but Kean would listen to no suggestion of the kind;—he declared himself ready for war, and on the 24th would meet his enemies on that ground, which, by the assent of all England, was his own! "In the mean time," added he, "observe how quietly I am living here."

At about four o'clock, on the day in question, Kean arrived at the theatre, where a dinner had been prepared, according to his directions, for himself and two friends; but an intemperate indulgence on the previous night rendered him unfit to preside at his entertainment; so that his two friends sat down without him. As the hour of seven approached, immense crowds were collected about the doors of the theatre. Many, of the lowest rabble, who had no means—whatever might have been their desire—of getting into the house, hoped, at least, to hear something; and in the failure of any disturbance within, appeared not at all disinclined to try the experiment without.

Prepared for war, as he had expressed it, Kean presented himself to his audience, when a shout, intermingled with innumerable epithets of reproach, broke over him, which, to do justice to his valour, he sustained with a firmness worthy the cause of action. No cast of character had won him half the clamour of this "cast in damages;" and when, in the language of *Glo'ster*, he repeated,

> "Now do I fear I've done some strange offence,
> That looks disgracious in the city's eye,"

the tumult might verily have "torn the cave where echo

lies," for it was beyond description. Kean had, of course, the support of his friends, but the "Pitites," in cowardly security of numbers, still assailed him in scandalous epithets and upbraidings, which he met with temper and fortitude. At one moment called on for explanation, and at another cried down when attempting to speak, the actor might indeed have declared, the "British public" had lost their old claim to the title of "generous."

These scenes having been repeated for some further nights, Mr. Douglas Kinnaird addresses Elliston:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—As you have done me the honour to consult me once or twice lately about the most advisable course to be pursued in regard to Mr. Kean, I take the liberty of offering you my opinion:—Mr. Kean is lost if you again permit him to be thrust upon the stage, and to make speeches. I entreated Mr. Calcraft, last night, to urge upon you that, if Mr. Kean answered the partial and unmeaning call for him, he should only announce the play, and disappear. It is sending him forth to fight a shadow. He has no opponent. There is no accuser—no specific charge; but there is an irresponsible persecutor—viz. *a portion* of the press. He must retire, or bear it like a man—patience, and he will overcome it. But he must not make speeches. What he said last night was much more objectionable than what he uttered the second night, which was ill-judged enough.

"Yours, very truly, DOUGLAS KINNAIRD."

"Pall Mall East, February 4th, 1825."

Regardless of the homely counsels of his friend Lee, and the wise admonitions of Hughes, Kean was frequently answerable for flights and vagaries of which the subject of these Memoirs himself might have been downright envious; amongst which, the following was a theatrical gossip of the moment.

After playing *Richard III.* on a certain night, Kean was seized with the sudden resolution of going over to Streatham—an experimental project, as he humorously

said, to recover what he had lost by the exhaustion of acting. Descending from his vehicle, with his companion, at a road-side public-house, in the district of Brixton, he found himself in the midst of a party of drovers, who had been partaking pretty freely of strong ale and "early purl;" it being now about one o'clock in the morning. A dispute having arisen between one of the drovers and a gentleman, who, by the ribbon he wore across his breast, was evidently a rat-catcher, respecting the sale and delivery of a pair of short boots, our enterprising tragedian took part in the controversy. Kean, who was always liberal with his purse, having paid the reckoning for the beer, commenced adjudicating the knotty point in question. The crafty drover, perceiving the verdict to go against him, uttered aloud something highly disrespectful to the dignity of the judge, on which Kean, with the arm and "fiat" of Rhadamanthus himself, thrust the nose of the offending drover on the rim of the ale-measure. The pint-mug hint was quite sufficient; for the driver of cattle, smarting under the pain of collision with the pewter, sprang from the cask of herrings on which he was sitting, and leaving the rat-catcher to bag the boots, aimed a most angry blow at the head of our sometime pet of Drury. Kean, ever generous in his disputes as liberal with his gold, accepted the ordeal, and, declaring for fair play, set to work with all the vigour he could command.

Ten years earlier, he might have been the better man of the two; but, alas! poor Kean was quickly beaten; and though he had generously paid the tapster's score for the whole party, yet it was evident to his friend who had accompanied him, he would have been rifled of what yet remained in his pockets, had he not been taken care of.

Richard Tarleton, of earlier days, had similar whims for adventure. With Master George Peel and others, he delighted in disturbing our snoring forefathers. These boon companions would get royally drunk with loose lords and hen-pecked husbands, and scour the city.

Charles Horn had introduced, this season, to Drury Lane, a youth of considerable musical abilities, particu-

larly as a violin-player—a wild, ungovernable lad, but a special favourite with all his acquaintance. Within a very few years, he became one of our most successful and accomplished composers, and whose vocal attainments have justly gained for him the highest place in public favour. This youth is the present Mr. Balfe—we cannot forbear inserting one of his juvenile applications to the theatre:—

"Monday.

"Master Balfe requests it as a favour that Mr. Elliston will send him his discharge to-night, as he does not intend to trouble the theatre again. If Mr. Elliston wishes to know the reason, it is because Master Balfe will not play until his week's salary is paid; if Mr. Elliston will send him his discharge, in writing, Master Balfe will thank him, and, if, not, Master Balfe, being under age, begs leave to let Mr. Elliston know he will not, until forced, go again into the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane."

Harley, the agreeable Harley, now took his benefit; and numerous friends were assembled on this occasion.

Dowton, 1805, first recommended him to his manager at Rochester, *Bony Long*, a great character, who had five fingers and a thumb on each hand. Bony said he could not engage an untried actor; "But," added he, "Jerrold has a company at Cranbrook—he wants a stripling of your description, and I will recommend you." Jerrold writes, "I can give you fifteen shillings a week, if you have a tolerable wardrobe, and a benefit on the York plan, sharing after *five* pounds. (Five pounds would have been a crowded house.) I shall expect you, next Tuesday, to open in *Alonzo*, in 'Pizarro.'" Harley jumped at the offer—but he in fact appeared in *Sir Charles Cropland*. The farce was the "Citizen"—*Quilldrive*, by *Mr. Jones*; which Jerrold requested Harley to play; "for, between you and me," said he, "our company is rather thin, and there is no such person as 'Mr. Jones;' the part is only four or five lines; but I will give a point that will get you great applause, and make your benefit." There had

been a great deal of rain at Cranbrook, and the place nearly deluged; the water was carried off by very small apertures, called there, *gulley-holes*. Harley was remarkably thin; Jerrold's joke was—"I am so thin, that I fear, if the rain continues, I shall disappear through some of the *gulley-holes*." This point succeeded wonderfully as to applause, but not a jot towards the benefit.

So few were the members of the company, that in the "Honey Moon" Harley played *Jaques*, *Lampedo*, and *Lopez*, which he contrived to accomplish by the assistance of several wigs and cloaks. In "John Bull" he played *Dan*, *John Burr*, and *Sir Francis Rochdale;* another actor, *Peregrine* and *Tom Shuffleton;* and Mrs. Jerrold played *Mrs. Brulgruddery* and *Frank Rochdale;* representing the latter in a pair of very loose nankeen trowsers and a very tight short jacket, which constituted, in fact, the chief humour of the evening. The whole company consisted of four white males, three females, and a negro.

Early in January, Wewitzer, the last metropolitan contemporary, we believe, of Garrick, expired suddenly, being found dead in his bed at his lodgings in Wild Passage, Drury Lane. He had entered his seventy-seventh year.

Wewitzer had the character of a wit; and the term "Wewitzer's last" almost passed into a proverb. He was the author of a farce called the "Rake's Progress." Sheridan had so good an opinion of the piece, that he purchased it for £60, and the money was actually paid. Wewitzer also produced a successful pantomime at the Haymarket. He dabbled a little in poetry; published a jest-book, and a dramatic chronology, and had it in contemplation, being an excellent French scholar, to benefit the world by a work on the idiom of that language.

As an actor, Wewitzer's merits were limited; but in the parts of *Jews* and *foreigners* he pre-eminently excelled. His *Canton* and *Moses* were of the very first order of dramatic art.

Though in the receipt of £80 a year, for the last five years of his life, he was always poor, and for ever borrow-

ing trifling sums,—generally half a crown. He usually favoured his friend with a very small note—"Please lend me half a crown." Wewitzer never forfeited his word, for the conclusion of his notes generally ran, "but I shall never pay you."

Two of his sisters were on the stage; one became Lady Trelawny—for many years she lived in Ireland, and was residing there at the time of her brother's death, then upwards of seventy years of age. The other sister married a Mr. Lane, and lived in retirement. Wewitzer, for many years, had no intercourse with either of these sisters.

The presence of Wewitzer was necessary, on a certain occasion, at the house of Mr. Peake, where Sheridan had appointed to meet John Kemble, at eight o'clock in the evening, to transact some Drury business. Kemble was pretty punctual to his time. To occupy the interim, however, between this and the arrival of Sheridan, Peake produced his best Cognac, hot water, and double-refined sugar.

Conversation, of course, ensued; Peake and Wewitzer listened to the distinguished guest with the liveliest interest and satisfaction. The brandy was of the finest flavour, and met equal justice with the objects of attention. After *some time* Kemble, with remarkable quietude of manner, demanded what was the hour. "*Half-past five*," responded Peake, with similar composure; on which Kemble, rising quietly from his chair, walked towards the window, and deliberately unfastening the shutters, let in the warm saffron rays of morning, and, gazing into the street with quiet unconcern, exclaimed, "Well, Mr. Peake, I don't think Mr. Sheridan will be here *to-night*."

We submit a short correspondence between the manager of Drury Lane and Braham on the question of an oratorio engagement. Our readers may, perhaps, feel some interest in knowing the terms at which leading vocalists negotiated their services:—

"Southampton, Feb. 9th, 1825.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I think thirty guineas per night a very moderate remuneration for your humble servant, which would amount to 360 for the oratorio season. However, as I wish really to be of service to you, I will say 300 guineas certain, and shall expect the additional sixty according to circumstances. Ashley paid me £500.

"I remain, dear Elliston, yours, &c.

"JOHN BRAHAM."

"T. R. D. L., February 26th, 1825.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I am glad that we are to meet again; and your 300 guineas in cash shall be at your disposal; as for profits, the expenditure will be so great there is but little hope; however, if it come, it will be welcome to us both.

"Yours most truly,

"R. W. ELLISTON."

John Ashley, who conducted the oratorios at Covent Garden Theatre in earlier days, was a laborious and persevering man, and so careful of his gains, that he not only secured his gold under double lock and key, but kept the very hiding-place itself a secret from every member of his family. He would shift his hoards from place to place, as frequently as Oliver Cromwell changed his sleeping apartment; so that, about every third night, his bags and boxes were treated with a fresh lodging. "'Fast bind fast find,' a proverb never stale to thrifty mind."

The keys of his money-chest had more harmony for him than the keys of the harpsichord; and these he never permitted out of his sight, or, at least, his feeling, for he constantly carried them in his clenched hand, or, if in his pocket, still within the grasp of his fingers.

It was during the performance of one of these oratorios at Covent Garden Theatre that John Ashley was suddenly seized by a fit of epilepsy, and fell, as though

stricken with death, in the Green-room of the theatre. The patient, however, was so far restored as to regain consciousness of things around him, when, earnestly clasping the hand of his friend, who bent over him, he exclaimed, "In the name of Heaven, tell me what *sort of house it is.*"

Elliston received a letter, bearing the royal arms, from a lady who had rendered herself conspicuous for several preceding years. The note has reference to some transaction with the theatre :—

"The Princess of Cumberland presents her compliments to Mr. Elliston, and informs him that she has received her opera of 'Human Nature,' but that the other, 'Half an Hour Too Late,' has not been returned. Her highness is informed that it has been used ; both operas were delivered to Mr. Elliston in one envelope. The Princess Olive requests the favour of an explanation of these matters.

"Rules of the King's Bench, April 7th, 1825."

In December, 1809, Olivia Wilmot Serres advertised the publication of her "Miscellaneous Works" at the price of one guinea. Six years afterwards a letter appeared in the *Champion*, signed *Olivia Wilmot Serres*, 8, Queen Square, in which she stated, with plausible reasons, that her uncle, *Dr. Wilmot*, was the author of "Junius ;" and a few months afterwards, numerous documents appeared in the public papers for the purpose of proving that she was the legitimate child of the Duke of Cumberland, who had married privately Miss Olive Wilmot. These documents were signed by George III., and witnessed by Lord Chatham, Lord Warwick, and others ; and the Duke of Kent, when she grew up, appointed her (his *cousin*) to the care of his daughter ; all parties were bound to secrecy during the life of George III., the Duke having married another lady two years after, and therefore was guilty of bigamy. George III., by will, left Olive £15,000. She published these documents under the expectation of obtaining the money from Government.

Olivia was constantly before the public in some way or the other; at last, she got in debt, was arrested, and taken to a sponging-house.

The princess was removed thence to the Fleet Prison in her own carriage, the servants wearing the royal livery. The rules being prepared, she went into lodgings at a hosier's shop, the corner of Fleet Market. From the one pair of stairs window she frequently addressed the crowds which assembled to gaze on a princess, and it was with some trouble the landlord got rid of the nuisance.

In 1823, her case was brought before the House of Commons. Mr. Peel treated the matter with ridicule, and proved, as he said, that the whole of the documents were forgeries.

One of her stories, whether true or false, might have been ascertained, Lord Harcourt being then alive, and never contradicting it.

"Before I knew my royal birth, a circumstance introduced me to the knowledge of his late Majesty, in 1804. As I was, early one morning, making a drawing of the castle at Windsor, the King asked me, among other questions, my maiden name, which I informed his Majesty was *Olive Wilmot.* He appeared to be greatly agitated. A few days afterwards, the Earl of Harcourt paid me a visit, and presented me with £1,000 from the King, saying I was to have further sums by applying to himself, &c. &c. This £1,000 was in hundred-pound notes, and Lord Harcourt took them out of a remarkable snuff-box, which his lordship told me was a great curiosity, being one of the smallest oil-paintings that Morland, the celebrated artist, had ever executed; the subject was a Yorkshire landscape and figures. By his late Majesty's conscientious and gracious donation, it is evident that when he learnt my name, he knew me to be his injured niece.

"I have the certificate of my royal parent's marriage, and my baptism as the daughter of Henry Frederick Guelph, Duke of Cumberland, and Olive, his wife, bearing the signature of a virtuous clergyman of the Church of England; a certificate afterwards corroborated by

Lords Chatham, Ashburton, and Warwick; and I was fully christened in 1821, at St. Mary's, Islington, according to the rank of my royal parent."

Elliston had now sundry interviews with Mr. Betty, the celebrated English "Roscius," with the view of an engagement being entered into for the services of that gentleman, for a few nights at Drury Lane Theatre. These meetings, avowedly on points of business, so frequently—indeed, so invariably—terminating in the good fellowship of a supper and the flowing bowl, nothing was ever settled on the theatrical measure; the parties usually separating on fixing some future day for business, which day terminated after the same manner as all preceding. "We've done nothing to-night," said the manager; "but, on Thursday next, we will finally settle." Chedron's Hotel was generally the spot of the "belle alliance"—suppers were more discussed than plays, and far more bottles opened than theatrical engagements; in fact, the original object was ultimately completely lost sight of by both parties, till they parted for the last time, on better terms of cordiality, perhaps, than might have been the result of any professional connection.

Mr. Betty was born in 1791, and was in his fourteenth year when he first appeared at Covent Garden Theatre.

The engagement of Master Betty, the "Young Roscius," occasioned a great schism between the Drury Lane and Covent Garden proprietors; each had their agents, who followed him to various places where he was acting. A very voluminous correspondence took place between principals and agents, and, at last, the arbitration was left to the Rev. Bate Dudley, whose decision was, "*that they each had an equal claim;*" the "Roscius" was therefore to play six nights at each theatre, alternately, at fifty guineas a night; a clear benefit at the end of every six nights; Master Betty to commence at Covent Garden. He appeared in *Achmet*, in "Barbarossa."

The average of the first twenty-four performances was £609 per night. After completing his engagements of twelve nights at each theatre, a fresh one was made in

the Drury Lane proprietary, at *one hundred guineas a night.* He played during the season fifty-seven nights; the sum total of receipts amounted to £32,416, and the average £586 per night. The following statements will be found remarkable :—

Master Betty received for 57 nights' acting	£4,725
Also four free benefits, each exceeding £500....	2,000
	£6,725

Kean played 68 nights during his first season; the receipt was		£32,902
Baster Betty acted 57 nights	ditto	32,416

Kean's average nightly receipt was £484; Betty's, £586.

The 2nd of May was fixed for the second royal visit to the theatre, and the monarch of Drury Lane was prepared to give a fraternal welcome to George the Fourth. The king had held a drawing-room at Buckingham Palace on the morning of this day, and a few untoward events, added to the fatigue consequent on the ceremony, found his Majesty not in the most serene temper of mind on his return to Carlton House.

The coarse behaviour of the London mob, which had followed the royal *cortège* from the Palace to Pall Mall, a few hours before, had hardly passed from the memory of our gracious Sovereign. By the King's desire, however, the captain of the escort, Lord William Lennox, rode immediately abreast the window of the royal carriage; an arrangement wisely made, for, on the morning, as the august party were passing the entrance to the stable-yard, a missile was projected at the King's person, which struck the captain of the escort a pretty palpable hit. The gallant captain, however, shook his plumes, and all was well again.

The rush into the theatre was tremendous. Considerable uproar, from various parts of the house, ensued, on disputed seats and packed benches, which, just as the King entered his box, being at spring-tide, his Majesty felt impressed was chiefly directed towards his own per-

son. The Lord Chamberlain at once perceived the King's feeling, and instantly requested his vice-official, the Marquess Graham, to descend, and at once see the manager, that the uproar might be appeased by explanation. Lord Graham now hastened to the stage, where, meeting Elliston in full costume, and totally forgetting he was accosting a *crowned head*, exclaimed :—

"Mr. Elliston, this is disgraceful! You should have prevented this excess. The King is vexed, and will never again come to Drury Lane."

This speech, addressed as it was with considerable acrimony to Elliston, surrounded by many distinguished strangers and followers of the court, besides troops of his *own subjects*, very sensibly nettled him. He replied with equal warmth, but ten times greater dignity; when, at that moment, espying Lord William Lennox, he added—

"Now, my Lord Graham, I have a friend; my wounded honour I shall place in the hands of Lord William;" which having said, he sweepingly led the way across the stage into his own private room; the captain of the guard following.

This private room, the temple of "Mars, Bacchus, Apollo," and the Cytherean queen, exhibited, at this moment, striking symbols of the various deities, which rendered the apartment a complete Pantheon. Lord William, *en cuirass;* Elliston "with his sword by his side;" full bottles and empty bottles—the long-necked Champagne and the rush-covered Curaçoa—plays, poetry, and the "London Gazette"— fans, tippets, and handkerchiefs "of the smallest spiders' web," formed such a confusion of effects, tending far more, at this moment, to "puzzle the will," than to offer a calm occasion for the consideration of a most pregnant question.

Elliston now entered glandiloquently into the nature of his grievance; but his friend soon perceiving that, though the vice-chamberlain might have wounded the dignity of the manager, Moet had clearly disordered his wits; he gave him, therefore, certain advice, which produced the following.

"You are right, my lord. The *deputy* has affronted me, and a *deputy* shall reply to it. My stage-manager

shall take up the question in its present shape. I shall meet no one but the Lord Chamberlain himself. My lord, a glass of Madeira?"

Here Elliston rang the bell, and on an attendant entering, exclaimed, "Draw a bottle of Don Pedro's Madeira. We will drink, if you please, 'The British Army.'"

"By all means," replied Lord William; "and let us add, the fair owner of this little plaything," taking up carelessly a small ivory fan. On this piece of gallantry, the conversation took a turn, so abrupt and of so contrary a nature to the great question at issue, that we should only interrupt our main narrative by repeating it. . . .

The curtain had fallen on the night's entertainment—the King had returned to Carlton House—the escort to the Horse Guards; and it being now one o'clock of the following morning, the captain had doffed his leathern pantaloons and huge jack-boots, preparing himself for repose, when a sharp knock was heard at his chamber door.

"Who's there?" interrogated the captain, not a little disinclined to intrusion at such an hour.

"One of his Majesty's secretaries of state, my lord, on urgent business," replied the serjeant.

"What can it mean?" murmured the Horse Guardsman.

"I know not, my lord, but he said it was on business—'vital' I think was the word. The gentleman has been to-day at court, and is now in the sitting-room."

To the sitting-room Lord William immediately proceeded, when he beheld, seated in an arm-chair, no less a personage than the monarch of Drury Lane—King William Elliston! in the same court gear in which he had a few hours before attended the monarchy of Great Britain; but, a little damaged.

"I have taken the liberty," observed Elliston, in a manner even more impressive than his usual delivery, "during your lordship's delay, of ordering a weak glass of brandy and water from the Canteen."

Here the manager paused to sip his mixture—"My lord, we must go out this very morning—I am steady to my purpose," added he, reeling actually in his chair.

Lord William now perceived that a confused recollection of Lord Graham's affront had brought Elliston, drunk as —a lord from the Theatre to the Horse Guards; there to renew the story, and pass the remainder of a quiet evening.

Lord William now pursued the same policy he had taken in the manager's room ; namely, representing that it was utterly impossible the Monarch of Drury Lane could go out with any Deputy whatever ; and that, if he did, so far from his honour being vindicated, it would be more deeply involved.

To this Elliston listened as to a perfectly new proposition, and fixing his eyes steadily on Lord William, during a very lengthened pause—at last said—

"But, my lord—there is one question yet—"

"Name it, by all means."

"Might I suggest one more tumbler of brandy and water?"

Lord William gave assent for a replenish of the glass, which the Canteen man, having an eye to business, presently supplied.

Elliston having liberally tasted of this "refresher," committed himself to the confidence of another pause, after which he said—

"And now, my lord, I would beg to ask, in which of the Royal Parks do you propose the meeting?"

"Windsor, by all means," replied the captain,—"and what will be still more fitting, you shall fight under 'Herne's Oak,' and so make Shakspeare himself one of the party."

Elliston gazed for a moment, perfectly overcome by the sublimity of the proposition, and then, with a very 'far-gone' *impressement* of manner, exclaimed—

"Herne's Oak! admirable! my lord—and my Lord Graham shall remember the words of Master Page, 'There be many who do *fear* to walk by this Herne's Oak!'"—when up he rose.

"Can I assist you, Elliston?" asked Lord William, offering him his cocked hat, and disentangling his sword from his silken legs.

"By no means," replied Elliston; "but—but your man is a long time about *this* tumbler of brandy and water."

"Nay, nay," cried Lord William, again laughing, "you forget—you have already despatched it; and really, as it is very late——"

"True, true!" interrupted Elliston, drawing out his watch, and looking at the reverse side of it; "we must be going—Lord Graham will be punctual—hair triggers, my lord—and my hand is steady as iron."

"Hush! Do you know what day this is?—Sunday morning."

"Then," said Elliston, "your man is the more reprehensible in his delay of mixing this brandy and water."

After some further difficulty, the manager was placed in the hackney-coach. "You'll follow, my lord?" said he, in a confidential whisper.

"Certainly."

"Then, I am content. To Shooter's Hill!" exclaimed the manager to the coachman—and off he drove.

The next morning, or rather that very morning, by ten o'clock, Robert William Elliston, in full possession of his energies, and far more alive to business than many about him, was at his writing-table in that private room, in which, ten hours before, he had toasted the fair owner of the ivory fan.

In the course of the morning the following letter reached him:—

"Chamberlain's Office, 3d May.

"SIR,—I regret to have heard that you felt hurt at some expression I used towards you, last evening. This was far from my intention, my only object being to induce you to take some means which would remedy the disorder in the pit of the Theatre; as well as the annoyance which it was to his Majesty, and the rest of the audience. I feel sorry that you should have misconceived me so as to suppose I would intentionally have said anything disagreeable to you.

"I remain, Sir, your obedient,

"GRAHAM."

In this month, Sheridan Knowles's drama, "William Tell," was acted at Drury Lane Theatre, for the first time. Its success was unqualified, and Macready's impersonation of the hero, a most effective and masterly piece of dramatic art. The history, however, of this play, immediately preceding the night in question, is rather curious. The fifth act was in rehearsal, on the morning previous to representation, when Macready abruptly quitted the theatre, declaring the play was not in a state for acting, and that he consequently should not play the part. The consternation of the manager may be imagined. A messenger, with a letter from Elliston, was despatched to Macready, at his residence, Hampstead Heath, but he returned with the forbidding reply, that Mr. Macready still positively refused to play on the ensuing evening.

On the following morning, Elliston received the annexed letter, which, in justice to Macready's friendliness we beg to insert :—

"MY DEAR SIR,—Your note was delivered to me in bed, last night, and I was obliged, in consequence, to return a verbal answer. I can only repeat my deep regret, that you should be inconvenienced ;—were I now in health and strength, I know I should long since have been induced to yield to your necessities.

"I certainly said, more than once, that you might almost rest secure of me for Wednesday, 11th ; but at that time Mr. Knowles himself had engaged to stay in town and assist me, which he has not done, but left me entirely to my own resources. As to neglecting rehearsals, I cannot really divine to what you refer, unless to my quitting the stage yesterday, when you asked a gentleman there to arrange the last scene of the play. I now understand you do not wish me to play the part at all, if not to-night. If you will give me back my strength and health, I will do it. I am truly, truly sorry that I cannot ; and since my engagement must be of little or no value to you without a novelty, I do not desire to take your money, or occupy your nights, unless I fully answer your demands on my exertions.

"Unprepared and imperfect as we are, I am OBLIGED to say, I cannot (although I would if I could) play it to-night. In declaring this, to show you that I wish only justice, I also state that I will, without a murmur, abandon my engagement, and even my benefit night, the only *chance* I look to for meeting the expenses of my coming and staying here, rather than that you should, for one moment, impute to me selfish or sinister motives.

"I am, with every good wish, my dear Sir,

"Yours very truly,

"WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY."

But the production of the play for the 11th was still a vital question with the lessee; one effort more was resolved on, and Elliston determined on going himself to Hampstead. "Journeying with this intent," he met Macready on his road to town, when they directed their steps to Drury Lane—Macready here still refused to comply. George Robins was eloquent, and backed his hopes by a bet, that Macready would yet assent. Calcraft, on the other hand, was buried in despair. Efforts were yet stirring until five o'clock; but in vain. At length, however, Calcraft, in most impressive language, begged the trial of the play, as a personal favour, pleading the serious exigencies of the establishment. Macready yielded—the play was acted—and no drama on a first representation had ever been more triumphant!

Terry, in July, purchased, in conjunction with Yates, the Adelphi Theatre, and withdrew himself, consequently, from Drury Lane Theatre. He showed Elliston a letter, which he had received from Sir Walter Scott, enclosing £500, an intended legacy to his godson, Walter Scott Terry, which he now advanced to the father to assist him in his new purchase—Alas, poor young Walter was never benefited by a single penny—the whole being swallowed up in Terry's failure.

On a certain occasion, at the close of this season, Elliston and Beazley met, as fellow-travellers, on the outside of the Hastings coach; there was also a third person, a precise-looking stranger, who sat by them. After travelling several stages together, in the merriest humour imaginable, the coach arrived at Riverhead, the place of Beazley's destination. Here he alighted, and, noticing the atmosphere to give pretty positive indications of a storm, observed to Elliston, in the most confidential terms, as he was descending, that, in the event of rough weather, he was at liberty to use his great coat, which lay on the roof of the coach, on condition he would bring it safely to London at a stated time. The offer was extremely opportune, and so accepted. The friends shook hands; Beazley struck off into a new direction, and the coach proceeded towards Tunbridge.

Within ten minutes, surely enough, the windows of the heavens were opened, and a pitiless rain came down. Elliston, of course, seized the coat, and had already thrust his right arm into it, when the prim stranger started up, and, with a most grotesque look of dismay, exclaimed, "Hollo, sir!—that's my coat!"

"Your coat, sir?" responded Elliston, forcing the other arm with greater resolution into its appropriate sleeve—"your coat, sir? I hold this property under an assignment of my friend, who has just quitted us."

"Your friend, sir? I know nothing of your friend, and as little of you. I only know that's my coat, and I must have it." Here the rain poured down still more furiously; and in vain the disseised claimant protected himself, by buttoning up the scanty black jacket which he already had on, and covering his kersey pantaloons with a shattered cotton handkerchief, figured by the signs of the Zodiac, of which *Aquarius* was uppermost—"Sir, I'm wet through already, and must have it—must—must—I tell you."

"My friend—if you take this coat, I shall be wet through also;" emphatically observed Elliston, "and there is no occasion for both of us to suffer by one shower of rain."

The fact is, by this time, Elliston clearly perceiving

he had been made a subject of Beazley's *mauvaise plaisanterie*, hugged himself still closer under the folds of his most ample wrapper.

"D—n it, sir," cried the traveller, "I'm a quiet man; but this is enough to make a Quaker strangle his grandmother. Sir, I must have my coat—my coat, sir."

The rain still appeared to increase, and the manager still closer hugged himself.

"Sir, sir, but you shall hear of this!"—roared the stranger, who perhaps had never been in so thorough a passion before in his whole life—"whoever you are, sir. Here, coachman—stop! stop, I say!"

"Stop, just in the middle of the town, sir, in ten minutes," said the driver, without turning his head.

The coach no sooner stopped than down sprang the stranger in the kerseys, which positively clove to his bones tighter than his own skin, and, in a fury not to be described, commenced a headlong appeal to the coachman. The driver, who was himself a bit of a wag, soon discovered, by our hero's style of justification, that some wicked game had been at work, and was about advising a division of the property between the two claimants, by tearing the surtout into two equal parts, when Elliston magnanimously said—

"No; this quiet gentleman and myself have both set up a claim to the garment in question, and the worthy judge, like another Solomon, would recommend a severance of the limbs. To that I am not a consenting party. Listen, then," continued he, unbuttoning the coat, and deliberately preparing to put it off, as the rain had by this time considerably abated. "Listen! I have enjoyed the services of this coat for seven miles, and will now make a new assignment of it to my friend here for the remainder of his days."

"But I am going no further!" screamed the appellant.

"Nor I," replied Elliston, who now walked into the inn-yard to order a chaise for a cross-road.

It was at the request of the committee of Drury Lane that Elliston had set off for the purpose of seeing a

certain actor, who was then engaged at the Wells theatre.

The play was "Richard III.," the actor in question sustaining the principal character. That it was a wild-goose chase may be readily believed, for disapprobation was soon manifested in very palpable hisses, and by the end of the third act, the endemic pervaded the whole audience. The acting certainly was bad, but the ill-nature of the audience, a far greater scandal of the two. Suddenly the poor persecuted player, dropping his character, advanced to the front of the stage, and thus addressed his judges :—

"Ladies and Gentlemen,— Mr. Kean is playing this part in London at a salary of £30 per night: I receive but 15*s.* a week; and if it isn't good enough for the money, may the Lord above give you a better humanity."

This well-timed reproof, delivered with much point and feeling, won instantly all hearts to his favour. It is unnecessary, however, to state, the charm did not extend to the manager of Drury Lane.

The "iron tongue of midnight" had tolled twelve as Elliston was stepping into his carriage from the stage-door of Drury Lane Theatre, when a stranger suddenly sprang forward from an obscure corner of the hall, and, presenting his card, demanded an instant audience from the fleeting manager.

"I am, Mr. Elliston," said the stranger, "the author of a tragedy, enclosed many months ago to this theatre, by the title, 'John Sobieski.' I have called, sir, fourteen times at this door, and——"

"Is it in a blue cover?" demanded Elliston, with much vivacity.

"The very same."

"Then just step into my carriage, and we will talk the matter over."

The author having obeyed, Elliston followed, and with great deliberation threw himself back on his seat, and the vehicle moved on. The imprisoned author naturally

looked to this opportunity for talking the matter over, but to his great mortification, the manager uttered not a word. Within twenty minutes the carriage drew up in Hadlow Street, at the residence of James Wallack, when Elliston, with much solemnity of manner, begged to be excused for a short time, as he had some important business to transact with his friend at the house in question. The dramatist, though a little astonished, had no choice but consent, and out stepped the manager, leaving *John Sobieski* tenant of the vehicle. The fact was, Elliston had engaged to sup with Wallack, and had arrived, true to his appointment, for that agreeable purpose. Not a syllable now passed between the two friends respecting *John Sobieski* in the coach, and, in the course of ten minutes, Elliston had altogether forgotten he had ever heard of such a being.

Wallack's supper, as may be well believed, was liberal enough, and, at about three o'clock in the morning, Elliston, having dipped into more tumblers of brandy and water than plays, was about taking his departure, after the best manner he was able. Appearing now to have some little recollection of *John Sobieski*, who still remained in the carriage, Elliston desired his coachman to descend, and making him take an inside seat *vis-à-vis* to the patient Pole, he mounted the box, and gathering up the reins, drove off.

What passed during their sinuous course between "John" the Coachman and "John" the Pole, has never been ascertained, but in due time the party reached Elliston's stables, when the galliard manager descending, with the same air of gravity with which he had mounted, deliberately walked to his own home, leaving his man and the author to settle between them all that remained to be said on "John Sobieski" in the blue cover.

Before noon, however, of that very day, Elliston enclosed the missing tragedy, with a very penitent letter, and a free-admission to Drury Lane for the season, to the enraged dramatist.

"Authors spring up like mushrooms," observed Mr. Calcraft, on hearing Elliston had refused this play.

"They do," replied the great lessee; "but if they were only half as good, I should like them better."

The Manager receives the following strange announcement from a "stricken" youth, dated from Devonport:—

"SIR,—I have at length summoned fortitude, and address you. My resolution is to tempt my stars on the stage; this, many have hazarded before me; some with success, others with failure. My experiment, therefore, is no new story. The course, Mr. Elliston, was your own.

"My age is not quite eighteen years. I am slightly built, and not fully developed; but my style of acting is the bold—the impressive—the stately and the grand. In one word, the disguise I hint at will be *my sex:* I am a fair youth, and desire to try the part of *Meg Merrilies.* Should I succeed, I would then proceed to *Elvira* and *Lady Macbeth.* History shall record me the 'D'Eon' of the stage. When of age, I shall come into possession of considerable property; I then quit the stage, and bid you farewell. My trustees and yourself shall be alone possessed of the secret. Should you entertain my proposal, on which many minor points still remain for discussion, direct a letter, 'C. M.,' to be left at No. 9, a stationer's, Newington Butts, nearly opposite the church."

It is needless to say, the "*Chevalier*" had no response from the manager. Within a week from the date of the above, Elliston received a brief note from the impatient "false one," censuring his neglect, and demanding an immediate answer. The answer, however, not forthcoming, nothing further was heard of the Chevalier. The above was supposed to be an *ébat* of Theodore Hook.

The failure of a drama which had been produced at Drury Lane, under the title "Five Minutes too Late," and brought out with very considerable expense, was a serious blow to the subject of these Memoirs. The piece was produced with the view of giving a representation of the coronation of the King of France; written by George Colman. Although aided by the masterly productions of Stanfield, who actually went to Rheims to make his ne-

cessary sketches, and many incidental exertions, involving an extensive outlay, the result of "Five Minutes too Late," was a melancholy event to the struggling manager.

The prosperity of Elliston was now clearly gone ; his resources fast failing, and his health materially invaded ; but he was still not without hope ; and there were moments (alas ! nocturnal) when, under the influence of his old treacherous friend, the distiller, he yet resolved "with a light heart to begin the world anew."

Certain it is, a very novel determination occupied him for several weeks, and this was a trip to America, whereby he calculated on reaping considerable profit, and by his absence silencing, in a great measure, popular abuse, which, at this period of his history, was heaped unsparingly upon him.

He now sent for his eldest son, William, whom he had recently placed at the university, to take the management of the theatre, and Mr. Calcraft attended a meeting of the committee, to make arrangements for Elliston's departure. For some unexplained cause, the Atlantic project was finally abandoned.

A very considerable time had passed away, and Elliston had heard nothing of "Invisiblina," when a letter reached him, from his mysterious monitress:—

> " I ne'er shall stay my prose or lay—
> My caution ne'er shall end,
> Until I hear you're fairly clear,
> Of your base *city friend*.
> While both you quaff—he has the laugh—
> You pocket all the care,
> The *silversmith* is Falsehood's myth,
> And plated as his ware.
>
> " You nightly meet—you pay the treat—
> But that is not the worst,
> He gains his end upon his friend,
> A usurer accurst.
> For *silver stand*, your note of hand
> You give, as ready quit—
> While he has due your I. O. U.,
> And serves you with a writ."*

* These hints of "Invisiblina" apply to a disreputable silversmith with whom Elliston had become, unfortunately, familiar.

Elliston having presented to Talma, in the summer, a beautiful Roman stage sword;—received the following handsome acknowledgment from the French tragedian:—

"MY DEAR MR. ELLISTON, — I am informed by the newspapers that you were not in a very good state of health; however, I keenly wish that this letter may find you in better spirits. I return you my most hearty thanks for the valuable token of your friendship and testimony of your kind remembrance. How do you go on with your theatrical affairs? Has your 'French Coronation' filled up your cash-box? I hope, for the good I wish you, that the English copy has attracted a greater influx of gazers than the French original. We have been accustomed to so many extraordinary things in France, that we take very little notice of those kind of shows; but if we, like you, are not permitted to expose to public gaiety, upon our theatres, mock-priests and all the ecclesiastical hierarchy, we have, in reward, the immense advantage to possess them in reality, and all the congregation of the Jesuits over the bargain.

"The newspapers tell us that Macready and Kean have left you to hunt after fortune in America—is not it a great loss for you? I see that you have been much perplexed by the amorous adventure of the latter. The public were, indeed, very unjust towards him; for, on the stage, he was but the representative of *Richard* or of *Hamlet*. They had nothing to do with Mr. Kean, the private gentleman, seducer or seduced. They had a right to judge of his capacities on the stage, and not of his wrong-doing in the chamber. His life in the vulgar world had no relation with his life in the poetical world. The stage and a court of justice are quite distinct things; but, my dear sir, in England, as in France, the Public by a secret impulse of envy, delight often in putting down the idol they have once erected; they are like those capricious savages who flog their gods when they imagine they have some cause of complaint against them. As, with regard to Miss Foote, it seems that public opinion

has taken another course; but it is not surprising; opinion upon the actions of those who lead a public life often forms itself at random; it is a kind of lottery—hazard makes the losers and the gainers—however, it seems that our old French gallantry has passed over to England, and mastered even your stern judges; they have sided with the fair sex and taken the part of beauty. So much to their credit! God bless you, my dear Elliston, and let me tell you, like the doctor in our Molière, *Salus, honor, et argentum atque bonum appetitum!*

"Your ever well-wisher and friend,

"TALMA."

In apparent health, Elliston had attended the general meeting of Drury Lane proprietors in July 1825; his energies were at their accustomed pitch, and his mind displayed that usual quick perception and ability to business for which, from a youth, he had been remarkable. In August, not quite a fortnight from the above meeting, only then in his fifty-first year, Elliston had become, as though by the retributive visitation of the slighted deity Prudence, a helpless, decrepit, tottering old man! Awful, as remarkable, was this sudden change. From his erect position he had sunk, like the yielding foundations of a stately pile—the proportions of the fabric were lost, and he seemed yet to survive only at the will of chance. But Dr. Pearson had had much experience in his patient. He persisted that his patient would yet live, and rally; for it was now confidently reported his dissolution was at hand.

Within a few days Elliston was so far recovered from this extraordinary attack as to be able to take a short drive in his carriage; and, in the same month, while returning from one of these brief excursions, he was arrested by a Jew, residing in Hemming's Row, for £50—a sum which had remained still unpaid, of an enormous amount, which the manager had inconsiderately given for a few suits of clothes, which had been used in the unfortunate "Five Minutes too Late."

On the following week, he was at liberty to be removed, on board a steamer, for the purpose of going to Ramsgate;

—a power of attorney was in consequence executed, empowering his eldest son, William Gore Elliston, to act for him in the affairs of the theatre. The language of the medical certificate, under which the power was granted, is rather curious :—

"I do hereby certify that Robert William Elliston, Esq., is at this time labouring under inability in the use of his hands, so as to deprive him of the power of writing the letters of his own language, or of any other language; but that he is in a perfectly sound state of mind, and, of course, competent to transact any business requiring the faculties of reason.

"GEORGE PEARSON, M.D., Physician.

"George Street, Hanover Square,
"August 15th, 1825."

Kenny was now appointed young Elliston's adviser; and had the official been equal to his duty, the Elliston interest in Drury Lane Theatre might, for a time, have been kept together. Kenny received a salary of £7 per week; he attended the theatre but rarely, and produced two unsuccessful pieces.

In September, 1825, Drury Lane Theatre again opened, this being the sixth season of Elliston's term.

The lessee returned from Ramsgate, considerably improved in health; but still unrestored to the use of his hands. He had the mortification of discovering his affairs, which had become "Fine by degrees, and beautifully less," in a still deeper state of embarrassment than when he quitted London. This the committee having foreseen, called together a meeting of their body, and the result of their deliberations compelled their lessee to retire for a time within the sanctuary of the rules of the King's Bench Prison.

The expenses at this time at Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres greatly exceeded £200 per night. In 1765, those of Drury Lane were less than £70. The company consisted of about 160 performers. Garrick was at the head of the company, with a salary per night of

£2. 15s. 6d.; Yates and his wife at £3. 6s. 8d.; Palmer and his wife, £2; King, £1. 6s. 8d.; Parsons, the same; Mrs. Cibber, £2. 10s.; Mrs. Pritchard, £2. 6s. 8d.; Mrs. Clive, £1. 15s.; Miss Pope, 13s. 4d.; Signor Guistinelli (chief singer), £1. 3s. 4d.; Grimaldi and his wife (chief dancers), £1.

To St. George's Fields, that territory of his early fame,—the soil which he had actually rendered famous, the "Great Lessee" of Drury Lane now withdrew. But in his obscure spot, Temple Place, he was neither forgotten nor neglected by the friends his good fellowship had once acquired; so that, like William Oldys, there was some danger of his becoming positively enamoured of his retreat. Nor were there wanting others who, having still faith in the prosperity of his days to come, collected around him through more worldly considerations. Though still labouring under infirmity, yet his stout heart and natural temperament sustained him buoyant over his almost unfathomable perplexities, and enabled him to view, with an unruffled spirit, some scandalous attempts to blacken his reputation and irritate his creditors.

In consequence of these, Mr. Robins, in a published letter, observes:—

". ....It is not for me to give publicity to what may be Mr. Elliston's available property; but I can boldly assert, without fear of contradiction, that one-fourth of the amount stated by the *Times*, and very considerably less than the sum expended on the improvement of the theatre, would clear Mr. Elliston from every pecuniary difficulty; consequently, his debts have 'this extent—no more.'

"The statement, 'That a creditor present refused to sign the letter of licence, and added, that it was precipitate in me to propose it,' is entirely without foundation.

"There were assembled creditors to the amount of £12,000 and upwards; and I should do injustice to the kind feeling that actuated them all, were I to deny myself the gratification of stating that there was not a dissentient voice."

Elliston, as we have observed, was not left to sour at "man's ingratitude" in St. George's Fields; and when visited here by "troops of friends," he would waggishly observe, "In the *situation* in which I now am, there are *no followers allowed.*" His little tea-parties, notwithstanding, became positively a fashion, at least, a point of attraction; on which occasion that gentle sex, willing to participate adversity with those they regarded, were by no means strangers. In fact, Elliston's tea-parties in St. George's Fields were as *spirituels* as Foote's in the Haymarket, and as many "good things" both said and acted. We doubt whether the tea-table of Garrick and Mrs. Woffington, with Dr. Johnson for their guest, could have been more sparkling. One lady presents him with a bouquet of her own culling, another with a woollen comforter of her own working, and a third some conserves of her own curing; and for conclusion,

> "To make the worst, the monarch did no more
> Than all the Ptolemys had done before."

In January, 1826, the Drury Lane Beef-steak Club was established. This, the youngest of many descendants of the first-born bearing this name, at whose christening Garrick himself stood sponsor, was by no means a sprig unworthy the family stock. The object of the Drury Club of 1826 was to bring together, at the social board, artists connected with all departments of the drama, at stated periods; where the flow of soul might be of the richest vintage, but the board itself moderate and limited. The dinner was literally beef-steak fare, and at half-past four o'clock punctually served up, so that the actors who might on the same evening be required on the stage, would have ample time and opportunity for partaking the good cheer without interruption to their professional obligations.

One of the chief characteristics of this club was their place of meeting. This was in a small apartment expressly constructed within the large area of the painting-room, boxed in by thin partitions, painted and decorated by Marinari, emblazoned by appropriate symbols and illus-

trated by pointed sentences. The "Leges Convivales" were placed in a conspicuous part of the room. Here were no drones; the "fruges consumere nati" had here but little chance for admission, though, be it well advised, the beef-steaks themselves were excellent, and as thoroughly enjoyed. Discord and contention were perfectly unknown, unless, indeed, that intellectual strife in which the hits are sometimes hard, and the sense of them smarting; but, like those by Telephus, the inflicter himself administered a cure, in the perfect good humour by which he stanched the wound. The steaks were dressed within sight and hearing of the seated guests, and the cook, in the true spirit of freemasonry, himself a member, was first-rate in his own department, and equally jealous of his privilege. This "painted chamber," hallowed as that at Westminster, resounded again with the common congratulations of friends at half-past four, and re-echoed the alternate *bon-mots* as they fell, like hail-stones, from all points of the compass; or, rather, each member, like the princess in fairy land, opened not his mouth but out dropped some flower of fancy, some spiritual exotic, by which the whole conservatory was fragrant. Here might Darwin have imagined a fresh "Botanic Garden," and conceived new fancies in luxurious rhyme. Here might Goldsmith have indulged in a new "Retaliation," and poured out his pleasant satire in characteristic touches.

Here, also, were commingled the wondrous sultanism of Elliston, the melody of Braham, the smart repartee of Cooke, the sprightliness of Wallack, the humour of Johnstone, the fun of Harley, the "franking" of Calcraft, the *bisticcio* of Beazley, the anecdote of Lamb, the versatility of Mathews, the sententiousness of Arnold, the *falsetto* of Kelly, the old school of Pope, the sly flings of Peake, the roar of Robins, the dry rubs of Dunn, and the amusing simplicity of Linley. Here the members sat, with their silver gridirons dangling from their buttons; not the only "orders," perhaps, then admitted into the theatre, whilst the company itself composed a "free list" far more choice and beneficial than that which nightly

crowded the narrow side-entrance to the entertainments at Drury. The vocal course of the banquet was generally served with Kelly's "Woodpecker," Jack Johnstone's "First of August," and Billy Linley's "Woodman." Yet "all that's bright must fade," and the "Drury Lane Beef-steak Club," though in great vigour for the few years in which it flourished, at length dwindled to a shade, and lives now but only in tradition.*

We have, from time to time, found it necessary to turn our attention to the mysterious "Invisiblina." Her repeated letters;—her undoubted regard for the well-being of our hero;—and her accurate information in respect of all his movements, greatly disturbed him. This state of things still continued, and although years had passed away since the date of her first epistolary favour, yet an equal mystery still hung over the machinery by which she worked and the region of her habitation.

On a certain afternoon, Elliston, by some strange chance, being actually at home, a person rang at the street-door bell, and on a female servant appearing, placed a letter in her hands, addressed to her master, and immediately, at a brisk pace, made the best of his way into Oxford Street. Elliston, at that moment, was passing through his hall; he had caught a glimpse of the fleeting emissary, and having cast his eye on the superscription of the packet, at once perceived the nature of the correspondence.

Without waiting the delivery of his hat, he sprang

* Of the original Beef-steak Club (to which we have elsewhere alluded), Mrs. Woffington was a member, and president, and the only woman admitted to the society. During its time, the Kit-Cat also flourished. This club took its name from Christopher Cat, who sold mutton pies, and it was held in Shire Lane, Fleet Street. About forty noblemen and gentlemen of the first rank composed this celebrated fraternity. The verses for their toasting-glasses were written by Garth, and the portraits of all its members painted by Kneller. Jacob Tonson was their "Billy Dunn" (secretary), and built a gallery at his house at Barn Elms, for the reception of the pictures, and where the club occasionally held its meetings.

into the street, with all the alacrity he could command, and taking the direction of the letter-bearer in question, in two minutes had turned the corner of Stratford Place, into the stirring thoroughfare of Oxford Street. Here he paused for a moment, and again took to his heels, in the line of Cumberland Gate. His pace and aspect, naturally enough, excited the stare and astonishment of the crowd; when at the corner of Duke Street, with an exclamation of triumph, he seized a person roughly by the arm, and, in the half-intelligible accents which his breathless state permitted, cried:

"Ay! now, now, I have you!—have you at last!—you shall evade me no longer—no longer!"

The man thus so unceremoniously handled and wildly accosted, turned with a look of dismay, for which a painter would have given the ransom of a king. The gazers thickened. "Why—why—what's this?" demanded the terrified *détenu.*

"No—no, no longer!" repeated Elliston, acquiring a little strength. "Where is she? what is she? Tell me! I must be satisfied."

The surrounding people, as little understanding the meaning of this address as the poor prisoner himself, were presently divided on two questions; one party looking on Elliston as a maniac, and another quite as satisfied the prisoner was a pickpocket.

"Take him to the watch-house, sir," cried one. "I knows him; 'tisn't the first time."

"Has the gentleman no attendant—no keeper?" questioned a second, who took up the other surmise in respect of Elliston's wits.

"Will you satisfy me on 'Invisiblina?'" demanded Elliston, with the fury of *Octavian* himself.

"Release me, madman!" vociferated the other. The mob now shouted again.

At this period of our history the street police were not in operation; but one or two persons more sensible than the mass of idlers around, suspecting some unhappy misunderstanding between the parties, interfered, and by their management, Elliston and his *fast* friend were

hurried within the doors of a neighbouring public-house.

The scene being now shifted to the back parlour of the "Wheatsheaf," this eccentric drama proceeded. The passionate excitement of Elliston had a little abated, but the indignation of the unfortunate stranger was considerably increased. Again he violently appealed, and angrily demanded the reason of this extraordinary usage, when Elliston, becoming somewhat intelligible, and the nature of the case being partly explained, it turned out (as the reader may guess) that the bewildered manager had laid his hands on the wrong person; the one present, being a decent tradesman on his way home to his five o'clock tea and toast, and the real emissary of "Invisiblina," by this time, in receipt of his half-crown reward for his meritorious punctuality.

In April, Elliston was so far recovered, that he once again made his obeisance before a crowded audience under the old roof, Drury Lane Theatre. *Rover* was again himself. He had wisely chosen this part for his reappearance, in which he had always given the most lively satisfaction, by a varied display of his rich comic powers; and on this occasion, with the exception of a little rigidity of muscular action, he appeared to recuperate the very days of his early celebrity. The duration of Elliston's late confinement, under the double lock of law and physic, had not been unwisely employed. If we cannot, in sooth, repeat—

> "Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
> Ease and alternate labour, useful life,
> Progressive virtue and approving Heaven,"—

we can, with confidence, declare that his time of estrangement from the turmoil of Drury Lane Theatre was occupied in a way creditable to his good resolutions. He had studied diligently in this interim, the character of *Falstaff;* had read the best critiques on former actors in the part, and brought to his aid the most earnest application of his own natural perceptions. His object was

not merely to play the part of *Falstaff*, but to give "one laurel more" which should be worthy of his early days, and honourable in his decline.

The 11th of May was the day advertised for his appearance in "The First Part of Henry IV.," and, at the last rehearsal, on the boards of the theatre, a private party of friends was assembled to witness his reading, and conceptions of the several scenes.

Not less encouraged by the friends around him, than animated by the project he had undertaken, Elliston went through the rehearsal of the part in a masterly and striking manner, delighting and astonishing all around him.

"What will he do at night?" was now the universal inquiry—which, while some asked themselves with sentiments of secure exultation, others repeated with most unwilling foreboding. A great house was expected, for Elliston and his friends were fully persuaded the eyes of Europe were fixed on the event of the 11th of May at Drury Lane. The auditory, however, was not numerous, but of a character, flattering to the comedian, being composed of the oldest play-goers and true lovers of the drama. Elliston played his part, and played it well. His rich, oily, vein of humour was copiously poured out in his delineation of the cozening knight, and his pointed delivery of his whimseys, in soliloquy, rendered the performance, if not unequalled, yet assuredly striking. The truth must be told:—The keen edge of that spirit, which he was unable strenuously to wield, yet glittered through the worn scabbard of his mortal frame, and would not be drawn. His acting on this night we cannot say was unequalled, for it had been greatly surpassed by the memorable rehearsal of which we have spoken.

The annual dinner, in aid of the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund, having taken place, Elliston, who had been announced for his second appearance in the part of *Falstaff*, on the following evening, prepared for the completion of his efforts. Beyond doubt, considerable interest had been excited in the dramatic circles by this novel undertaking, and a report of the famous rehearsal having,

by this time, become a topic of theatrical gossip, a numerous party was assembled on the occasion.

Elliston, though labouring under extreme debility, resolutely avoided his old *restaurant* and its usurious effects, wine. He ate little, for, alas, he could do no more, and a single glass of Madeira was the only *appui* to the night's enterprise! His energies were fully and successfully displayed in the two first acts of the tragedy, so fully, that he unfortunately drew on the whole amount, while expenditure was still necessary. As he proceeded he weakened, and gave most distinct signs of inadequate strength even to sustain the struggle. The fifth act had commenced, and in his scene with the *Prince of Wales*, as he was approaching the orchestra, he fell bodily on the stage, through utter exhaustion. This was the last night that Elliston ever appeared on the boards of Drury Lane Theatre!

We have never attempted to justify Elliston's irregularities, or to veil his errors, but the general report of his ebriety on this occasion was totally without foundation. False, however, as it was, he had only to thank the reputation he had acquired, for the insinuations in question; as some characters may lay to their account, not to be believed though they do speak the truth. The "*John Bull*," in noticing this event, tartly observed, that "Elliston fell *off* in the fourth act, and fell *down* in the fifth." As monarch of Drury, Elliston, farewell!

> "Who ventured all his fortunes at a cast,
> And fought, like Hannibal, to fall at last."

Two days after the above event, as Elliston was musing —perhaps occupying himself in vain regrets—the usual hall porter tapped at his door panel and announced a stranger. Before the manager had power either to deny himself or permit an interview, the said stranger was in his presence. Elliston looked with some little astonishment, for verily the intruder was of a habit to excite it. He was a tall man, with long, black, but scanty hair. His shirt-collar was of very large dimensions, one side of which positively covered his cheek, and the other, beaten

down, lay over a loose, wry-tied neckcloth. He wore a green coat, and waistcoat of the same colour, both of which were liberally adorned by gilt basket-buttons; a pair of grey tight pantaloons and high shoes, completed his costume.

"Mr. Elliston!" cried he, abruptly seating himself, whilst he thrust out his legs from the chair, and plunged his hands into his two capacious pockets—"Mr. Elliston, have I the pleasure of beholding you—of speaking to you? My name, sir, is *Gordon*."

The manager replied, with a look which seemed to say, "I see no just cause or impediment to the contrary." The stranger proceeded—

"My name is *Gordon*, Mr. Elliston. I have gazed on you—wondered at you—thought of you, for many and many a day; but this is the first of my happiness in knowing you. My name is *Gordon*."

The manager still held silence.

Mr. Gordon went on: "Any man but you, Mr. Elliston, might think my address strange; but you are a strange man yourself, and must not be surprised, if, now and then, you meet with a subject of as eccentric a fancy as your own. But my name is *Gordon*."

Still was the manager mute.

"Mr. Elliston," continued the other, in a more temperate key, "you have for some—for many years, been acknowledged the first comedian of the age. You are now at the head of a great theatrical concern, which I grieve to believe is no longer a flourishing speculation. Would a sum of money be useful to you?"

"Sir!" responded Elliston, with a look of inquiry.

"Would a sum of money, I say, be useful to you? My name is *Gordon*."

"To say that a sum of money would not be useful, to one having such responsibilities as mine," responded Elliston, "would be at least to assert an improbability—but why this question?"

"Because my name is *Gordon*."

Elliston, not at once perceiving the logical inference, was again silent.

"Would ten thousand pounds be useful to you?"

"Ten thousand pounds!"

"Ay, Mr. Elliston!—ten thousand pounds; and you shall have them. You know my name—*Gordon.*"

The manager was now pretty well convinced that the term eccentricity was the mildest which might fairly be applied to the interrogator before him.

"How now!" rejoined the other, starting from his chair—"I have known you, sir, these twenty years—have witnessed your merits, and now learn your necessities; don't stick at fifteen thousand," added he, in an impressive whisper.

"The munificence of your offer, Mr. Gordon—"

"Ay, my name *is Gordon,*" interrupted the stranger as he seized the manager eagerly by the hand—"My name *is Gordon.* Harkye! I will exact but one promise from you at this moment: breakfast with me to-morrow morning—to-morrow morning, ten o'clock, Mr. Elliston—at Ibbotson's Hotel?"

The manager hesitated.

"Come!" continued Mr. Gordon—"this promise, absolutely I must have—Ibbotson's Hotel, ten o'clock."

"I will, sir,"—responded Elliston—"I will wait on you by this appointment."

They were now passing together, towards the hall, when Mr. Gordon demanded, who and what the person might be, who was just then standing near to them?

"The prompter to this establishment, Mr. Wilmot," responded the manager.

On hearing which, the visitor made a rush towards the worthy official, into whose hands he suddenly thrust ten sovereigns, and assuring him his name was "*Gordon,*" without another word hastily quitted the theatre.

Wilmot, very properly being desirous of immediately abandoning his claim to the ten sovereigns, delivered them into Elliston's hands, the latter being now resolved to be faithful to his appointment, the next morning, at Ibbotson's Hotel.

At five minutes before the hour appointed, Elliston was in Vere Street, and demanding to be shown by the

waiter to Mr. Gordon's apartment, up he went, and, on entering the room, perceived the breakfast-table suitably arranged for two persons; but Mr. Gordon was not visible.

In about five minutes his ears were saluted by a kind of triumphal shout, and presently Mr. Gordon himself abruptly entered from an inner room, apparently just from his bed, for he was literally in his night attire; in each hand he held bank-bills to a considerable amount, which he now sported in the wind.

"Here they are! — here they are, Mr. Elliston! — a small dividend only at present; but don't stick at twenty thousand!" exclaiming which, he scattered the money in various parts of the room.

The malady of Mr. Gordon seemed rather to have gathered strength since the occurrence of the day before. His manner was more wild, and the unattired state in which he appeared, still added to the manager's dilemma. But Mr. Gordon went on after the manner of yesterday; tossing the notes; repeating his own name; and assuring the manager of his permanent friendship.

Elliston was now in downright alarm, and rang the bell with some violence. As the door opened, 'The trembling notes ascend the sky.'

The master of the house was called—the waifs and estrays were collected together and confided to his custody. The ten pounds, which had been so strangely forced on Wilmot, were also given up; and Mr. Gordon having in the interim taken flight into his inner apartment, Elliston made the best of his way from Ibbotson's Hotel.

On inquiry, it appeared that the present wild exhibition was by no means the first that Mr. Gordon had displayed. His connexions were of the highest respectability, and his means considerable; but, when under the influence of mental attacks, he would make these profusive offers, at the suggestion of the moment. Without doubt, he had often encountered less scrupulous friends than the manager of Drury Lane Theatre.

A general meeting of the committee was now summoned on the affairs of Drury Lane Theatre, and the

circumstances of the lessee ; two days previously to which, Mr. Calcraft called on Elliston, advising him to announce his intention of withdrawing from the theatre, on the grounds of ill health and increasing infirmity ; but this, Elliston rejected with extreme acrimony. In May, the meeting took place, and the result was a demand that Elliston should pay up his arrears, amounting to £5,500, within *three* days. Such were the terms !—such, the consideration granted to a man, who, on the statements of this very committee, had laid out nearly £30,000 in rebuilding, improving, and decorating their property —to one who, as lessee, had paid £66,000 rent out of £71,000.*

At the expiration of the three days, Elliston attended the adjourned meeting. He offered proposals from a committee of his creditors, who were ready to give security for the amount still owing ; but the committee of Drury Lane would accept nothing "but their bond."

The Napoleon of Drury would now have abdicated in favour of his son ; but the allied powers of the committee

* Elliston erected the portico in Brydges Street, which must be admitted was a necessary appendage to the theatre, whatever may be said of its deficiency in grace. It was completed under the sole direction and design of Sir John Soane, and cost Elliston	£1,050
He rebuilt the whole of the interior of the theatre, from the bare walls, which he was bound to do at the expense of £6,000 ; the contract was made for £7,000. The rebuilding of the theatre and improving the stage amounted to	21,000
The saloon he lined with looking-glass, at the expense of ..	1,000
	23,050
Deduct the sum he was compelled to lay out	6,000
	17,054
From that take his deficiency of rent	5,500
And the theatre will be indebted to Elliston	£11,550

Elliston paid the committee, during his seven years' lesseeship, upwards of ***sixty-six thousand pounds.***

were too powerfully in arms to listen to any treaty in favour of the family of the dethroned monarch, and thus received the affairs of the theatre under their own protection. But of this committee, we fear, it could not be said, as of Peter the Great, that tyranny and usurpation were forgotten in the virtue and vigour of their government. Injustice to the lessee was followed by incompetency to their own business.

The habit of Elliston, at this period of his career, was to return to Stratford Place, at about three o'clock A.M., after vespers ; and too frequently in that state of perception to which all things in life are matters of indifference.

At the offing of Stratford Place he had frequently encountered a little, fat, pudgy man, who appeared to entertain the same indifference to external things as himself. In plain English, our hero and the little fat unknown had met many times, about the same spot, and under a similar contempt for sobriety. Each was to the other a perfect stranger ; but a kind of saturnalian freemasonry seemed to exist between them—and though they never exchanged a word, yet they as perfectly understood one another as though they had conversed together all their lives, and had never lived apart.

As near three of the morning as might be, occasion after occasion, Elliston drunk, had met the little stranger drunk ; the sympathetic chord was struck as they passed each other, and they parted, until about the same hour of the following day; but, as we have just observed, with not the interchange of one syllable.

After, however, some months of this spiritual acquaintance, they, on a certain morning, met as usual—the same spot—the same common state. The little man made an abrupt halt, and gazing on Elliston with a steadiness by which drunkenness is sometimes invested, marched solemnly up to him, and clasping him by the arm, exclaimed —"My friend — my friend ! this can't last for ever ! "—which having said, without waiting for reply or comment, he staggered off.

In November, Elliston's trustees, to whom he had made over his entire property, effected a sale on the premises, Stratford Place. The two magnificent suits of armour, which might have "stood against the world," were knocked down for one hundred pounds.

On the 10th of December, Robert William Elliston, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and Leamington, dealer and chapman, appeared in the character of bankrupt.

"Non minus est virtus quam quærere, parta tueri."

The fallen "Great Lessee" now sought refuge at Leamington Priors, where, in his moments of depression, he would fain, like Wolsey himself, have laid down his bones in quiet; but, his thoughts being yet of the earth earthy, he noticed an advertisement in the *Times* newspaper, headed, "To be let, the Surrey Theatre." In an instant he felt he had tasted of "the enchanted herb which did renew old Æson," and with the activity of five-and-thirty started for the metropolis. Not a moment was lost in pursuance of his object. Interviews were speedily obtained with the Surrey proprietors, or their representatives; and with a few hundred pounds advanced by some attached friends, *sur le champ*, on the old ground, St. George's Fields,—the Assyrian fallen to the Arab, but still a warrior,—behold Robert William once again installed in the principality of the Surrey Theatre.

Elliston not having at this precise time received his certificate, the lease was made out in the name of his son, Charles Robert. In the meantime, differences having taken place between our hero and West, the lessor, the latter refused to transfer the lease according to promise, when the certificate was signed in June, 1828.

On taking possession, a second time, of the Surrey Theatre, the company which Elliston was enabled to collect was extremely good. He refitted the interior of the house, and effected considerable improvements in all departments of the building. The scenery he found in a very dilapidated state, on which exigency he engaged Mr. Marshall, a young artist, who had been a pupil of Mari-

nari, and had practised in the painting-room of Drury Lane Theatre with those accomplished masters, Stanfield and Roberts. Marshall was a young man of considerable genius, to which he added industry and attention; so that within a very few years he was enabled to take a lead in his profession.*

A numerous audience witnessed the opening of this theatre, on Whit-Monday, 1827. Elliston appeared in the fantastic, triune character of the *Singles*, and his public greeting, on this night, was as warm and enthusiastic as on any previous event of his dramatic life. At the close of the piece he stepped forward to make his speech; a circumstance which his friends as fully expected as any part of the night's entertainment which had been advertised in the bills, and a treat which he seldom niggardly bestowed; like fleecy clothing, it was never out of season—salutary at all temperatures; for whether applause or disapprobation, Elliston's speech was always a case in point.

It was at this time, under Elliston's management at the Surrey, that the singularly clever boy, Master Burke, made his first public appearance. His attraction at the Surrey was considerable. Elliston had engaged the lad at a salary of £600 per annum, with the view of taking him a provincial tour during the time the theatre might be closed; a project which was never carried into effect, the health of Elliston again declining, before the termination of the boy's first Blackfriars' season.

Young Burke, when first introduced to Elliston, was extremely small of his age,—and on his father observing to the manager, he was a very acute lad. "Why, yes," replied Elliston, fixing his eyes on the little figure—"if brevity be the soul of wit, he is indeed so."

* The whole scenic department at Covent Garden Theatre, under the reign of Macready, was intrusted to the hands of Mr. Marshall. At the revival of "Henry the Fifth," Marshall greatly distinguished himself by his masterly view of "Old Southampton by Moonlight," and also by the last scene in that play. To the patronage of Elliston at the time alluded to above, Marshall owes a great portion of his early success.

Managers of theatres, as we have frequently said, have a most extensive corresponding train, comprehending mysterious friends, and secret enemies; urging advice or seeking redress. Amongst the various letters Elliston received at this period of his career, we cannot forbear inserting the following:—

"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 play-houses. 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, shaking her sides a good deal during the performance; but it was no laughing matter to her when she got up to go home. I hope I have said quite enough, and am your

"WELL-WISHER."

Success having attended Elliston and his Surrey undertaking, during the course of many weeks, and fortune appearing really in earnest once again to inscribe him in

her good books, the soul of our hero (for a hero he must be to the end) expanded with his new opening prospects. One morning, after a rehearsal of "Who wants a Guinea?" (for comedies were cut down into two acts, like men-of-war into frigates), Elliston, with a right ducal air, or, what was more pregnant, his own appropriate manner, advancing to his stage manager, said—"West, I wish you to accompany me to Great Queen Street."

"Certainly; but on what business, sir?"

"You shall see—step into my calash—it is at the door." West readily obeyed, and within three minutes the companions were on their passage. Having reached Queen Street, the vehicle stopped at Birch's the coachmaker, when Elliston, stepping out, beckoned West to follow. By this time Mr. Birch himself had advanced to meet the comedian.

"My carriage, Mr. Birch?" was Elliston's prompt inquiry.

"Here—here it is—and nothing, I believe, left undone;" saying which, Birch opened the door of an elegant landau, deposited in his shop, for the purpose of displaying all its appointments. Elliston and his companion, having gazed on this work of art for a few minutes in silent admiration, the comedian, with an air of humour which would baffle all power of description said, "West, step in with me," and at the same time entering the landau, deposited himself comfortably in a corner. "Perfect!—admirable!"—continued he, "and how easy!"

"A positive feather-bed," replied West.

"It is, as you say, West, a feather-bed," continued Elliston, dancing the springs with the whole weight of his body. "Birch, you'll step in too?"

"If you wish it, certainly," replied the smiling coachmaker, and Birch immediately took his seat opposite his two visitors.

"Now close the door," cried Elliston to one of the workmen in attendance, "we shan't want you any more. I really never travelled in so easy a carriage in my life," continued the manager, addressing rather himself than his companions—"not the slightest jolt; and the stuffing

of these squabs is positively the mould of the human form—admirable—delightful indeed ! " and he once again commenced testing the springs. Birch considering by this time he had been imprisoned long enough, looked imploringly from the window for one of his workmen, when Elliston, turning slily to his faithful stage-manager, whispered, " Make the most of it, my good fellow ; it is probably the last ride we shall ever have in the landau—don't go, West." By this time Birch had contrived, by passing his arm from the window, to open the door himself, and was in the act of stepping out, when West observed that, as it was necessary for him to call on a colourman in Holborn, he would take the opportunity of descending likewise. " Well advised," said Elliston ; and off went the highly amused stage-manager.

Birch, happy in his release, took advantage of the moment to attend the demands of some more profitable customer, and West pursued his way to the tradesman's habitation in Holborn. In about three-quarters of an hour, the business being transacted, the deputy-manager returned to Queen Street, when, immediately making inquiries for Mr. Elliston, was told, to his great surprise, that he had left the house, a full half-hour before. " Impossible ! " said West ; " gone, you say ; which way ? " At this moment, a prolonged and very audible snore, proceeding from the interior of the new landau, occasioned West to turn in that direction, and advancing to the window of the carriage, beheld Elliston in as fast a sleep as ever harassed and fatigued mortal had enjoyed.

Still further amused at the eccentricity of the Surrey potentate, West now proceeded to rouse his master, when Elliston, thus suddenly awakened, and seeing his deputy at the door, exclaimed—" Ah, West, I'm glad you're at home ! I've just driven over to you, for I wish to see you of all things ; but, just step in, will you ? " " No, no, not again," replied West, laughing. " Come, sir, we had better return ;" saying which, he commenced handing the Surrey manager from his comfortable position, who being now fully brought to his senses, stepped out with the same air of majesty with which he had entered.

The two now took their departure—not a word was interchanged for a considerable time; when, about the centre arch of Westminster Bridge, Elliston turned suddenly about, and said, "West, I'm satisfied; but 'tis our last drive."

True, indeed, were Elliston's words, for the landau was never removed from the premises of Birch. The carriage had been ordered prior to Elliston's bankruptcy, when he was still manager of Drury Lane Theatre.

Elliston having obtained his certificate, quitted his temporary lodgings adjoining the theatre, and entered on an excellent family-house in Great Surrey Street, Blackfriars Road, which he furnished in a consistent and complete style. Here he was enabled once more to call his friends around him—old friends who had travelled with him much of the journey of life—who had witnessed his rise, had done honour to his fairly-acquired fame, but who had never been sparing of their censure when his actions too frequently provoked their just expression. Amongst these were Major Wathen, Mr. Durrant, and Mr. Winston, in whom our hero never could have been without the best advice and the most friendly consideration.

Elliston now played out his best and strongest card which fortune appeared to have dealt to him, in this his last mortal rubber of the Thespian game. "Black-eyed Susan" was the honour in his hand, which, sustained by the winning trump (T. P. Cooke), occasioned him to rise, at the conclusion of the season, a considerable gainer. This drama, however, for the first half-dozen nights, though much applauded, did not give promise of the extraordinary success which subsequently attended it. On the second week of its representation, the piece rose like a rocket into the sky of public favour, and became, from that time, a blaze of popular admiration. The receipts now averaged £500 per week, out of which £150 clear fell on the profit side of the manager. Cooke's salary was sixty pounds per week, and half a clear benefit in every sixth week of the representation.

Elliston's eldest son being at this time on the eve of departure for Hobart Town, with the view of settling in the country as agriculturist, the father fixed a day for assembling, at his house in Great Surrey Street, many of his old and esteemed friends to honour the occasion, and receive in return their best wishes for his child's prosperity.

As this event was to be considered not only a parting dinner between those concerned, but also a house-warming, (as, on the same day we mourn a royal demise and hail a kingly accession,) the sentiment which might arise from the first, was expected to find some relief from the boon good fellowship of the latter. But this, at least, was beyond all doubt, Elliston had determined equally to distinguish himself in two characters which he had so voluntarily undertaken.

The banquet (for it was no less) had been ordered at much pains and expense. The table exhibited a little excusable display, in being ornamented by finery, which might have been in more fit positions than on a dining-table—it was all, however, good of its kind. The exhibition might have reminded us of Hugh Kelly, who was accused by Dr. Johnson of a great ostentation of the little plate he possessed, and that, on a certain occasion, an interval between the spoons and pepper-caster was actually supplied by a pair of silver spurs.

The two dining-rooms were thrown into one, and a separate table in each, Elliston himself presiding at the upper and his son William at the lower. Each guest had his appointed place, and every plate, contained some motto or conceit happily appropriate to the double occasion. The dinner itself passed off with that cumbrous solemnity which generally attends great events. The buckram of state stood obstinately out from the more natural mould of frank fellowship; but the cloth being removed, Elliston exclaimed, "Are the singers arrived?"

"They are here, sir," was the reply.

Blewitt then rose from the table, and receiving four or five of the *Surinam* choristers at the door of the banqueting-room, the party moved to the pianoforte; when an

ode, expressly written for the occasion, and set to music by Blewitt himself, was sung by the whole band. The folds of the buckram were greatly crushed by this movement, and the natural man began to portray the best features of its humanity.

With an overflowing cup, and in the gestation of a speech, Elliston was most verily in his element. He rose to address the assembly on the chief purpose of the day; —he spoke with much truth on the uncertainty of life, and the still greater miscalculations of human hopes;—alluded to his own career, not without some well-timed terms of self-reproach, and finally called on his friends to second the parent's benisons in respect of the youthful adventurer, who was about to quit them—perhaps for ever. Nature by this time had prevailed over the mock heroic, and the language of parental affection never fell more feelingly from a father's lips than at this moment. His speech invoked the tribute of a tear from those around him—the only water poured out on this memorable occasion. The challenge was accepted by all hearts, and "Huzza! long life and prosperity!" sped the parting guest.

The bottle now went about as briskly as a country-dance after a stately minuet. It was "Sir Roger de Coverley" all round. Blewitt and the singers were again at the orchestra, and some admirable songs succeeded. Elliston was again on his legs. In a kind of prose *improvise*, he had some epigrammatic application for each guest at table, in which the wit of the moment was his first—perhaps his only, consideration; for some of his hits, though no malice prepense, were a little hard, and it was as much as he could effect, in the latter part of the evening, to apply successfully the vulnerary of soft words, and heal the wounded spirit of one of his guests, whom he had downright offended.

Wine and the song, with scarce an intermission for breathing, brought up the close of the entertainment; and, in consideration of the long voyage the young man was about to make, the guests were by this time, so far his companions, as to be more than half over that element

which was to sustain him to the shores of New Holland. The parting was indeed final between parent and child: they never met again.

The earliest musical production of the late Carl Maria Von Weber was performed, for the first time in this country, at the Surrey Theatre. It is entitled "Sylvana"— an opera consisting of three acts, which is attractive more for the merit of the music, and the fame of the composer, than on account of any striking novelty or interest in the plot.

The story, which is not very clearly developed in the piece, comprises little more than the incident of a young lady, who, after having led a strange and solitary life in a forest, by the unaccountable interposition of a hermit, is restored to her parents, persons of noble birth, and to her lover, who has conceived an attachment for her, although in her woodland life she affects to be dumb. This and many other incoherent parts of the piece are forgotten in the rich variety and splendour of the musical composition with which they are associated. The music of "Sylvana," compared with that of "Der Frieschutz," approaches more the Italian style, although there are occasional passages resembling "Der Frieschutz" and "Oberon."

The *forte* of Weber, however, was in the extremes of his country's music, belonging to what may be denominated *caricatura;* at least, it was in the expression of passions and incidents, supposed to be least fitted for musical subjects, that he established his reputation. There is the same originality and vigour—the same display of natural and highly-cultivated genius—the same abundance of gay, brilliant, and sparkling combinations in "Sylvana," which mark and distinguish the productions of Weber, so popular and familiar in this country.

The performers acquitted themselves with much zeal, and in some instances with great ability. The singing of Miss Graddon was extremely good; but her *soprano* voice and feminine appearance were inappropriate to the martial sounds and sentiments which, as a cavalier, she

had to utter. The part was manifestly intended for a powerful tenor voice, nor could Miss Graddon reconcile us to a transmutation which nature and propriety do not sanction. This lady seemed actually disposed to abdicate her own sex, as she had already usurped the character of *Captain Macheath*, and had gone through almost all the male parts of our principal operas. Mr. Philipps played the part of *Albert*—a knight and a lover—and, both by his acting and singing, greatly contributed to the favourable reception of the opera; his musical skill rendered him fully competent to the music of Weber; and his execution of many brilliant passages was much applauded. Mrs. Fitzwilliam played the part of *Sylvana*, and sustained it most creditably.

In January, of this year, Mr. T. Dibdin had opened Sadler's Wells, for a winter season, and introduced a new plan which answered his purpose, but did incalculable injury to theatrical property. He issued what he denominated a *renter's ticket*, to admit two to the boxes on paying *two shillings* each—the then price of admission to the boxes, being *four* shillings; "thus bad begun, but worse remained behind."

Shortly after, the shop-windows exhibited regular *printed tickets*, to be had, like kisses, for asking, and which admitted two to the *boxes* or *pit*—"this order will only be admitted by each person paying ONE SHILLING, nor admitted to the boxes unless such person be suitably attired—the admission to private boxes, *two shillings and sixpence* each." This was the origin of the *shilling order system* which has done such injury to the theatres; every manager but Elliston felt compelled to adopt it; and he, finding his receipts so much diminished, had nearly fallen into the plan: but his regard for the stage and its professors, prevailed—and though he at first lost considerably by his determination, ultimately he profited by it. So sensible were his company of his spirited and disinterested conduct, that the principal performers of his establishment entered into a subscription for a piece of plate to present to their manager, as a mark of their

regard for resisting a system so derogatory to the respectability of the profession. This was a handsome silver cup, presented to him on Saturday, the 7th of March, 1829.

When Elliston, for this second time in 1828, became lessee of the Surrey Theatre, he had to pay down, before he could take possession, £870; that sum having been borrowed, he now returned the same amongst those friends who had so handsomely come forward in the time of need. He had furnished his house at a cost of not less than £500; fitted out his son for Hobart Town, at a very considerable expense, and also had some heavy family demands to defray; and last, though not least, he kept a hospitable table. Notwithstanding these drafts upon his purse, at the beginning of 1830 he had placed £2,000 in the Three per Cents.

On one evening, pending the representation of a very serious piece, a sailor, elevated, in every sense of the word, frequently interrupted the progress of the play, and annoyed the audience by exclamations of dissatisfaction and sundry noises peculiar to gentlemen of the sea. At length Elliston appeared on the stage:—

"May I know the cause of this unseemly clamour?" asked he.

(*Voice from the gallery*).—"It's this here sailor what makes the row."

"A British sailor!—the glory of our country's annals!—the safeguard of our homes and families! What is it he asks?"

"Rule Britannia!" roared the tar.

"You shall have it!" emphatically pronounced the manager. "Of what ship, comrade?"

"The *Haggermemnon*," again roared our son of Neptune.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," continued the manager, advancing a few steps forward with imperturbable assurance, "on Monday next, a nautical, national, allegorical sketch will be represented at this theatre, entitled, 'The

British Flag!' in which the whole strength of the company will be employed. The music expressly composed by Mr. Blewitt. Give 'em 'Rule Britannia,'" concluded he, with a nod to the musicians. "Bring your companions here on Monday," cried Elliston, with a wink at the sailor, which having done, he strode off the stage.

"Rule Britannia" was immediately sung "by the whole strength of the company," and the play was resumed. As to the nautical sketch, it is needless to say this was *the momentary suggestion of the manager's untiring fancy.*

On another evening, too many persons having been admitted to the gallery occasioned much altercation, and totally prevented the performers from being heard.

Elliston came forward, as usual, and thus addressed the audience:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—I take the liberty of addressing you. It is of rare occurrence that I deem it necessary to place myself in juxta-position with you. (*Noise in the gallery.*) When I said juxta-position, I meant *vis-à-vis.* (*Increased noise in the gallery.*) When I uttered the words *vis-à-vis,* I meant *contactability.* Now let me tell you that *vis-à-vis* (it is a French term) and contactability (which is a truly English term) very nearly assimilate to each other. (*The disturbance above redoubled.*) Gentlemen!—Gentlemen! I am really ashamed of your conduct. It is unlike a Surrey audience. Are you aware that I have in this establishment most efficient peace-officers at my immediate disposal? Peace-officers, Gentlemen, mean persons necessary in time of war.

"One word more," said he, returning; "if that tall gentleman, in the carpenter's cap, will sit down [pointing to the pit], the little girl behind him, in red ribbons (you my love, I mean), will be able to see the entertainment."

This oration produced the desired effect, and Elliston, after bowing most respectfully, as he always did when he had made an impudent speech, retired to spend his *afternoon.*

This was whim, and so let it pass; but, as an example of real dignity towards an audience, it is related that Dufresne, a French actor, speaking on the stage in a low tone of voice, a person in the pit cried out "Louder!" when Dufresne, with an air imperial, observed—"And *you*, sir, not so loud."

The notorious Pierce Egan having introduced himself, by letter, to the Surrey manager at the early part of the season, transmitted to him proposals, in various shapes, for furnishing the theatre with dramatic pieces. The variety of his epistolary style was even more remarkable than that of his proposals. Sometimes he wrote with the air of a dashing blade—at others in the burlesque heroic —and occasionally in the terms of a jolly tar. This Protean diction was, doubtless, employed to have its due effect with the manager, who might naturally, after so many examples of versatile humour, be duly sensible of the available quality of Pierce Egan's fancy and intellectual resources. But whether, like an over-eager witness in our courts of law, the author of "Life in London" proved too much; or whether, from a positive want of perception on the part of the manager, of his correspondent's dramatic qualities, is not sufficiently clear; but true it is, Elliston lent no favourable attention to his applications; and when at last Egan forwarded to the manager a direct specimen of his quality in the shape of a "Comic Sketch," all doubt was at an end by Elliston, under his own sign manual, requesting that all further correspondence might be stayed; for the manager was perfectly persuaded that his friend Egan was not precisely an author who, like Sophocles, would have been acquitted at court by merely reading one of his own plays. But Egan, no doubt, felt all the pangs of a slighted poet, exclaiming—

> "That the vast universal fool, the town,
> Should cry up Labeo's stuff, and cry me down!"

We believe, however, there is some degree of merit in everything. It has been said that Sternhold and Hop-

kins had eight lines which Pope absolutely envied. But, beyond all question, "Tom and Jerry" enjoyed most extraordinary success; no one can rob Mr. Egan of that —and as to poets, "Pan was a god, and Apollo was no more."

Many, innumerable, were the young Labeos who now spread out their early essays before the setting sun of our great theatrical manager; some of whom have since risen to renown; and many a Bavius and Mævius, who are known only by plagiarism to this day—

> "Whose brains, like ivy, cannot mount at all,
> But by adhering to some neighbouring wall."

On a certain morning of this season, a gentleman waited on Elliston, at his house in Great Surrey Street, for the purpose of soliciting an engagement at his theatre. The applicant was a man of ungainly and loose appearance, but there was something in his manner of address that greatly tickled the manager, and he was not inclined to dismiss his applicant hastily, though he had completely made up his mind to have nothing to do with him as an actor.

After listening for some time to the candidate's pretensions to the art of acting, and hearing a long list of managers with whom he had been triumphantly connected, Elliston stopped him, and in a grotesque manner said—

"Ay—now, sir, I recollect you well,—it was at that place you played a kangaroo."

"A kangaroo!"

"Ay, a kangaroo; and admirably you did it."

"Sir, believe me, I never acted a kangaroo; I never could have acted a kangaroo."

"You do yourself injustice," continued Elliston, calmly, "your versatility is great, and your parts have been numerous; but you cannot have forgotten the kangaroo?"

"Forgotten! Mr. Elliston — a kangaroo! Why, sir, do *you* say I ever acted a kangaroo?" demanded the other, with a thoughtful air.

"I never was more pleased in my life. Norwich was the place; you have acted at Norwich?"

"Yes, sir—many, many, many times. I remember, about the period of the battle of Waterloo, we got up 'The Death of Captain Cook'——"

"Ay, I knew you had played a kangaroo."

"But are you sure, sir, it was I—*I* who played the kangaroo?"

"Striking things always make a lasting impression with me; and your kangaroo I remember as though the event were of yesterday. Let's see," continued Elliston, jumping up, and making a grotesque twist of the body—"it was somewhat after this manner in which you did it—no, no—not quite so, either. I can't exactly make the movement, but it was ——"

"Hold! hold! Mr. Elliston," cried the other, springing to the middle of the room, and instantly throwing himself into a strange attitude, as he balanced himself on one leg—"the kangaroo makes its advances in this manner."

"Ay, ay! I knew you had played the kangaroo," exclaimed Elliston; "and when I get up an Australian spectacle, I'll send for you."

The frame of Elliston had now exhibited fearful evidences of decay. A career of labour and excitement—success and disappointments—an inherent sense of indulgence attendant upon them all; but more particularly the day of reckoning with his old usurer, Alcohol, which had evidently arrived, now made common cause in their demands on Nature's resources; and Elliston was as bankrupt in health, as, two years before, he had been in estate. But the flattering chances of the former were gone for ever. His frame was shattered in every bolt and seam. The elasticity of limb was no more, and a kind of plantigrade step of caution, denoted the thorough disorganized condition of the animal machine; yet, it still held together, and the "piece of work" languidly performed its office. But repose, which had never made part with his temperament, was not even courted at the

parting hour of his strength: so that he still went borrowing on, as long as the old usurer would lend, paying the enormous interest of days for the paltry loan of an hour's enjoyment which wine afforded.

It was at this very period that this most eccentric and extraordinary man contemplated two of the greatest projects of his life; visionary and wild as they were, he yet followed them up for a time, with an ardour which puzzled all physiological inquiry, as it excited more and more disinterested regrets—a *second marriage* was the one, and a *seat in parliament* the other!

His senatorial dream was a vision of no mean character. Neither as the tool of a party, nor as the nominee of a patron, did he look for his appearance on the stage of St. Stephen's; but with the proceeds of "Black-eyed Susan," and the richer sum of his personal endowments, he purposed canvassing some western borough, and was actually in correspondence with parliamentary agents on the question. *Surrey*, certainly, he had twice represented, and was still a sitting member; and had the franchise been extended at this time to the metropolitan boroughs, we are not quite clear how far his exertions might have led him towards success. The senatorial project, however, expired in the cradle of its birth—namely, the back-parlour of our hero in Blackfriars Road.

But the deuterogamy, of far graver consideration, was much nearer its consummation. The history is not a little curious. The lady in question was the eldest of three antique spinsters, who, in the days of Miss Flemming, had been in the ranks of Mrs. Elliston's youthful patronesses. Apparently eternal as the *Parsæ* themselves, they were still venerated in their domain, at Bath, over which city they had so long presided; and had actually fixed the destiny of Elliston's first marriage. Whether out of gratitude for the happiness he had so long enjoyed with his late partner, or whether to propitiate these divinities for events yet to come, is uncertain; but true it is, Elliston's devotion was renewed at this venerable shrine, and, mortal as he was, presumed to offer his earthly alliance to no less than *Atropos* herself. To drop

all metaphor, circumstances having led to a renewal of the acquaintance between Elliston and these three sisters, in a moment of strange miscalculation, he made a proposal of marriage with the eldest, and which proposal was actually accepted. Now, these three ladies had never known an hour's separation. They had lived in the closest sisterhood :

"Corporibus junctis spiritus unus erat."

Their united means yielded them an income equal to their best desires, but not superfluities. Elliston, in contemplating a marriage with one third of the sisterhood, had fondly meditated, at least two-thirds of the profits, together with a total dismemberment of this knot of virgins. Time, however, having so thoroughly cemented the state of sisterhood, the bride elect had no more dreamt of being called upon to tear these family bonds asunder, than, six months before, she had ever dreamt of any other ties on this side of the grave ; but Elliston now having come to closer explanation respecting the future establishment, the awful truth broke like a thunder-clap over the Bath tea-table, and positively sent the three sisters into one fit of hysterics. "Separate !" they, one and all, exclaimed, throwing themselves into each other's embrace, which would positively have been a study for Canova himself—"Separate !—what Heaven has united, let no man tear asunder—separate !" Here, amidst the pauses of renewed hysterics, the common vow was plighted never to seal such a bond.

What the Fates had resolved admitted of no appeal. The deed of federalism was fatal to the contract of marriage ; for no sooner was the determination of the three confederate maidens forwarded to our attendant swain, than Elliston, who felt he could only love but one, was little inclined to marry three. The treaty thereupon was incontinently brought to an end, and Elliston, once again, sought refuge in the green-room of the Surrey Theatre.

Wife and borough had now vanished from before his vision, and in a short time he was about as cool, under

the double disappointment, as a certain Spaniard, who, having had one eye struck out at tennis, in a few days after lost the other by a similar accident ; on which he calmly put on his hat, saying—"Good night, gentlemen," and quietly departed.

Elliston had been playing *Pangloss*, in Colman's comedy of "The Heir at Law." The part of *Dick Dowlas*, was assigned to Mr. Elliston, jun., who had made a promising *début*, a few evenings before, as *Robin*, in the musical entertainment of "No Song no Supper." His conception of the character was correct, and his whole performance received with very warm applause. At the conclusion of the comedy, the original epilogue was spoken by the characters, and the new pantomime of the "Golden Goose," which was well conceived, filled the house to the very roof.

Amongst other untried actors, Elliston, after some deliberation, engaged a young man, chiefly as a singer, but, in point of fact, to do anything (a duty, for the most part, assigned to those who can do nothing) at a small salary. The youth was an agreeable, well-spoken lad, who, on being questioned respecting his former employments, &c., carefully avoided the subject, and was particularly anxious to *conceal his family name, on embracing the profession of the stage.* Elliston was a little curious on the matter, as the youth was strikingly prepossessing. He played small parts decently, sang tolerably well, and was extremely attentive to business. But this concealment of his patronymic was a somewhat unusual manœuvre, for it eventually turned out, that the lad's honoured father was one of those gentlemen who perambulate the streets, offering an unhappy bullfinch in exchange for an old coat; vending compositions, at corners of bye-places, for taking out stains from wearing apparel, and haranguing the mob on the virtue thereof ; or, at other times, whistling through a tin tube in imitation of the skylark.

Elliston, who had verily been impressed the youth was at least the son of a baronet or some country member of

parliament, was not a little amused with the discovery. The double policy of concealing the family name, while it suppressed a discreditable origin and at the same time led the stranger to believe it was highly distinguished, was a bit of tact which greatly recommended the young artist—introduced him to better parts, and added a crown at least to his weekly salary. The young man, however, remained not many weeks at the Surrey. He turned tobacconist, and took a house in Lambeth, the back parlour of which, he opened as a singing-room. His new auditory were now betrayed into the old illusion, and the vocal tobacconist was again looked on as a nobleman in disguise.

It is related, that when Lamash was acting in Edinburgh, he desired his wife to represent abroad that she was the daughter of an Irish peer, and to go to the Lady Elphinstone with the same story. The experiment succeeded wonderfully. Lamash and his wife were, in consequence, highly patronized, and their benefit was abundantly productive.

The following parental and affectionate letter, was addressed by Elliston to Charles and Jane, on the subject of his daughter Lucy's illness, which terminated fatally within ten days afterwards. This young lady was in her twentieth year at the period of her death. Elliston felt deeply and keenly this affliction; and the unaffected declarations of his letter were fulfilled to the very utmost; for nothing was left undone on his own part, to comfort and relieve his child.

"84, Great Surrey Street, January 20, 1831.

"MY DEAR CHILDREN,—I should welcome any hope that was at all reasonable, with the most lively satisfaction; but I fear to indulge an expectation of Lucy's recovery. Be that, however, as Providence may dictate; we must do our duty while there is any spark of animation remaining. I hope my dear Lucy is sensible that there is nothing in my power to give, which she may not command; pray assure her of my love, and say how much

I am gratified to find that she feels happy under our care.

"It is impossible to express the obligations I owe to Doctor Macgowan—he appears to have acted in the two-fold capacity of friend and physician. I have felt almost a vanity in showing his benevolent epistles to my friends.

"I have inclosed twenty sovereigns, and I recommend you to pay, weekly, for your lodgings, and defray all your general expenses, so that you may have nothing to apprehend but the more particular demands attendant upon the sick-chamber.

"I am fully sensible of your desire to ease me of any unnecessary expense; but I must not hear of Jane's directing her attention to professional pursuits while her sister remains in this uncertain state.

"I was in hopes my recent illness would not have reached your knowledge. I have, however, the pleasure to add that I am recovered, and having just completed all my intended exports for William, my mind is, in one respect, greatly relieved.

"I distribute your accounts of the invalid, as they arrive, to the family; and I need not tell you, that they are equally interested with myself in your constant intelligence of Lucy's afflicting disorder; indeed, every one, who ever knew her, feels most anxious for reports as they reach me.

"Fail not to call upon me for any other additions to her comfort, and be assured I am fully sensible of the very excellent care, attention, and unwearied affection which you are so cheerfully exercising in the service, and for the advantage of your sister.

"From your affectionate father,

"R. W. ELLISTON.

"To Charles and Jane Ellistone,
&c. &c. &c."

Like one having escaped shipwreck, our hero now hung up his votive tablets on his widowed walls, in Blackfriars Road, and began sententiously to congratulate himself, and to rehearse the virtues of her, whose place he could

never have hoped adequately to supply. Elliston's animal constitution was of that extraordinary texture, that the slightest *relache* of exertions or abuse, met with that generous rebound, which might have taught our infatuated friend what a rich inheritance he was wasting, under the name of enjoyment. Care and abstinence, for a brief term, had produced cheering and wonderful effects. No hermit—not even "Hilarion" himself had been, for three whole weeks, half so holy; so that, about the middle of December, like a good bird, though often beaten, he returned crowing to the fight, and made his reappearance in the part of *Sheva*, before a crowded theatre. The order of the day being "no orders," at night.

His acting was admirable. The very lees of his days were clear: at this precise moment Elliston was still the first comedian living:—

> "And better gleanings thy cropt soil can boast,
> Than the crab vintage of the neighbouring coast;
> This difference still the judging world shall see,
> Thou copiest Homer, and they copy thee."

Strange, but not more so than true, he played on this night with greater effect, and felt more equal to his labours than he had found himself for some few preceding years; and so great was the applause and congratulations he received, that he came forward, after his old habit, and treated his friends with a speech, which nearly occupied the time of a modern farce, but was considerably more entertaining. He said it was bold for so *young* a man as himself to offer any observations to an audience of the high character which he saw before him, but he should be ungrateful, as a *débutant*, if he did not make some acknowledgments for the encouragement he had received. That he had appeared on that night as the immediate descendant of an old actor, one Mr. Elliston, who had for many years enjoyed the favour of the public, but had, a few weeks before, judiciously—

> "Walk'd sober off, before a sprightlier age
> Came tittering on, to thrust him from the stage."

The above humorous allusion to his late infirmity and present restoration, was, of course, pleasantly received. In conclusion he said, that, in July, he should have the honour of appearing in an entirely new character. Alas! it was in July he expired.

Frail, inconsistent man!—and yet frailer than humanity itself, Robert William Elliston! The triumph of abstinence was celebrated by excess. Thoughtless conviviality closed all these flattering scenes; and though perhaps less than riot, yet for this moment, greater than madness.

> "When, prodigal of life, in one rash night,
> He lavish'd more than might support three days."

Elliston was now fast and visibly sinking. His fine natural constitution, which had long been labouring, like a trim vessel in the elemental strife, was too evidently giving way on every side, and each succeeding shock told with the awful certainty of speedy dissolution. In aspect, as well as body, he exhibited a very wreck. His limbs had become almost cumbrous appendages to his frame, which human nature had at length resigned to the brief custody of human art. His features had lost all indication of intelligence or expression, and his mind, doubtlessly visited by bitter retrospect and unavailing regrets, could yield him but sorry consolation.

So extraordinary was Elliston's constitution, that he still bore up against this rapid decay. Within a very few weeks of his death, a relative, by marriage, whose professional duties brought him into the neighbourhood of Great Surrey Street periodically, and who regularly passed an hour with our invalid on those occasions, when about taking leave one evening, was desired by Elliston to remain till some other visitors had departed, having something particular to communicate to him; he then told him in a very emphatic tone, that the night before he had had a mysterious and solemn warning, and was quite convinced that his last moments were at hand. "I am," said he, "prepared for the event, and should it come in the immediate way of the strange warning I have received, I shall die contented." He dwelt much on the

anonymous letters he had from time to time received from "Invisiblina." This appeared greatly to affect his spirits, and particularly that he had failed, in all his efforts, to discover the writer; two of these letters he read with the greatest earnestness and excitement, and then destroyed them.

But Elliston once, once again rallied, and on the 24th of June, 1831, came forward in *Sheva*, a part he selected as the least fatiguing; but to all present, it was the effort of a dying man; it was with difficulty he struggled through the character. The afterpiece was the 221st representation of "Black-eyed Susan." The following day the bills stated his next appearance would be on the 28th, in *Megrim*.

In minor theatres, the bills for the following day are printed before the performances of the immediate night are concluded; otherwise, from the state in which Elliston left the theatre, he would not have been announced for any future appearance. The day after, it was stated that a severe cold and hoarseness prevented his acting. He never appeared again!

On Tuesday, the 5th of July, he rang up the servants at a very early hour, and, by seven in the morning, was on his road to Norwood, to visit his married daughter, and returned to his house to breakfast. The next morning he started for as early a ride, but had not proceeded far, when he was taken ill, and compelled to return: he had not entered his house many minutes, before he was visited with an apoplectic fit, from which he never recovered. He had appointed the following morning for the execution of a power of attorney, to sell stock for the use of the theatre, which, at that precise time, had not its usual success. The power was executed on Thursday morning, but so imperfectly, the Bank would not allow the transfer. The whole of Thursday he was unceasingly talking in a low and confused tone, calling upon his friends and blessing them in the most placid and resigned manner. It was impossible to ascertain whether he did or did not, during that period, fully retain his recollection. On Friday, the 8th of July, at half-past six in the

morning, this very extraordinary and misguided man breathed his last, having but a few months before completed only his 56th year.

"Joyousest of once embodied spirits!" Thus died Robert William Elliston—thus passed from the mortal scene one of the most accomplished masters in his peculiar art, who, in the exercise of it, could play with our feelings at his humour, and touch our sympathies as one running over the keys of a harpsichord; thus perished one of the most charming companions, "by the hand of Nature"—one of the readiest apprehension in all things of affinity with the traffic of human life; of unwearied perseverance, and fearless energy.

This, of its kind, although to the full measure of praise, is still *only of its kind.* Fain would we, at this moment, as the curtain slowly descends on the mortal history of our hero, improve the quality of our applause, and pronounce him a man as worthy of imitation as he was an actor deserving of renown. As a member of society, the memory of Elliston must suffer, for he lived in disregard and violation of the great "social contract;" and as to the claims which good order might have on the citizenship of the world, they were to him little better than objects of contempt.

Respectably born, and of near consanguinity with those elevated by their virtues and intellectual acquirements—by them protected and encouraged; of good education, which his own act alone interrupted in its course to the highest; favoured and caressed; united to a woman of no ordinary mind, and of most extraordinary goodness; blessed with children dutiful and affectionate; courted by the great, and flattered by the multitude; prosperous in the accumulation of his own estate, and fortunate by the accession of contingent advantages, — Elliston, it is not too much to say, had a chance thrown into his hands of leaving behind him a nobler name than that of a brilliant player or a boon companion.

The profession of an actor we believe to be a state of temptation. We believe this to be the case, and many

have sunk under the baneful influence; but many, also, to their honour, have baffled the subtle foe—many, with but half the armour of defence with which our frail combatant was clothed. Emphatic are the words of Addison: "A man of talents, but void of prudence, is a Polypheme; strong, but blind." Strong was he, beyond doubt; but his blindness, almost without example.

As a good husband we cannot record the hero of the preceding pages. Sudden displays of sentiment or passion are no substitute for the consistent exercise of marital duty. In acts of kindness and gallantry, no husband ever showed himself more to advantage than Elliston, for he could still play the lover in the days of wedlock: often would he delight to surprise his wife with some tasteful attention of presents and projects for her gratification; yet these were but fleeting impulses, in which vanity (we will not say ostentation) bore an equal part with affection. But the grace of to-day was dishonoured in the shame of the morrow. Elliston, we believe, never turned away from a single pleasure to satisfy his wife's repose, nor did he give up the pursuit, though her peace were the inevitable price he must pay for its attainment. Pleasure, pleasure!—that *improba siren*,—was the deity he worshipped; and thus, one of those "desirous of being more happy than any man *can* be, was less happy than most men *are*."

"The life of a player," says a modern writer, "which is not marked by some prominent vice or distress, has generally but little worth recording." The sentiment is certainly a strange one; and we lament to have taken so much of these sorry grounds as a claim on public attention. We hope, however, in the foregoing pages, we have offered something better than a plea of this description; and we must confess, in treating on the fair qualities of our hero, and more particularly his professional deserts, that we have materially failed in doing him justice. If we have made the evil to live after him, the good should *not* be interred with his bones; and we must beg, in justice to

his memory, to remind our readers, that there were some deliberate acts of generosity on the part of Elliston, which might have added lustre to the brightest character, —witness the instance of his generosity to the poor old player at Bath, and more particularly his conduct in the case of the unfortunate Mr. L——, as recorded in the early pages of this volume.

In his worldly undertakings, Elliston was punctual and faithful. On the rebuilding of Drury Lane Theatre, he liberally and voluntarily expended an enormous sum of money, and was rewarded, if not by ingratitude, at least, with meanness and unnecessary severity on the part of the committee. He was faithful in the discharge of his obligations to all persons concerned under his various managements; and though some may have "lost money by him" (as the phrase is), yet was it owing to circumstances by which upright men have been overtaken. His energy and activity were truly wonderful. Of this he was indeed an example worthy imitation; and his practical talents were of that high order, by which fortune might have been defied, and success insured. There were, in fact, moments of his life, in which he might have asked,

"Quæ regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?"

As a comedian, Elliston was, perhaps, never excelled, and it may be, he will be never equalled. Of this we have endeavoured so particularly to speak in various parts of this history, that it will be unnecessary here to renew the question. Of *Felix*, *Aranza*, *Rover*, *Rapid*, *Sheva*, *Belcour*, *Charles Surface*, *Leon*, *Tangent*, *Wilding*, *Dowlas*, *Dornton*, *Valentine*, *Lothario*, *Absolute*, &c. &c., and last, the celebrated rehearsal of *Falstaff*, we have spoken in their proper places. In the romantic drama, Elliston, at an early period of his life was greatly attractive: his *Octavian*, and *Sir Edward Mortimer*—the peculiar circumstances, too, under which he played this latter character—would alone have entitled him to the name of an accomplished actor.

In the "business" of the stage, Elliston was always popular. He was, what is called a "fair actor,"—never appropriating the scenic effects of others, but always playing in such a manner as might bring into best operation the professional merits of those around him. This fact, and a total absence of jealousy towards rising actors, rendered him always popular with his brethren. One thing further we may be permitted to observe (for with those at all acquainted with theatrical life, it will doubtless be a claim of commendation): Elliston never was guilty of the coarse and ungentlemanly act (to say the least of it) of common swearing. No one ever heard an oath pass his lips; and though he lived in too great neglect of religious observances, no man was readier to respect those of better example than himself, and he was the very last to treat with levity any question of a sacred nature.

We may, in fine, term him as a kind of dramatic Alcibiades; great versatility, eccentric enterprise, strange inconsistencies, with a fervent devotion to the public duties to which fortune had called him, constituted him in his time, if not an exemplary general, at least a brilliant soldier.

On Friday the 15th of July, the remains of this celebrated Comedian, were removed for interment, from Great Surrey Street, Blackfriars, to St. John's Church, Waterloo Road.

The funeral was a walking one, in compliance with the will of the deceased. Of relatives and family connections, the following were present:—

Mr. Henry Twistleton Elliston; Mr. Charles Robert Elliston: Messrs. Wilson, Torre, Rundall, Winston, Beazley, &c. &c.

The body was deposited in a Vault of the Church, and the service performed by the Rev. Dr. Barratt.

In August, 1833, a marble tablet was placed on the south side of the Altar of the Church, bearing the following inscription, composed by Mr. Nicholas Torre, Son-in-law of the deceased:—

Haud procul ab hoc loco sepultus est
ROBERTUS GULIELMUS ELLISTON,
cujus memoriæ sacrum liberi sui superstites,
amicis etiam quibusdam opem afferentibus,
hoc marmor ponendum curaverunt.

Natus est septimo die Aprilis, MDCCLXXIV.
Obiit octavo die Julii, MDCCCXXXI.

Dum pia Melpomene, nato pereunte, querelas
Fundit, et ante alias orba Thalia gemit,
Non minus in lachrymas fidi solvuntur amici,
Non minus egregii pignora chara tori.
Thespica comœdum Londini pulpita mœrent,
Gaudia diffugiunt, deliciæque tacent.

Of which classic memorial we subjoin the genial notice of one who well appreciated the rare talents of the actor and pleasant eccentricities of the man,—we mean the testimony of Charles Lamb.

"Great wert thou in thy life, Robert William Elliston! and not lessened in thy death, if report speak truly, which says that thou didst direct that thy mortal remains should repose under no inscription but one of pure *Latinity*. For thee the Pauline Muses weep! In elegies that shall silence this rude prose, they shall celebrate thy praise!"

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