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“ Vanitas vanitatis, et omnia vanitas ! ”

I N T W O V O L U M E S .

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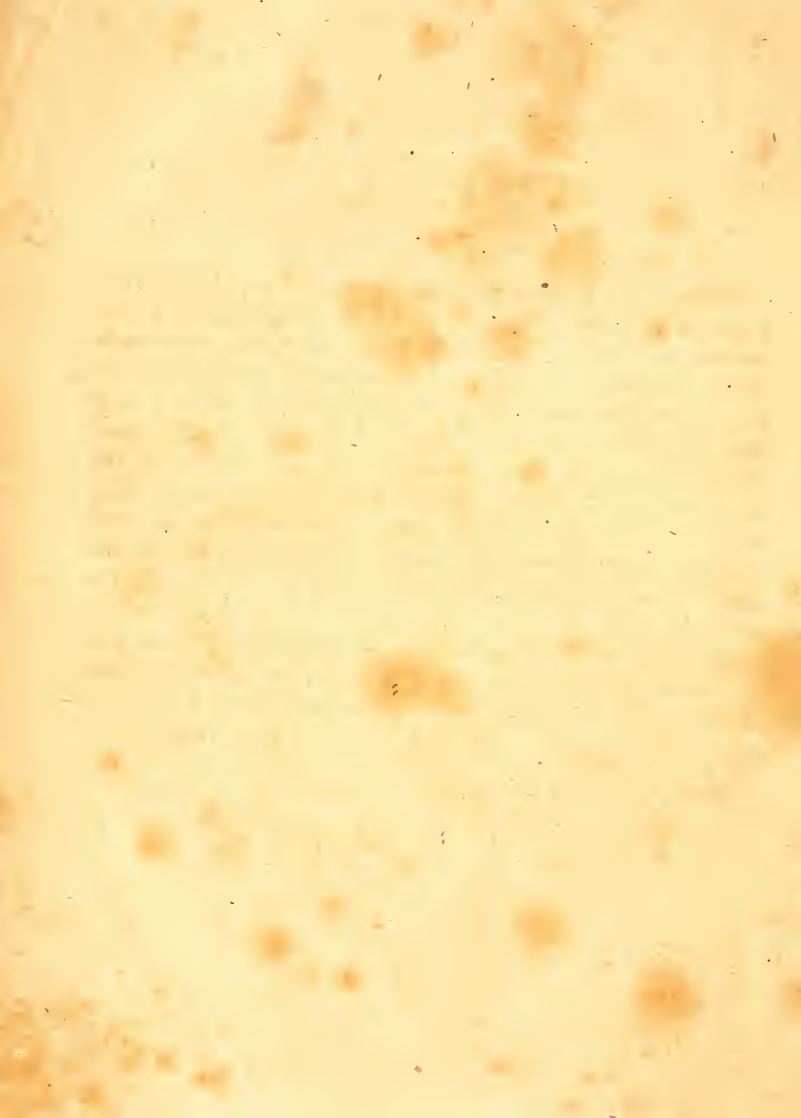
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HAVING been frequently asked to commit to paper the varied scenes of an actor's life, in which I have been engaged, I have commenced, partly from recollection, and partly from memoranda made at various periods, the present journal, under the title of the Life of an Actor and Manager, in the course of which I may have occasion to mention the names of nearly all the European Actors who have appeared upon the American stage during the last twenty years. If any amusement may be derived from such a source, reader, it is at your service; but should the frequent occurrence of the personal pronoun *I*, disgust you, lay down the book. If you will travel through it—spare its faults—under the assurance of its veracity. Wherever a change of opinion has taken place it is faithfully chronicled, without reference to the first impression, which remains as it first struck the author, thus endeavoring to do full justice to my professional brethren.

THE AUTHOR.

NEW-YORK, October, 1846.

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# TWENTY-SIX YEARS

OF THE LIFE OF

## AN ACTOR AND MANAGER.

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### CHAPTER I.

Birth—Parentage—Education—High School of Edinburgh—Early Pursuits—Private Theatricals—First Appearance in Public—Strolling Actors—Wise Reflections—Theory versus Practice.

THUS to commence, then. Know all men, that I, Francis Courtney Wemyss, late Manager of the Chesnut Street Theatre, Walnut Street Theatre, Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia; Holiday Street and Front Street Theatres, Baltimore; Pittsburgh Theatre, *et cetera, et cetera*, first drew the breath of life in Finch Lane, Cornhill, London, on the 13th of May, 1797. My father was an officer in the British Navy, descended from one of the proudest of the proud families of North Britain, who lost his life in the service of his country, and lies buried in the Island of Malta. My mother was born in Boston, Massachusetts, while that State was a colony of Great Britain. Of my boyhood, I can say but little, more than, that I was for a short period on board the Utrecht, with my father, who intended that I should follow his own profession. After his death, I was placed under the care of his brother, Otho H. Wemyss, Esq., Advocate, Edinburgh, was sent to the High School, where I remained three years under the tuition of Mr. Carson, the present Rector of that far-famed school. While there, Dr. Addams, who had for fifty years presided as Rector, died, and was honored by

the Lord Provost and Baillies of the city with a public funeral, of which the boys, to the number of seven hundred, formed one of the most interesting parts of the procession. He is well known to the literary world as the author of *Roman Antiquities*, a Latin Dictionary and a Latin and English Grammar on a superior principle, including all the best rules of Rudiman, and many valuable literary works. No praise from a pen of mine can add the smallest lustre to a name which will ever be held dear while science and learning deserve a niche in the temple of fame. He was succeeded in the Rectorship by a Mr. Pillans, a very learned gentleman, whose English pronunciation of Latin words had nearly caused a revolution in the school, which Dr. Taws assisted in reducing to obedience, to the no small annoyance of the refractory boys' fingers.

The first bias my mind received towards the stage was thus early given in acting the part of Lady Randolph, in the tragedy of Douglas, at the house of a schoolfellow named Miller, in which I elicited much *undeserved* approbation. Private theatricals are at the best, ludicrous, and have a dangerous tendency on any young mind imbued with romance. Although I had not at this time the most distant idea of the possibility of ever becoming an actor, the applause I received on this occasion acted on my imagination at a later period in life, and kindled a flame which nothing could extinguish.

After going through the usual number of Latin and Greek verbs, and being rather an apt scholar, bearing off several primia at the public examinations, I was one morning called into my uncle's study, and a communication laid before me from Mr. Thomas Courtney, Junr., my mother's brother, offering to take charge of my future welfare if I should think proper to change my views in life, (having been up to this time intended for a surgeon in the navy.) To this proposition I gave a willing assent, and my whole pursuits were at once altered: instead of ardently pursuing a liberal profession, I was to be transformed into a plain, plodding man of business. Messrs. Courtney and Sons, having introduced into Scotland the manufacture of raven duck, since dignified by the name of linen drilling, established a house in Dundee, where the junior partner was to reside, and to whose care my future destiny was now entrusted.

Never did boy enter upon life with brighter prospects, or never did boy exert himself more successfully in the outset. My attention and assiduity gained me the entire confidence and approbation of my uncle, and at the early age of sixteen, I was entrusted

with the superintendence of a business, which, in the various departments of flax-dressing, spinning, bleaching, warping, winding, weaving, lapping and packing, employed nearly two-thirds of the manufacturing population of Kirkaldy, Dysart, East and West Wemyss, Perth, Dundee, Forfar, Arbroath, Brechin, Montrose and Aberdeen,—all furnishing their quota of labor, and all passing for inspection through my hands. The government contract, held by the house of Courtney and Sons, requiring the weekly delivery of at least two hundred pieces of cloth, not less than seventy-nine yards each in length, and as much more as could be furnished; nay, at the age of fifteen, I had actually signed policies of insurance and cheques upon the bank, as the authorized agent of Thomas Courtney, Junr., when business required his presence in London. What then, it may well be asked, could induce me to throw away such advantages?

#### TOO MUCH INDULGENCE AND TOO MUCH MONEY.

My lamented uncle has been for years numbered with the dead: the only fault I can lay to *his* charge, was *too much kindness in general, and only one act of harsh severity*. Picture a headstrong, high-spirited boy of sixteen, placed on a par with men, associating with men, entrusted with business, and transacting business like a man, money at his command, and no control exercised over his actions, his word a law to those around him. Thus situated, is it to be wondered at, if assailed in all quarters by temptation, I sometimes exceeded the bounds of prudence. Accustomed to associate with men, I forgot I was a boy, and gambling, the most seductive of vices, became the source of difference between my uncle and myself. Not contented with the card parties, at which, in his company, I was a frequent visitor, I enrolled myself as a member of clubs, composed of clerks and young tradesmen, who met for that purpose at an hotel once or twice a week. My visits to these places were communicated with much exaggeration to Mr. Courtney, who, at once, peremptorily forbade me to touch a card except in his presence.

To break up these associations, he signified his intention of taking me with him to London, on a visit to my mother; and little did I think, when joyfully preparing for this trip of pleasure, it would be the last time I should ever see my dear mother more; she died ten days after my arrival. Thus the loss of my surviving parent, turned a visit of intended enjoyment into one of mournful condolence, and hastened my return to Dundee.

I had a brother two years older than myself, who, from sudden fright, had been laboring under temporary insanity. He was just

recovering ; and his friends, fearful the shock of his mother's death might occasion a relapse, his uncle invited him to follow us to Dundee, hoping, by change of scene, to obliterate all traces of recent sorrow. He accepted the invitation, and from the moment of his arrival in Bains' Square, the demon of discord appeared. A coolness, without any apparent cause, took place in Mr. Courtney's treatment towards me ; he was distant and reserved, while I have frequently heard him lavish praise upon my brother for work which had actually been performed by me ; nor did he ever, owing to my stubborn disposition, become sensible of his mistake, until I had finally left the factory, and William was found incapable of doing what had been previously supposed to be his, but was now discovered to have been the labor of Master Frank. Poor fellow, he was not accountable for his actions, and I verily believe, would have laid down his life to serve him, of whom he was unconsciously the worst foe. He died at Kirkaldy shortly after I entered my professional career.

About this time, Mr. Henry Johnston, accompanied by Bartley, and James Wallack, then a boy, arrived in Dundee, and announced a medley performance at the theatre. Before the commencement of the entertainment, a change of scene placed Mr. Johnston within the walls of a prison, on suspicion of debt : having suddenly left Ireland, without taking leave of his creditors, who, following close at his heels, surprised him in the North of Scotland. Thus, my first acquaintance with the man, who was destined to be the means of my embracing the stage as a profession, commenced within the walls of the Dundee gaol. Sympathy for a man of talent in distress, first induced me to visit him ; when, finding his situation almost destitute, I used every effort in my power to alleviate his distress, furnishing him with every luxury which my uncle's house could afford, frequently spending my evenings in his society, until I imbibed from his conversation a romantic veneration for the drama, and its humblest professor, ending in an attempt to establish a private theatre in Bains' Square, in which I acted once a fortnight before all the fashionables of Dundee. Here it was, I acquired a reputation among my companions for dramatic talent, which fixed the stake upon which I was to hazard all.

Mr. Johnston having been released from prison under the act of "cessio bonorum," became manager of a company of comedians in Paisley, afterwards obtaining the Montrose and Aberdeen Theatre. In the latter cities I visited him by invitation, to be present at the first masquerade ever given so far north in the land of

steady habits. The fortnight I remained in Aberdeen was spent chiefly in the society of the officers of the 42nd Highlanders, then stationed there, whom I had known in Dundee: poor fellows, how many of them shortly afterwards found a bloody, but a glorious grave at Waterloo.

On my return home, a crisis approached little dreamt of, and which, in the space of a few short hours, changed my future position in society. I had been engaged during the day, superintending and stowing in the warehouse, a cargo of Riga T. R. flax, which had arrived from London. The subscription assembly was to take place at the Town Hall in the evening, to which my uncle, my brother, and myself, were going; I was much fatigued, and not being very fond of dancing, would willingly have foregone the ball. My brother William, busily engaged in adorning his person, had neglected to copy a letter of some importance to Mr. Willis, of Kirkaldy, which my uncle, much displeased at the neglect, desired me to copy, at once. I told him I was very tired, and that William had better be called down. He said rather harshly, "No sir; do it yourself." This, I refused. What followed, I never can forget. He deliberately rose from his seat, reached the letter-book, placed it open on his desk, lighted the candles, placed a chair before the desk, and then addressed me thus—"Young man, I give you five minutes to determine. If you do not begin to copy this letter at the expiration of that time, by the God above us, we shall see whether you or I are master here, for I begin to doubt it." He laid his watch upon the table, and pacing up and down the room, became each moment more excited. When the time expired, he again asked me if I intended to copy that letter. The monosyllable *no*, was scarcely uttered, when I found myself prostrated by a blow—*that blow made me an actor*. I rose, took the pen, copied the letter, and left the house, with a firm determination never to enter it again. That evening, Mr. Courtney and my brother, the cause of all the mischief, visited the ball, while I paraded the streets, scarcely knowing, from passion and mortification, what I was doing, and caring still less. With my mind in this feverish state, Henry Johnston, and the idea of becoming an actor, first presented itself.

I addressed a letter to Mr. Johnston, telling him I had resolved to leave Dundee for ever, requesting his instruction and support, as I wished to make the stage my profession. In the morning, I informed Mr. Courtney of what I had done. He laughed at the idea; but finding me seriously bent upon it, he used his utmost endeavor to combat it. As an amusement, he said, he had no objec-

tion to it, but to make it the only dependence, whereby to live, he never could consent—adding, “Your own headstrong and ungovernable temper, led to a collision, which I most sincerely regret, and could wish obliterated from your memory.” I replied, “You have degraded me, sir, by a blow, and I feel I never can be comfortable again under your roof; on your return from London, you will not find me here.” And thus we parted.

Henry Johnston, in a few days after this interview, passed through the town of Dundee, with his company, on the way to Montrose. He also urged me most strenuously to abandon my intention; but finding me fixed in my resolve, promised to aid my views to the utmost of his power, as a poor requital for the kindness, he was pleased to say, I had heaped upon him. It was decided I should hold myself in readiness to obey his summons, and he would write to me as early as he could make arrangements for my reception. At the end of three weeks I received the following letter from him:—

(COPY.)

MONTROSE, July, 1814.

DEAR FRANK,

Suppose you muster your Dundee friends for a trial here in Zanga, on Friday next, if you are still bent upon ruin; but remember the hints and predictions of one, who has no other motive at heart, than your welfare, in return for kindness, when placed in a most unhappy situation. Spencer has agreed to support you as Carlos. Respects to all. Your's sincerely,

(Signed,) HENRY ERSKINE JOHNSTON.

On receipt of this, I started the following evening for Montrose, where I arrived early on Friday morning. I breakfasted at Mr. Hunter's, The Montrose Arms, asked with a palpitating heart for a play-bill, which, to my astonishment, announced the Tragedy of Douglas, as the play for this ominous Friday. Enquiring of Mr. Johnston the reason of the change, I learnt that Mr. Spencer, who was to have played Carlos, was confined with a fit of gout, and the *Revenge* could not be acted. But, said he, “You have played *Norval*; do it to-night; it will give me an opportunity of judging, and in case of failure, which we will not anticipate, your secret will be confined to your own breast.” I, therefore, acted *Young Norval*, with his name in the play-bill for the part, and this should, in strict justice, be considered my first appearance on a public stage; but no record of it being in existence, I date my



theatrical career from my opening in Glasgow, as Selim, in the *Tragedy of Barbarossa*, two months later. Douglas was thus cast on the occasion, Young Norval, Wemyss; Glenalvon, Scott; Lord Randolph, Emley; Old Norval, H. Johnston; Lady Randolph, Mrs. St. Leger; and Anna, Miss Charlotte O'Keefe. Thus, was the decisive step taken. I returned to Dundee, with the perfect understanding that I was to meet Mr. Johnston in Glasgow, on the opening of the theatre there, of which he had become the lessee.

On a fine summer morning, I crossed the Tay, with the determination of walking to Kinghorn, and so crossing the Frith of Forth to Leith, proceed to Edinburgh; the distance to be accomplished, about thirty-six miles. This, to a young man, who had never walked ten miles at any one time, was a serious undertaking; however, I arrived at the "*lang town*" of Kirkaldy, where I made a halt, sleeping at the factory of Messrs. Courtney and Son, there; received five pounds from Mr. Jamieson, their agent, telling him I was on my way to Glasgow, but not divulging the secret of my journey. Crossing to Leith the following morning, I secured a place in the Glasgow mail, from the Bull's Head, in Leith Walk, and resolved to spend the day with my uncle and Aunt Wemyss—the last I ever passed in their company. Mr. Otho Wemyss accompanied me to the coach, little dreaming, when he bade God bless me, and send me safely to my journey's end, on what errand I was bound. The guard's horn blew, the words "all right," pronounced, and I was fairly started. We arrived in Glasgow at two o'clock on Monday morning, when I retired to bed to dream of success, and a prosperous career.

After a hearty breakfast at the Tontine Coffee House, I walked to the theatre, where I found the play announced for the opening was *Hamlet*, in which Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kemble were to play *Hamlet* and *Ophelia*; H. Johnston, the *Ghost*; Mrs. St. Leger, the *Queen*; Emley, *Laertes*; Berry, (the best comedian in Scotland,) *Polonius*; and Spencer, the *King*. This was the best acted play I had seen. The impression made upon my mind was one of unqualified delight: such language delivered by such artists, is not often heard out of London. I can, at a distance of twenty-six years, recall almost every action of every player engaged on that night.

My reception by Mr. Johnston, was, as Baillie Nichol Jarvie says, "the north side of friendly"—coolness is scarcely a sufficient name—it was actually rudeness. He called me into the manager's room, and addressed me thus—"Well, young man, here you are, I see. Have you your uncle's consent for this folly?"

(He knew, I had not, as I had distinctly explained to him my situation in Montrose, when he pledged himself to do every thing in his power to advance my interest in the profession I had chosen.) I of course answered, "No." "*Then I do not suffer you to act until I receive his written consent.*" And, without another word, he walked out of the room, leaving me perfectly astonished at the change in his behavior, heretofore, so kind and courteous. Had he, when the subject was first broached between us, acted thus, although I might have felt hurt at his conduct, my judgment, knowing myself to be a minor, and a runaway boy, might have pronounced it right; but I was at this moment in Glasgow, on his express invitation, with the full knowledge of every thing which had transpired between my uncle and myself, and the positive assurance, not only of his protection, but assistance. From what has since occurred, I may say, with justice, had Mr. Johnston, at this time, devoted a small portion of his leisure to my instruction, he would have repaid himself handsomely, from my future exertions, and deserved the gratitude of one, to whom he had acknowledged himself under many personal favors. He chose the course already mentioned, and converted a warm friend and devoted enthusiast, into a bitter foe.

My situation at the close of this interview, was any thing but agreeable. I had left my home, without money, offended my friends, depending upon the word of a man who had suddenly apprised me that I had nothing to hope from him. Thus foiled, prudence should have dictated an immediate return; but my pride was wounded, and the fear of ridicule prevented an acknowledgment of error, which would have immediately reinstated me in the affection of my uncle. I therefore boldly resolved to make an application to a strolling manager, named Moss, well known in the theatrical world, and not unknown to fame, in a metropolitan theatre. He was at this time, with his company at Falkirk. Thither I proceeded in the canal boat, waited upon him, dressed for the occasion—when, after an interview of nearly an hour, it was agreed I should open on the following Thursday, as Young Norval, and be rated on the books for a *share*. Well pleased with this arrangement, all present difficulty seemed overcome, and I was already, in my own opinion, the future hero of the company. Here, again, I was doomed to meet a bitter mortification. I was punctual, according to promise, at the theatre for rehearsal; but, oh! "*what a check to proud ambition*"—this theatre, the object of my hope, and my desire, was a *barn*, fitted up in the rudest style;

but I consoled myself with the knowledge that John Kemble had acted in a barn ; therefore, it could be no disparagement to me, and there was something romantic in the idea of thus entering the profession at the lowest round of the ladder. But when the ladies and gentlemen assembled to rehearse, Falstaff's ragged regiment in apparel were princes to them ; with the solitary exception of the manager, there was not a decently dressed individual. As to a whole coat, that appeared to be a luxury totally unknown ; yet, there was a shabby genteel appearance among them, which spoke of better days, and a certain strut, by which the strolling player is readily detected, by the eye of a professional brother. As each actor was introduced, I could scarce repress a smile—but my courage failed ; I resolved not to make one of their number. Approaching Mr. Moss, I requested a few moments, conversation ; related to him as much of my history as it was necessary he should know ; told him I had decided on returning home, and wished to decline acting altogether. To his credit, be it spoken, although he had a prospect of a well-filled house, he approved my resolution, offering to lend me the means, if necessary, of putting, as he said, my praiseworthy intention into practice. This was my second and last interview with Moss. Poor fellow, he is dead ; but this generous act of his would shame many of those who are continually railing at the immorality of the stage, yet would not stretch forth their hand to prevent a youth from plunging headlong into such a vortex of vice and dissipation, as they describe it. *Verbum sat*, which, being rendered into plain American, means—" nuff sed."

## CHAPTER II.

Effects of Badinage—Reflections and Regrets—Stage Fright—Gratitude of a Manager—A Lawyer's Opinion of the Stage as a Profession—Two Letters—Look on this Picture and on that.

IF I could believe in the doctrine of predestination, I should say it was my fate to become an actor; for I solemnly declare, at the moment I placed my foot in the Glasgow mail coach, as it passed through Falkirk, to return home, I had firmly resolved to abandon, for ever, my foolish project, and by strenuously devoting myself to business, make all the atonement in my power for the loss of time and trouble I had occasioned to my relations. One unfortunate occurrence again altered all my well formed resolutions. On my arrival in Dundee, on the 20th of June, 1814, Mr. Courtney was entertaining a party of gentlemen at dinner. The officiousness of a servant, in announcing my arrival, produced a message requesting my presence in the dining-room. This summons I readily obeyed; but no sooner had I opened the door, and stood fairly over its threshold, than one universal roar of laughter burst from the crowded table, accompanied with expressions, like the following: "Make room for Roscius"—"Here comes the proud representative of Shakspeare heroes"—"Right welcome back to Denmark"—"A frog he would a wooing go," &c., &c., &c.

This ill-timed badinage sealed my fate. Smarting under the lash of jests, the truth of which I could not but inwardly acknowledge, I replied to my uncle's question of—"Are you cured of your folly, and determined for the future to attend closely to business?" "No, sir, I am off again to-morrow morning." Not another word was uttered upon the subject; but from that moment, I used all my endeavors to obtain his consent to my becoming an actor. Instead of candidly acknowledging myself disgusted with scenes I had witnessed, I uttered the first untruth that ever passed my lips to Mr. Courtney, stating my return was only for the purpose of obtaining from him, a written acknowledgment of his approbation of the course I was pursuing, without which, Mr. Johnston would not permit me to act; that my mind was firmly fixed upon the subject; that his refusal would only have the effect of driving me into the

society of the first strolling company who would receive me, instead of commencing my career in a respectable theatre, with every prospect of success.

Thus urged, his kindness and indulgence got the better of his judgment. He furnished me with the necessary document, generously adding a monthly allowance of ten pounds sterling, which was afterwards reduced to five, and finally to three; which sum, he continued to allow me to the hour of his death. Thus, the folly of friends, in a moment of hilarity, prevented by an ill-timed jest, the return of a headstrong lad of seventeen, to the path which interest and duty pointed clearly to be right.

The die being now cast, before I proceed, let me do justice to one, whose memory I revere, whose kindness I abused, to whom I was indebted for more than parental indulgence. His liberality in not withdrawing from me his countenance and support, but granting me pecuniary aid, with the hope that I should repent my folly, will be so strongly contrasted with the conduct of my father's family, that, had Mr. Courtney followed their advice, I should, in all probability, have become the worthless vagabond they feared. Many a time has the monthly allowance, which arrived punctually to the hour, been the support not only of myself, but others in the same distressed situation. Those only who have experienced the vicissitudes of a strolling player's life, can know or feel the joy with which such a windfall as three pounds, would be hailed in what is termed a *bad town*, where, probably, all were in debt, many without a penny in their pockets, and none with a dinner to supply their wants. Through his bounty, was I enabled to avoid the shifts and tricks of my professional associates, although I have felt, and keenly too, the bitter smart of poverty. I can proudly say, in reviewing this part of my career, that no dishonorable action stains its progress, never having quitted a town, as a strolling actor, in which I did not faithfully discharge every claim against me.

The character of Mr. Thomas Courtney, Junr., may be thus summed up. He possessed a soul of honor, a heart at all times open to a tale of distress, and a hand ever ready to relieve it; he was the orphan's friend, the poor man's hope, and the rich man's example. To him may be truly applied Shakspeare's language—

“He was a man, take him for all in all,  
Eyes shall not look upon his like again.”

Death closed his career at the early age of twenty-eight; but he lives in the recollection of his numerous acts of kindness, and

may my children, while they drop a tear to the memory of their father's benefactor, learn to imitate his virtues, and avoid their father's failings.

With what different feelings did I now leave the town of Dundee for Glasgow—reconciled to my uncle, furnished with a supply of cash, amounting to fifty pounds, and the written approval of my course—to present myself before Mr. Johnston, convinced that every difficulty was surmounted. When I met him, he seemed at a loss how to receive me. Being informed I had procured my uncle's approbation, he desired me to meet him in the green-room on the following morning. Here I was introduced to Mr. Charles Kemble, who drew any thing but a flattering picture of the life of an actor, giving himself, as an instance, of the precarious tenure of their engagements, enjoying the favor of the public in the highest degree; but from the caprice of the management, excluded at that time, from both the London theatres, of which he was one of the brightest ornaments, and strongly recommending me to abandon all thoughts of the stage.

It was now arranged that I should make my first appearance as Selim, in the play of Barbarossa, which part was selected by Mr. Johnston on account of my youth. I committed the words to memory, expecting to receive from the manager those instructions in the business of the stage, he was so capable of imparting; but to my astonishment, Mr. Johnston did not even attend my first and only rehearsal.

The awful night, pregnant with my fate, arrived. I entered on my theatrical career, on the first night of the Glasgow fair, July 14th, 1814: never shall I forget the dreadful sensation I experienced, as I heard the prompter's bell ring, to begin the play. My mouth became perfectly parched, my tongue refused its office, and, dressed as I was, one word would have prevented my attempt. *Stage fright*—I will not attempt to describe thee—actors know too well what it is: and auditors, who see no difficulty in acting, should be placed but once before the lamps, in a crowded theatre, to make them silent critics for ever.

Like William the Conqueror, I made a stumbling entrance to my future throne. Wishing to appear erect, and not to lose an inch of my height, I was carrying my head with martial precision, when my toe caught in the stage carpet, bringing me to a kneeling position before the mighty Barbarossa, not in the most graceful manner. This added to my fright, and induced a facetious member of the company to declare, at the end of the performance,

if I wanted my voice again, it would be found in the folds of the green curtain, beyond which not a sound had penetrated. Yet, I was loudly applauded by the audience, and perfectly satisfied with my reception ; so much so, that I ventured to ask Mr. Johnston what emolument I was to receive for my future exertions. Here is his reply.

(COPY.)

SIR,—It is my opinion you will never make an actor, and the sooner you return home again, the better. When you resume your late respectable situation in society, I shall be proud and happy to renew our late friendship.

Yours, &c.

(Signed) HENRY ERSKINE JOHNSTON.

And thus ended all the promises of support, so liberally made on his part, and so foolishly depended upon on mine. We separated, to meet again in Philadelphia, in the year 1838, when he applied to me for an engagement at the Walnut Street Theatre. What strange events daily occur in this world. Who could have supposed that the Glasgow manager, who so summarily dismissed a boy of seventeen, in 1814, should in 1838, have applied to that boy for permission to act in a Philadelphia theatre, of which he had become the manager, and be refused, for want of talent, having become perfectly superannuated.

Thus repulsed, Mr. Emley, an excellent actor, and my constant companion, advised me to make an application to an old friend of his, a Mr. Neville, who had the management of a small itinerant company, then playing in Port Glasgow. I accordingly addressed a letter to him, and received a most flattering answer, offering me a fair trial, stating he had been introduced to me, by Dr. Horsley, in Dundee, when a member of the Edinburgh company of comedians, under the management of Mr. Henry Siddons, and had a favorable idea of my talent if properly cultivated ; requested me to proceed without delay, to Port Glasgow, and all minor points could be settled between us when we met. On the 4th day of September, 1814, I departed from Glasgow, in the Clyde steamboat, and on the following Monday, played Young Norval, at Port Glasgow. The manager being pleased with the performance, engaged me as a member of his company, the same evening, at the enormous sum of fifteen shillings, (not quite \$3 50,) per week, with a promise of increase, as I should improve, or appear worthy ; which promise, he faithfully kept. I paid eight shillings per week for

board and lodging. But never having, heretofore, known the want of money, I have frequently, in one afternoon, spent double the amount of my weekly stipend; until finding myself in debt, from which I had no other means of extricating myself, than by pawning my watch and chain, on which, I borrowed ten pounds sterling, which I was unable to redeem for as many months. This was a salutary warning, teaching me the necessity of living according to the rules of economy, and may be called my first lesson in adversity.

On the 22nd of September, my salary was raised to one pound sterling, for studying the words of Captain Absolute, in the Rivals, at six hours' notice, and presenting myself before the public, perfect to a monosyllable. I was not aware that I had performed any thing like a miracle, until on the following Saturday, a very flattering note informed me of the increase of remuneration, and conveyed to me the thanks of Mr. Neville, and his partner, Mr. Shaw, for my kindness on the occasion.

The company consisted at this period, of Messrs. Neville and Shaw, (the managers,) Mr. and Mrs. Ryder, Mr. Mullender, Mr. Hart, (known as Old Joe Hart,) Mr. M'Cann, Mr. Martin, Mr. Michel, Mr. Wemyss, Mrs. Mills, Mrs. Shaw, Mrs. Neville, and Mrs. Hart. Many pleasant hours have I passed in the society of the Ryders. To Mrs. Ryder, I am indebted for my first instruction in the business of the stage; to her alone, I attribute the rapid improvement I made during the first six months of my career. When she left the company, my good genius departed with her. The Port Glasgow company occupies a place in my memory, associated with the most unalloyed pleasure I ever experienced in my profession. The managers were most friendly to me; each actor seemed to take pride in affording me every information in his power. Pleased with these attentions, I looked upon the life of an actor, as one of uninterrupted felicity. The difficulty I had experienced in enrolling my name among them, adding to my satisfaction at the result.

Thus pleased with myself and every one around me, I received the following letter from my uncle Courtney. My refusing to listen to the proposal therein contained proves the entire ascendancy the stage at this time possessed over my mind.

(COPY.)

DEAR FRANK,

I have but just returned from Edinburgh, where I found your Uncle and Aunt Wemyss in the greatest mental distress,



on account of the line of life you have thought fit to adopt. At their instigation, I am induced to repeat the offer already made, provided you will abandon your present folly, of allowing you the choice of any profession you may name, for the prosecution of which, I will provide you with a suitable maintenance, until you shall be enabled to live by the profits of your occupation. Weigh this well in your mind, and after due consideration, let me know the result of your determination: at all events, write a few lines to your uncle in Edinburgh.

Yours most affectionately,

(Signed) THOS. COURTNEY, JUNR.

BAINS' SQUARE, DUNDEE, Sept., 1814.

On the day I received this letter, my first Benefit was to take place.\* The play fixed upon was George Barnwell, the after-piece *The Lying Valet*. My name was announced in large letters for George Barnwell—first time. Thinking this a good opportunity of conveying to my friends the idea that I was making rapid strides in my new profession, I enclosed a bill of the play to each of my uncles—one to Mr. Courtney at Dundee, the other to Mr. Wemyss at Edinburgh. I should scarcely have recorded this circumstance, but that my uncle Wemyss alludes to it hereafter in a most bitter manner.

Looking at my past life as I *now* do, I am astonished that any infatuation (and such I admit a passion for the stage to be) could have induced me to have rejected the offer contained in the above letter, yet such was the case; and had a fortune beyond my wildest hopes been tendered to me at that time, coupled with the positive injunction of never again appearing upon the stage, I should have rejected it without the slightest regret: my only wonder is, that Mr. Courtney continued his kind allowance, urged as he was by Mr. Wemyss to abandon me to my fate, and even reproached by him as encouraging me in my headstrong disobedience.

A few days brought me an answer to both my letters, the contents of which were as follows:—

(COPY FROM O. H. WEMYSS.)

DUBLIN ST., EDINBURGH, Sept., 1814.

Your unexpected epistle, so well calculated to call forth all

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\* This produced me, after paying the charges of the manager, the enormous profit of three shillings and sixpence.

the angry passions on a subject requiring peculiar care and circumspection, now lies before me.

The infatuation must indeed be irresistible, that can induce any human being, blessed with an ordinary share of intellect, voluntarily to prefer the society of the profligate and lowest dregs of the community, together with a life of contempt, penury, and wretchedness of every description, and not unfrequently attended with ulterior consequences of a still more alarming nature, to the countenance and esteem of a numerous circle of friends and relations, and to those habits of industry, which must infallibly have led, in a few years, to a useful, creditable, independent situation in society.

Such, however, is your resolution, not taken under the impulse of passion, arising from any grievance, real or pretended, or from any distaste to the line of life which your friends had, with your own approbation, destined you, but deliberately taken, and wilfully adhered to, in face of repeated remonstrances, and of offers so generous and liberal, as were perhaps never before made to any young man in similar circumstances. Woeful experience will teach you, too late, the real value of these advantages you have thus unaccountably neglected. I say, *too late*—for you deceive yourself miserably if you imagine you can at any time relinquish your present disgraceful career, and resume your proper sphere in society: your best friends may not always be willing to receive even a returning penitent. Habits of idleness inimical to all manly exertions, will insensibly be formed, while every hour of lost time, by preventing the necessary previous tuition, will infallibly obstruct any attempt to establish you in a more useful, creditable situation in society.

I am not so presumptuous as to expect to succeed, where others, entitled to equal respect with myself, have already failed; but I feel it an imperious call of duty to make the attempt. Let me then conjure you in the most forcible manner, again to peruse your Uncle Courtney's letter, offering you the option of any profession you may desire, *which shall be prosecuted at his expense*. Should you, then, be inclined to avail yourself of this uncommonly generous offer, I shall indeed feel a proud satisfaction in conveying to him your sentiments, procuring a total obliteration of the past, and forwarding your views, as far as consistent with reason and propriety—but *this resolution must be immediate*. Should you still persist in your present ruinous and disgraceful career, your refusal can add nothing to the poignancy of that distress, which I, in common with all your friends, have felt from your

misconduct ; but supported by the proud consciousness of having performed my duty to you, from the earliest hour up to the present moment, I shall attempt the painful task of forgetting for ever that such a being exists, as was once the object of my fondest care, and unremitting solicitude, and from whom I had every reasonable prospect of much better things. You cannot have forgotten how, in earnest conversation, I once told you I would rather see you a *common hangman*, than a *player* ; since the one, though unquestionably the lowest, was still a *useful* member of society ; while the other, in my opinion, was something worse than *useless*. These opinions would remain unaltered, even if you, by a miracle, should become a perfect paragon, exceeding any thing ever dreamt of, not to say, actually seen or heard, of theatrical excellence, instead of gaining, with a set of miserable strollers, a pittance less than the wages of a common porter, or daily laborer.

To me it is now perfectly immaterial under what name\* you play the fool, or whether your fooleries shall be successful or not ; however, the practical *bull* of enclosing your play-bill might have been spared : but the piece was certainly well chosen. In Barnwell, if I mistake not, there is an affectionate, ill-used uncle, suffering the extreme of misery, from the profligate habits of an infatuated and misled nephew. If the similarity of situation was felt by the actor, the character must have been portrayed with much natural effect.

Having thus put it once more within you power to extricate yourself with honor from the ruinous and disgraceful career in which you have so imprudently embarked, my paper permits me to add three words only—

PAUSE—REFLECT—DECIDE :

and on your decision it rests, whether this shall or shall not be, the last letter you ever receive from you justly offended, but still affectionate uncle,

(Signed) OTHO HERMAN WEMYSS.

This letter would probably have had a greater effect, had the language been less strong. I acknowledge nothing could be more felicitous than the hit at my play bill ; but to use my uncle's own expression, nothing could be so well calculated to call forth all the angry passions. Comparing a player to a hangman, and

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\* My uncle had previously requested that I would cease to dishonor my father's memory, by using his name as the designation of a mountebank.

giving the latter the preference in society, is a very pretty idea, but most galling to the feelings of a romantic novice, desirous only of obtaining fame in the theatrical world. I had been habituated to admire, from my birth, his talent as an advocate, and this letter is the offspring of no common mind. Notwithstanding his bigoted hostility to the stage, I should hail with satisfaction the hour of our reconciliation, which I hope is not far distant.

I will now proceed with Mr. Courtney's letter, written in a very different spirit; and although he would freely have given thousands to have recalled me from my foolish career, offering every thing that man could offer, to induce me to adopt some other mode of obtaining a living; yet finding me determined to persevere, he used his utmost endeavor to make the thorny path as smooth as possible, aiding me by advice, which his own acute observation on mankind rendered him so capable of affording,—that no old actor ever placed a better set of general rules before a pupil for his instruction, than Mr. C., without any green-room knowledge of the profession, here penned for my guidance.

(COPY FROM THOMAS COURTNEY, JUNR.)

DEAR FRANK,— \* \* \* \* \*  
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Now that you are embarked in your profession, and feel so certain of doing well, I trust you will spare no pains to make yourself as respectable as you can; and of all things, as a player, avoid ever looking at your audience, but always at the person who addresses you on the stage, and whom you have in your turn to address. I consider this fault the greatest a man can be guilty of, and we find is only practised by vain, weak-minded men, who fancy that their persons and their attitudes are alone the source from which they are to derive applause, instead of learning that it is the style of delivery, added to the feeling, that the player portrays, in his wish to impress his audience with the meaning of his author: that alone gives delight. You will be sure to discover this if you pay strict attention to good performers, such as John Kemble, Charles Young, &c., &c.; and as you have had an excellent education, and are supposed not to want ability, I hope we shall find that you excel in whatever you undertake; for a man must never think of half measures—his very soul must be full of what he engages himself in, whether it be in acting, or whether it be in amusement; whether in the counting-room or behind the counter; whether as a

sportsman in the field, or as a private gentleman, enjoying the social conversation of his friends, it is alike in all; and the man who succeeds best is he who is never absent, and only taken up with what he has immediately before him. I hope you will also see, that it is impossible to please, without first studying and well understanding your author: therefore, before you play any new part, you ought to make a point of reading over the whole play with studious attention, at least three times, before you attempt to commit to memory your own part, for you will often find points that ought to fix your attention, in a second or third reading, which would have been overlooked in a first perusal, which should be considered only as a cursory review. Think particularly of this, and always bear in mind, that you are playing for reputation, which will prompt you to act as well, before half a dozen people, as before a crowded audience. The actors with whom you are playing, are sure to give a right estimation to the line of conduct which is pursued in this way, and must acknowledge it to proceed from a superior mind. Try also to improve yourself in your temper; for it often occurs on the stage, in cases of unruly displeasure on the part of an audience, without the cause being in the actor, that a man who wants moderation and sense, is apt to show spleen towards the company present; which must spoil his style, if he be ever so good a player.

These little remarks, I hope, you will attend to, as far as you think and feel them to be correct, and I suppose it will not surprise you, now you have regularly embarked in this profession, to have your Uncle Otho, Mr. Sinclair Wemyss, and myself, among your audience; but you may be sure, we shall take care not to see you, before we see you on the stage, that we may form our opinion of your usual method of playing.

With regard to the reduction of your income, what I wrote to you in my last is my fixed determination upon it: I will give you no more than five pounds per month, beginning on the first day of September. Your cousin, Sinclair Wemyss, was surprised I should allow you anything. I shall consider that I do more than my duty, in granting you an allowance of sixty pounds sterling, per annum, which is a livelihood of itself; and your profession must pay its own expenses, and keep you besides, or it will be but a poor one; however, whether it does or not, cannot now be helped, it is your own choice, and you must be satisfied with it. I expect to hear from you regularly, and am always,

Your affectionate uncle,

DUNDEE, Sept., 1814.

(Signed,) THOS. COURTNEY, JUNR.

I shall not pause to decide which of these letters was the most judicious: I am certain they were both written in the same spirit—*anxiety for my welfare*. The former closed the doors against me for ever, unless its terms were complied with instantly, while the other was intent, upon preventing, if possible, the evils feared by both; but which happily for me have not been realised.

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### CHAPTER III.

Rather too long a Walk for Pleasure—Great Benefit—Shaw, the Singer—Whiskey Punch and Burns' Cottage—Theatrical Row—M'Alpine and M'Cann—Tricks of Strolling—Effects of the first "hiss" upon the nerves of a Novice—Berry, the Edinburgh Comedian.

In a few days after the receipt of these letters, the season closed at Port Glasgow. I spent a few days at Greenock, where the Glasgow company were then performing, and proceeded on the summons of Messrs. Neville and Shaw, to commence in company of Mr. and Mrs. Ryder, my first strolling journey. The next town at which we were to perform, was Irvine; and with three shillings and sixpence in my pocket, the proceeds of my benefit, I started to walk this journey.

Mr. and Mrs. Ryder's family, consisted of three children, two young girls and an infant boy, the last, rather a tax upon travellers, as he had to be carried the whole distance. In order to relieve the lady as much as possible, I volunteered to carry him, mile and mile, with his father; but before we reached Kilwinning, I was scarcely able to carry myself. Mrs. Ryder proved the best pedestrian of the party, and I have ever gratefully remembered the care and attention she heaped upon me after our arrival in Irvine, when the blistered state of my feet rendered me unable to walk for two or three days. She is dead—but a kinder heart never beat in woman's bosom—yet withal, she possessed a most violent temper. Many a time has my presence averted the storm from poor Ryder; but with all her faults, when she died, he lost, in truth, his better half, for she was a most excellent and thrifty housewife.

Irvine is a very pretty little town, surrounded by a variety of diversified walks. Our theatre was the Town Hall, which Neville had fitted up with much taste, and more tact, than commonly falls to the lot of an actor descending from the stilts of a royal theatre, to be the humble manager of a company of strolling players.

Our company was here reinforced, by the addition of Mr. Berri-man and Miss Laing. The Irvine folks appeared delighted with our efforts; the pieces were really well acted, the tact of the manager refusing to attempt whatever he deemed beyond the talent of those under his control, and selecting such pieces, as he was enabled to present, with every part filled with ability. With all the knowledge I subsequently acquired of patented theatres, few, if any out of London, could have filled their "*dramatis personæ*" as well as this little company.

Of the good people of Irvine, I, at least, am bound to speak with gratitude, the hall upon my benefit night being literally crammed. As I was fortunate enough, thus, to eclipse all the better actors, it is but fair I should assign the reason. A gentleman of the town had written a trifling drama on the subject of Burns' Tam O'Shanter, which was produced for Ryder's benefit, in which I was cast the part of "Cutty Sark." With the tuition of Ryder, the witches' scene, in the interior of Alloa Kirk, so well described by the immortal poet, was placed upon the stage, with all the effect which paint, canvas, and dress could give it. The business of the scene was capitally arranged; and with such spirit was it kept up, that when I obtained the tail of Tom's mare, on the middle of the Brig of Doon, one universal shout of "Well done, Cutty Sark," followed the descent of the curtain, each night of performance. The little urchins in the street would salute me, as I passed, with "Well done, Cutty Sark," and when my name was announced for a benefit, every body was determined to be there; an overflowing house was the consequence, but Cutty Sark had nearly become a professional nickname, of which I was not at all ambitious, although it had put several pounds sterling in my pocket.

This season was very successful, and I left the little town with regret, to proceed to Kilmarnock, a brisk manufacturing town, not far distant; here my old friend Emley and his wife, (late Miss Fanny O'Keefe,) joined the company, which the managers were gradually recruiting for the winter season, which was to be passed at Ayr.





From Kilmarnock we bent our course to Ayr, where we passed the winter. Here I became a favorite with the public, and for the first time, began to feel myself of some importance to the theatre. I was worked hard, and not very well paid; but the romantic enthusiasm with which I pursued my now favorite occupation, allowed me little time to think of hardships, which were made the food of mirth, rather than complaint. My leisure hours were chiefly spent at Mrs. McCulloch's, whose house I strongly recommend to any of my readers who may visit Ayr, vouching for the goodness of her table, and moderation of her charges. Many a happy hour have I spent under her roof, and many a hearty supper have I enjoyed, in good fellowship, after a trip to Burns' cottage, in the early part of the day, had laid the foundation for an evening of mirth and joviality. I would fain draw a veil over the scenes of dissipation in which I indulged during my four months' residence in Ayr. My society was courted both by high and low, and I was in real danger of becoming a confirmed drunkard. I never knew what it was to retire to bed perfectly sober,—it is true I was not drunk, but the whiskey-punch (and excellently well did my lady hostess brew it,) had always made strong innovations on sobriety,—merry is the best term; for a set of merry dogs we were. Lucky is it for me I am able to record I had strength of mind sufficient to shake off an evil and a growing habit, which confirmed me in my future sober resolutions; and as experience, if not too dearly bought, is cheaply purchased, so my frolics in Ayr were attended with ultimate beneficial results. Having once escaped an abyss, which has swallowed up so many actors, I never again ventured to sport on the edge of it. Poor McAlpine, had you but followed my advice and example, you would have been at this moment an ornament to your profession. Poor fellow, he was another victim to the duplicity and hollow friendship of Mr. Henry Johnston. Enjoying the esteem of a numerous circle of friends in Glasgow, possessing the qualities of a convivial companion, in a greater degree than usually falls to the lot of a private individual, being decidedly one of the best comic singers I ever heard—in an evil hour, he was persuaded to make a trial of his powers on the stage; his success was complete, but unfortunately for him, it interfered with the views of the manager, who, after a few nights, the profits of which were his only object, refused him an opportunity of acting, even gratuitously. Being a native of the town of Ayr, and the éclât of his Glasgow performance having reached the ears of Mr. Neville,

he started to Glasgow for the purpose of engaging him. He made his first appearance in his native city as Octavian, in the *Mountaineers*, in which I played Count Virolet. He next appeared as Romeo, and such was the anxiety to witness his performance in a character which he had never before studied, that he agreed to play Durimel in the *Point of Honor*. Finding more difficulty than he had anticipated, in committing the words to memory, and that he had overtaken himself, he foolishly neglected it altogether, passed the preceding night in dissipation, and recklessly refused to act the part at all. Public excitement was raised to the highest pitch by his previous excellent performances, so that not a seat remained unoccupied in the boxes. The whole house was filled to overflowing, at least half an hour previous to the usual time of commencing. Every argument was used in vain to induce him to appear before the audience and apologize; he steadily refused, but offered to repeat the part of Octavian, if the audience could be reconciled to the change. In this dilemma, Mr. Neville requested me to make an apology to the following effect:

“Ladies and gentlemen,—I am deputed by the managers to inform you, that in consequence of a most untoward and unforeseen event, it will be utterly impossible for Mr. McAlpine to appear before you in the character of Durimel, as announced this evening. The prompt book of the play having been mislaid or lost, the managers throw themselves upon your indulgence, and request to be allowed the favor of substituting the play of the *Mountaineers*, in which Mr. McAlpine will support the part of Octavian.”

This apology, the first I had ever been called upon to utter, was well received by the audience, until some young man in the pit, who had provided himself with a book of the *Point of Honor*, offered it to the managers. A deputation with the book was sent behind the scenes, but Neville, like a good general, had secured a retreat, and was nowhere to be found, well knowing the utter impossibility of performing the play. Foiled, however, in the attempt to see the manager, the opinion quickly gained ground that the managers were averse to Mr. McAlpine's attempting the part, so that when the curtain rose, on the first scene of the *Mountaineers*, and Mr. Emley and myself were discovered as Kilmallock and Count Virolet, we were saluted with cries of—“*Off!*” “*off!*” “*Point of Honor or no play!*”—“*McAlpine.*” We continued to speak for some time without the possibility of being heard, until the top of one of the benches, hurled with violence on the stage, made us both depart in double quick time.

The stage once vacated, the uproar continued, while the cries for the manager became so loud and long, that Neville at last made his appearance in company with McAlpine, entering into an explanation, very wide of the truth, (a practice too common in theatres when a discontented audience have to be suddenly appeased,) pacifying the audience by a promise on the part of McAlpine to sing the comic song of the Mail Coach after the play of the Mountaineers. Thus terminated a row, which at one time threatened the destruction of the interior of the theatre.

This was the last time I ever saw McAlpine play. He continued to improve in his profession with astonishing rapidity, and was pronounced by many excellent judges, a young man of uncommon talent, who would shortly arrive at eminence. Alas! that "man should put an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains." All his bright prospects have been crushed by his own folly, and the conviviality of his temper proved his ruin. The last I heard of him was as the hero of a strolling company in Cartmel, near Ulverston, Lancashire; his performance only tolerated from the recollection of what he had been, and in all probability, he has sunk into an early grave, another victim to intemperance.

It was in Ayr I first formed the resolution of providing myself with my own theatrical wardrobe. Having received a present from London of two very handsome velvet tunics, I resolved to lay by a certain portion of my weekly receipts to purchase whatever might be necessary for correctly dressing the parts entrusted to me. How well I accomplished my object, those who have ever seen me on the stage are the best judges. It soon acquired for me the reputation of being one of the most attentive actors to costume, and one of the best dressers in the country: this aided me very materially in my future provincial engagements.

I know that actors of the old school have exclaimed loudly against the practice; and that managers have taken most unwarrantable liberties with the public, in consequence of many performers choosing to find their own wardrobe, cannot be denied. If an actor now refuses to find his own dresses, he will frequently be compelled to appear in rags and filth; yet the comfort may be obtained at so slight a sacrifice on the part of any actor, that the reputation he is sure to obtain from his audience will amply overpay him for the attempt. Yet would I endeavor to persuade the public to prevent managers from encroaching too often on their good nature, where actors either will not, or cannot find their own dresses, by loudly hissing, not the actor, but the man-

ager, boldly explaining the cause of disapprobation. A few lessons of this description would speedily correct the evil.

Whenever a new piece is advertised with the additional flourish of new scenery and dresses, unless they are new, it is an imposition, which should be treated as such by the spectators. How frequently does a play-bill trumpet forth the expense and labor bestowed upon a new play, when in the third or fourth scene, on comes an old acquaintance of the audience not even retouched by the brush of the artist, while the performers, with the exception of two or three principal characters, appear in the old standing dresses, worn nightly; whereas a few pounds judiciously expended, would have rendered them new in appearance, and produced every requisite effect. This parsimony, when theatricals are well supported, should not be tolerated an instant; and even in the degraded state to which I have seen the drama reduced, is unjustifiable, and only tends to make bad, worse.

Every line in a play-bill should be strictly true; but to such a height has the pernicious system of puffing been carried, that it is a common saying, "that the greatest liar in the world except a newspaper, is a play-bill." The consequence of thus frequently disappointing the public, has produced an apathy towards the theatre, which it will take years to destroy.

My first participation in a trick too frequently resorted to by strolling players, occurred the night previous to my departure from Ayr. Harry M'Cann, (Paddy M'Cann—glorious Paddy, who, when engaged to carry a torch in a procession, provoked the laughter of every one connected with the theatre, by declaring to Kean he was improving in his profession, for he was acting the light business at the Cobourg every night,) a worthy little fellow, and at this time my constant companion, having failed in his attempt at a benefit, and instead of realizing a profit, finding himself indebted four pounds to the manager, (not an unfrequent case on such occasions,\*) was placed under stoppage of five

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\* Here let me observe, that the public labor under an erroneous impression with regard to actors' benefits. It is usually supposed the actors play gratuitously for each other on these occasions. On the contrary, the expenses are fixed at a certain sum by the manager, which, if not received at the doors, the unfortunate actor is placed under stoppages until the deficiency is paid into the treasury; although in many instances, if it had not been for the exertions of the actor whose name is placed at the head of the play-bills, the manager would not probably have received half of the amount taken on the occasion without including the deficiency which the actor has to make good.

shillings per week, which had so crippled his finances, he was unable to discharge a debt of two guineas at his lodgings; for which sum, all his wearing apparel, together with his stock of wigs, red stockings, and other properties most needful to a low comedian, were placed under the surveillance of his hard-hearted landlady. He was allowed to take each evening to the theatre what he wanted for that night's performance, provided it did not exceed in bulk the size of a common pocket handkerchief, which was to be regularly brought home after the performance. He therefore extracted the most necessary articles, replacing their bulk by small pieces of painted canvas or other useless articles which abound in all theatres. These things were deposited in the trunks of his brother actors, who were more fortunately situated than himself, while the bundle of rubbish was regularly deposited at the bottom of his own trunk. To me he applied on the last occasion, to place in my trunk two or three wigs and a pair of russet boots, the possession of which was a matter of great importance to him. I confess I felt a few qualms of conscience as I gave my reluctant consent, on receiving the pledge of his honor that the money should be faithfully paid, which was done in my presence two weeks afterwards. Never shall I forget the alarm of his landlady when the trunk was opened in her presence to see that the things were safe. She was under the impression that they had been abstracted by some one about her house, not thinking it possible a strolling actor could have honor enough to pay a debt after having abstracted piece-meal the only security she thought herself possessed of. She actually offered him the two guineas to say nothing about the matter, as it might injure the reputation of her house. This was too much for our risible faculties: he confessed himself the offender; and with a hearty shake of the hand and an extorted promise to prove kind to the next unhappy actor who might be placed in difficulty, we left her, with her opinion of the honesty of the play-actors much improved, and an anecdote which she repeated to every company of actors who visited Ayr for many years afterwards.

The season at Ayr having terminated, Neville and Shaw dissolved their partnership, Neville retaining the management, Shaw leaving the company, and taking with him Mrs. Shaw, and his sister, Mrs. Mills. Mr. and Mrs. Ryder and family also left us, to commence management on their own account, at Port Glasgow; a speculation in which they strongly urged me to embark as a partner. In short, this may be termed the breaking up of our

snug and happy party. In a short time afterwards, we were scattered in all directions, many of us never to meet again.

Neville's first effort on his own account, was at Mauchline, where he decidedly failed, our force being inefficient. He was advised to try his fortune for a few nights, at Catherine Mills, a large manufacturing village, but a few miles distant. Having obtained permission from the resident proprietor, Mr. Buchanan, to perform for twelve nights, a barn was fitted up for the purpose; and here it was, I for the first time, numbered myself among the barn-door fowl of the profession, without which my strolling adventures would have been incomplete. The houses for the first four nights were excellent; after which, we could rarely muster money enough to pay for candles. With some difficulty, the manager contrived to pay his actors; but for his other debts, I doubt much whether they are paid to this hour.

To me, our visit to Mauchline was marked by an incident. It was here for the first time that I was hissed—the part, *Fainwould*, in *Raising the Wind*. I suppose I deserved it, but it was the admirable acting of Emley, in Jeremy Diddler, that caused the offence. He made me laugh so heartily at the breakfast table, that I could not speak for laughing, until the audience tried to change my tune. I went off the stage laughing, while the audience were hissing, but I did not return that night: I ran out of the (theatre,) barn, home. How the farce was finished, I never exactly heard. I received a long lecture from the manager the following morning, upon the folly of my course, concluding with what I then thought a remarkable expression, but which experience has taught me was correct, that no actor, however high his station, ever passed through his career, without at some period of his life encountering the displeasure of an audience; that I must make up my mind to such scenes, if I intended to remain upon the stage, and that nothing but my inexperience prevented him from discharging me forthwith.

M'Cann and myself lodged in the same house, and most excellent quarters we had, passing a pleasant fortnight, notwithstanding the bad business. Not so the manager: his troubles were beginning, as we thought ours ending. Being in arrears for rent, his goods and chattels were arrested “in transitu,” as a lawyer would express himself. So well had the landlord taken his measures, and with such secrecy, that he not only secured the scenery, wardrobe, dresses and properties of the manager, but the trunks containing the wearing apparel of the actors, and whatever little private property they possessed—all was in possession of the Philistines.

Unconscious of what had happened, M'Cann, Emley, Mrs. Emley, her children, and myself, were on our road to Cumnock, as merry as larks, little dreaming of the mishap which was shortly to overtake us, only thinking what sort of a house we should open to on the following evening, none of us overburdened with money, but all in high spirits. We reached our destination, ordered dinner, which, while we were in the act of enjoying, Neville presented himself, with a face full of sorrow, to recount the sad tale of our undoing. To me it was of awful import. Every thing I possessed, except the clothes in which I was seated, appeared lost, without the possibility of recovery. But actors, unlike other human beings, seem to be most merry when they have most cause for sorrow. The bad puns, which passed by wholesale, elevated my spirits, and the first expressions of regret past, I never spent a more pleasant evening.

A council of war was assembled, when the ladies retired, and the course we proposed to pursue being marked out and determined upon, matters were left to take their chance, and not permitted to interrupt our hilarity. It was now my knowledge of business was to be turned to account. Being able to talk sensibly of warp and weft, winding, heckling, spinning, bleaching, &c., I resolved to wait upon Mr. Buchanan, inform him who I was, and trust to his generosity to release us all from our present dilemma. I started early in the morning for the mills, procured an interview with the foreman, Mr. B. being unfortunately absent. After a well told tale, I succeeded in releasing all the things, promising in the name of Mr. Neville, that the landlord should be paid out of our first receipts, and returned in triumph to my companions, bringing the captured ammunition into port, free from all charge for conveyance to Cumnock. This very act, so adroitly managed on my part, caused my separation from Neville. Once in possession of the scenery, &c., he did not feel disposed to comply with the terms on which they had been released. On this I peremptorily insisted, and went so far as to threaten I would return to Catharine Mills and inform Mr. Buchanan of the breach of faith contemplated. I carried my point, obtaining the money, but I lost my situation, and shortly after bade adieu to Scotland, which I have never visited since.

It was in Cumnock I heard of the death of poor Berry, one of my first theatrical acquaintance, once the idol of the Edinburgh audiences, and, beyond doubt, the best low comedian of his day. Liston, Matthews, and Emery, combined, would not have formed a better actor than Jack Berry; but dissipation and repeated acts of neglect of his profession, through dissipation, at length so ex-

hausted the kindness and patience of Mr. Henry Siddons, that he was reluctantly compelled to abandon him ; and, in leaving the Edinburgh theatre, the last restraint upon his unhappy failing, was lost in Dumbarton, where he and his wife had been giving an entertainment of a theatrical nature. He fell in a state of intoxication against a glass door, lacerating his arm in so dreadful a manner as to produce lockjaw, from which, by the care and attention of his physician, he recovered, but was never the same man again. He became a member of a travelling company, performing in the open air, at fairs : and thus the man whose talents had delighted the most enlightened audience in the British empire, was converted into the low buffoon of a mountebank's caravan. He died in abject misery, almost shunned by his pot-house companions. Let his example be a warning to others, who, while they breathe a sigh to the memory of lost talent, will avoid that dangerous of all seductions to an actor—convivial meetings, and free and easy societies—where your company is valued only by the song you may be able to sing, or the amusing anecdote you are expected to relate—where many who court your society within the walls of a tavern, would refuse to acknowledge an actor's salute in the open day, in the broad highway.\* To all such be your motto—

*Nemo me impune lacesset.*

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NOTE.—One of the gentlemen here described, once attempted to avoid the late Mr. William Francis, of the Philadelphia theatre, (for whose society he expressed a particular relish in the evening parties,) by crossing the street, to avoid the necessity of addressing him "en passant." Mr. Francis, perceiving the intention, attracted the notice of every person within hearing, by loudly calling him by name, thus—"Don't trouble yourself to cross, Mr. S—t ; upon my honor, sir, I had no intention of speaking to you." It is needless to say this just rebuke prevented any second insult. Mr. S. was always most happy to shake Francis by the hand, wherever they met. A few instances of the same manly spirit, properly exercised, would raise the character of actors much above their present estimation.



## CHAPTER IV.

Parting of old Friends—Grave of Burns—Gretna Green—Alnwick—Kendal  
—New Acquaintance—Journey Across the Mountain—Harrowgate Springs  
—Mr. Booth and Mrs. Renaud, (late Mrs. Powell,)—Theatre Royal, York  
—Captivity of Buonaparte—Edmund Kean—Canterbury and Rochester.

THE separation from Neville being finally determined upon, I saw the landlord at Mauchline paid in full, and passed on to pay a farewell visit to my numerous friends in Ayr; having once more tasted the good cheer of Mrs. M'Culloch's table, I turned my course towards England, resolved if possible, to procure a situation in Mrs. Butler's company, then performing at Kendal, Westmoreland; or, failing there, to proceed to Newcastle-on-Tyne, and offer my services to Mr. Macready, for any sum he might think proper to offer; hoping, under his excellent tuition, to rise rapidly in the profession. Full of these resolutions, I arrived in Cumnock, where I booked my name for an outside seat in the coach for Carlisle, which was to start the following day—the last evening I spent in the society of those who remained of my first theatrical companions, with whom I expected to have passed a much longer period of my life. It was a merry and a sad parting. I was aware I carried with me the good wishes of the whole fraternity, and I know I parted from them with regret. Emley and M'Cann were the only two I was ever destined to meet again. With the latter I corresponded regularly, until within a few months of his death; previous to which I lost sight of him, and have since learned he was confined in the King's Bench Prison for debt. False pride prevented him from making known his situation. If I could not have paid his debts, I could, at least, have administered to his wants, and would willingly have shared the last guinea in my possession with him. We had stood, shoulder to shoulder, in many a scrape, and a braver little fellow never left the land of St. Patrick.—Peace be to his ashes.

The ceremony of shaking hands—and, in this instance, hearts went with them—being over, I received and exchanged several small presents, as tokens of remembrance, mounted the coach-box

with the driver, and, as the guard gave the signal for departure, waved a last adieu to the assembled company. My reflections, for the first ten miles, were by no means pleasant. Old associations had rendered the Port Glasgow company dear to my feelings. The kindness I experienced from one and all, the ready manner in which many of them had instructed me in the profession, were all presented to my memory; and, in justice, I must add, I never met a company of players so totally devoid of those little feelings of envy and jealousy which frequently render the lives of actors unpleasant, destroying that harmony which ought to exist, where people, from their avocation, are compelled to pass a greater portion of their time in each other's society.

I arrived at Dumfries about 12 o'clock, where I slept; and, early in the morning, visited the grave of Burns. Having passed many a joyful hour in the cottage where he was born, I could not lose the opportunity of viewing his last resting place on earth. At six o'clock in the morning, I again mounted the coach-box and proceeded rapidly to that famous spot in English history, *Gretna Green*, "where runaway couples cross the boundary of their native kingdom to visit a Scotch blacksmith, whose fetters having been tightly rivetted, most of them wish in vain to unrivet again, before the end of twelve months." This place was, of course, an object of curiosity to most of the passengers, and the driver indulged us with five minutes' delay; after which we proceeded at a sharp pace to the inn, where we changed horses, and which is the last possessing the same accommodation in leaving Scotland.

After an absence of seven years, I entered England, widely metamorphosed. When I departed, as a boy, with spirits full of youthful hope, for the roof of my uncle in Edinburgh, my prospects in life were of the brightest nature. My own actions had altered the position of affairs. I was now out of employment, travelling only upon the chance of finding an engagement. The beautiful town of Alnwick, the first stopping-place upon my route, awakened a train of feeling, which forced me to acknowledge, I had embarked in a Quixotic expedition, which would, in all probability, plunge me into the depth of wretchedness before I could expect to reap the slightest remuneration, beyond a mere subsistence. My thoughts reverted to Dundee, and to those friends whose offers had been so repeatedly rejected, and I wished, from the bottom of my heart, I had never deserted my home. In this state of mind I reached Carlisle, where I had to remain nearly a day, and where I replenished my exchequer by the sale of my watch-chain, bade adieu to melancholy recollections, and started

onward in the mail for Penrith, passing through Shap, and over the mountains of Westmoreland, to Kendal, at which place I arrived at two o'clock on the morning of the 12th of April, 1815.

At the Crown Inn I enjoyed an excellent night's rest, and, breakfast over, my first inquiry of Mr. Riggs, the worthy landlord, was whether the company of comedians had left the place. To my great joy, he answered in the negative, immediately furnishing me with a play-bill, for the following evening. It announced, *The School of Reform*, and *We Fly by Night*, for the benefit of Mr. Meadows (now of Covent-Garden Theatre.) I waited upon Mrs. Butler, stating my views and wishes, when she informed me Mr. Thomas Mercer was on the point of leaving the company; but, being a total stranger to my talent, she must require a specimen of my abilities, before she could make me an offer of any description. It was therefore agreed, that I should play *Henry*, in *Speed the Plough*, for Mr. Hallam's benefit, on Wednesday evening. At the theatre, I was introduced to her brother, Mr. George Jefferson; it was a neat building, regularly built, and capable of holding from sixty to seventy pounds. I was much pleased with the manner in which the business was conducted. Meadows played *Tyke*, with a feeling and talent rarely seen in a country theatre, and the whole performance was such as to make me anxious to become a member of the company. On Wednesday, I appeared in *Henry*, to a house fortunately well filled. The actor being a favorite, the *debut* was pronounced so promising, that I was offered fifteen shillings per week, the highest salary given, which I cheerfully accepted, really happy to think I had obtained a situation. The following ladies and gentlemen composed the company:—Mr. G. Jefferson, stage manager; Mr. Brewer, Mr. Meadows, Mr. Mercer, Mr. Hallam, Mr. George, Mr. Martin, Mr. Bristow, Mr. J. O'Conner, Master Samuel Butler, Mr. Stoker, Mrs. Butler, Mrs. Murray, Mrs. Mercer, Miss Craven, Miss Stoker, Miss Butler, Mrs. Martin; to which list I have now to add, Mr. Wemyss. In Mrs. Butler's company I remained three years. A very laughable adventure took place, arising from the custom of closing all the licensed theatres during the *Passion Week*. The actors, on these occasions, generally divide themselves into small parties of four and five, and visit the villages in the neighborhood, where dramatic amusements are seldom seen, and never for a longer period than three or four nights. A party of this description, consisting of Mr. Mercer, Mr. Meadows, Mr. J. O'Conner, Mrs. Murray, and Miss Craven, having announced George Barnwell for representation, at Kirby Lonsdale, found themselves deficient in numbers to complete the cast;

and, as the leader of our orchestra, Mr. William Mercer, had accompanied them, they persuaded him to make his first appearance on any stage, as the Uncle, in *George Barnwell*. As he had frequently boasted, that the young lads (as he used to call them, although he was but twenty-five years of age himself) knew nothing of acting, he would do it, if only to show them what it was. Therefore, having diligently perfected himself in the words of the author, (which, at rehearsal, he spoke very well, but with a broad Yorkshire dialect,) he prepared to give the lads a lesson, which was to be of service to them during their natural lives. But when the time arrived, stage fright deprived this boaster of his courage—he could scarcely utter a word. The stage being cleared for his entrance, he commenced thus—

“If I were superstitious now.”—(A dead pause.)

“I say, if I was superstitious.”—(Another pause.)

“If I was superstitious, I should say.” (Aside)—“Tom, why don’t you stick me?”

But Tom, who played *George Barnwell*, did not intend to let him off so easily, but remained in his retirement, convulsed with laughter. So the Uncle was compelled to proceed, which he did, thus—

“Oh, religion is a blessed thing.”—(A pause.)

“Religion is much”—(Another pause.)

“Religion is—Oh, Tom, I say, *do* stick me.” (Aside.)

To this Tom replied, in the words of the Author—“*Oh, it is impossible.*” This line produced such a ludicrous effect upon the audience, who had become aware of the matter, that the only thing to restore gravity was to despatch the Uncle as quick as possible: but this was not to be so easily done. Mr. William Mercer’s memory had, by this time, returned—he suddenly exclaimed, “Stop, Tom, I know it now—I can repeat every word of it.” And he began—“If I were superstitious now, I should say”—dingle, dingle, went the prompter’s bell, and down came the curtain, amid the uproarious laughter of the audience; and so ended the third act of the tragedy of *George Barnwell*, and the last attempt of Mr. Mercer to give practical lessons in acting.

The season at Kendal being concluded, we next proceeded to North Allerton, in Yorkshire. The distance is something over sixty miles, which, on a fine summer morning, in company with O’Conner, Meadows, William Mercer, and Mr. Kelly, I started to walk. We allowed ourselves two days to accomplish the task, walking twenty miles before breakfast the first day, fourteen to dinner, and fourteen after dinner; thus accomplishing forty-eight miles the

first day, over a mountainous country, and leisurely walking fifteen miles on the following day. So accustomed had I become to fatigue of this description, that a walk of thirty miles was no uncommon occurrence, for a day's amusement, when we had not to act at night.

In North Allerton, we remained six weeks, when we repaired to the Races at Beverly, and from thence to Harrowgate Springs, for the summer. Here it was I first met

### BOOTH,

the most eccentric of all mad tragedians. He was the first London Star I ever acted with, and at that time in the height of his popularity. Who could have supposed that the "Wilford," who trembled with fear before this little tragedian, at Harrowgate, in 1815, should, years afterwards, have paid him thousands of dollars as the manager of an American theatre?

His performance of Bertram, at this time, was terrifically grand. His mind was in its full vigor, and a well cultivated soil it was. A more delightful companion, "*when not in his mood,*" it would be difficult to find. Gifted with powers of conversation the most agreeable, master of several languages, Lucius Junius Booth was born to control those over whom he wished to cast a spell of fascination. He was the only actor who had dared to measure strength with Kean—failing only through his own imprudence—trifling with his reputation—and, at the same time, with the public, who were desirous of fostering talent, which had suddenly burst upon them in a blaze of excellence. He first played at Covent Garden, then at Drury Lane, then back to Covent Garden, until he was finally driven from the London stage, stamped with fame and character, to realize a fortune in the provincial theatres.

He was accused of being a servile imitator of Kean, which being reiterated by the London Press, became a received opinion, but a very erroneous one. It was only necessary to see the two actors on the stage together, to dispel it at once. Booth felt and acted, when on the stage with Kean, as if conscious of his inferiority, which he candidly acknowledged; but, when separated, there are many of Kean's warmest admirers who do not hesitate to pronounce his performance of Richard, equal, and his Hamlet, superior, to Kean's representation of the same characters.

As I shall frequently have to mention Mr. Booth again, I shall only observe that he played three nights at Harrowgate, and three

nights at Ripon, in the same week, and left us all delighted with his acting, and equally pleased with him off the stage.

Here, also, I met Mrs. Powel, of Drury Lane, (Mrs. Renaud,) the rival of the great Mrs. Siddons, who, when young, must have been a beautiful woman. Her acting spoke more to the feelings of the heart than any lady I ever saw before or since, identifying herself with the character she was performing, until you forgot the woman, in the actress. The first part I acted with her was Jaffier, in *Venice Preserved*. I had requested her indulgence in the morning at rehearsal, on two accounts—the first, the short time I had been allowed for preparation, and the second, the consciousness of my inability to support her properly—but that I would do the best I could with a part far beyond my ability, and of which I knew nothing but the words. In the kindest manner, she repeated the part to me, impressing upon my mind those portions of the dialogue usually producing the greatest effect upon an audience. To her tuition I owed the success of my performance; and as we left the stage, at the end of the first act, her expression of “*Very well, indeed, sir—excellent,*” enabled me to proceed with that confidence which, in an actor, is the sure forerunner of success. The press complimented me highly on this performance, and even the manager condescended to thank me in the green-room. For years afterwards, I used to consider Jaffier my best part, and felt a desire to act it, long after I had ceased to appear in tragedy. Mrs. Renaud remained with us one year, playing a few nights in each town, and left us in Kendal, in 1817, to join the Edinburgh company, where she remained until her death. Her performance of *Elvira*, in *Pizarro*, and *Alicia*, in *Jane Shore*, was the perfection of the dramatic art; while her *Lady Macbeth*, although not so powerful, was second only to Mrs. Siddons. How they could spare such an actress from the London boards, was a question asked very often, but not readily answered. Oh, these Managers! these Managers!!

The eventful year of 1815, was made memorable by another remarkable occurrence. In company with Mr. George and Mr. O’Conner, I had paid a visit to the city of York, where the theatre was then under the management of Mr. Fitzgerald. The play was the *Fortune of War*, the afterpiece, the *Wandering Boys*, in which Mansel, famous for a well-written *Defence of the Stage*, was acting *Count de Croissy*, when a gentleman in the dress circle of boxes suddenly placed his feet upon the cushion of the hand-rail, and holding himself in that position by the pillar of the boxes, with scarcely breath enough to make himself distinctly heard,

demanded that the performance should cease, until he addressed the audience. This was met by hisses, and cries of "turn him out," until, amid the uproar, the name of Buonaparte was heard, followed by a cry of "hear him, hear him." He proceeded nearly thus, his agitation choking his utterance:—"Gentlemen—I have the pleasure—to inform you—Napoleon Buonaparte—has surrendered himself a prisoner of war—(dead silence, every one intent upon catching the next word)—to Captain Maitland, of His Majesty's ship Bellerophon." The whole audience rose—cheer followed cheer—the men waved their hats, the ladies their handkerchiefs—God Save the King was called for—the whole company, male and female, appeared upon the stage, sung the national anthem, the audience joining in the chorus. At the conclusion, three cheers were given—Rule Britannia was played by the band, and three-fourths of the audience immediately left the theatre, to talk of the wonderful news, and to ask each other if it could be possibly true. Thus ended my first visit to the York theatre. My readers will agree with me, that it was not easily to be forgotten.

From Harrowgate we proceeded to Richmond, in Yorkshire, crossed to North Allerton, for the race week, returning to Richmond; and, at the close of the season, taking our departure for Whitby, where we remained during the winter, and opened the spring campaign at Ripon; from thence to Beverly; back to Harrowgate and Richmond; then, over the mountains, to Ulverstone, in Lancashire, and Kendal, in Westmoreland—thus performing my first tour of a regular provincial circuit, occupying two years, from my first joining the company at Kendal; during which time Mr. Meadows, Mr. Hallam, Mr. and Mrs. Mercer, Mr. Brewer, Mr. Bristow, and Miss Craven, left us, their places being supplied by Mr. Calvert, (then playing under the name of Young, but now known by his contest with the Rev. Mr. Best, and his admirable answer to that gentleman's attack upon the stage and its professors,) Mr. O'Conner, Mr. Francis O'Conner, Miss O'Conner, and Miss Stannard.

It was during my stay in Mrs. Butler's company, I had the misfortune to lose the friend and protector of my youth, Mr. Thomas Courtney, jun. He died in London, during the month of October, 1817; but he lives in my heart, and will continue there until that heart ceases to beat. Those only who knew his worth, could appreciate his loss.

*Requiescat in pace.*

In Mrs. Butler's company I remained nearly three years, during which time an attachment had taken place between Miss Butler

and myself, which was the cause of my departure. No objection was offered to our marriage by the friends of either party, but our extreme youth. I was scarcely twenty years of age, and the young lady not more than seventeen. It was agreed by all parties, that we should separate for twelve months, at the expiration of which time, if we remained steadfast in our affections, we were to be united, with the perfect approbation of our friends. Under this arrangement we parted, breathing vows of eternal constancy, *never to meet again.*

Mr. Munden, of Drury Lane theatre, procured me a situation with Mr. Dowton, in Canterbury, at a salary of twenty-five shillings per week, where I arrived in January, 1818, making my first appearance as Rover, in O'Keefe's Play of Wild Oats. The company consisted of Mr. Hamerton, (the stage manager,) Mr. W. Dowton, Mr. H. Dowton, Mr. Wharton, Mr. Owen, Mr. John Sloman, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Hamerton, jun., Mr. Jeffries, Mr. Hubbard, Mr. Wemyss; and, shortly afterwards, Mr. Calcraft, Miss Barry, Mrs. H. Dowton, (afterwards Mrs. J. Sloman,) Mrs. Owen, Miss Leigh, Miss Kennedy, Mrs. Hamerton, jun. A company of handsomer women I never saw collected within the walls of a theatre.

The four months I passed in Canterbury was really a round of delight. Miss Barry led the way, with a social party, which was repeated alternately by the ladies on every non-play night; while each Wednesday night we played in Feversham, starting in coaches provided for that purpose, after dinner, and returning after the play to Canterbury, forming a trip of pleasure occasionally made uncomfortable by a rainy day; but so full of fun and good humor, that we were like so many school-boys let loose for a holiday.

From Canterbury we proceeded to Rochester. In this city I first became familiar with the faces of the London actors, every week bringing down some star to grace our little theatre. Notwithstanding all which attraction, and the garrison at Chatham, Rochester is the worst theatrical town I ever acted in, in England. Here I was first introduced to that bright luminary of the stage,

EDMUND KEAN.

How shall I attempt to describe "the star" of the British stage—the man, who, without a single friend, overcame obstacles almost insurmountable; and, by one bold effort, swept the cold and polished school of Kemble from the stage, astonishing the English metropolis by his bold and natural conception of character, which



he executed in such a style of excellence, that "no one but himself could be his parallel."

Treated with marked indifference, amounting almost to insult, by the actors and actresses who filled the "dramatis personæ," on the night of his first appearance at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane; and finding, before the end of the season, those same dignified ladies and gentlemen, who would scarcely return with civility the salute of an obscure country actor, among his most servile flatterers—filling the theatre nightly to overflowing—rejecting the society of the noble and learned—seeking his companions among those actors whom he had known in adversity, and to whom he ever proved a kind friend—he moved like a comet, to be wondered at, but not approached. Throughout his triumphal career,—raising the prostrate fortunes of the theatre to which he was attached—reigning sole monarch, without a rival, in the estimation of the public,—and yielding up, at last, a broken spirit, in one great effort to sustain his fame.

Whatever may have been the faults of his private life, his public career was a triumph of genius over prejudice; and the name of Edmund Kean, like that of Garrick, will descend to posterity, as "the actor" of his age.

The first time I ever saw him act, I played Wellborn, to his Sir Giles Overreach, in Massinger's Play of A New Way to Pay Old Debts. With the exception of my first appearance at Glasgow, I never suffered so much from stage fright; but his known kindness and affability, to actors of every grade, soon relieved me from my embarrassment. I supped with him after the performance, and, from that hour, he became my friend. Many years afterwards, in Baltimore, I had the good fortune to extricate him from a most unpleasant and dangerous situation. But, of this, hereafter,—if, good reader, you can travel with me across the Atlantic.

Mrs. Glover paid us a flying visit, during which I acted, for the first time, the part of Frank Heartall, in Cherry's comedy of the Soldier's Daughter. Charles Woodley should have been my character on the occasion, but Calcraft being absent, I was compelled to assume the light comedy hero. There is an expression of the author's frequently used in this character during the dialogue of, "In for it again," which proved a source of much annoyance to me on this occasion, but is too good a joke not to be recorded. A gentleman in the boxes, who did not appear to relish my acting, and who must have been something of a wit, having his patience worn out, repeated the words of "In for it again," after me thus, "Yes, by Heaven you are in for it only, for I will

be hanged if you can play it. I wish you good night," and immediately left the boxes. This produced a roar of laughter, not only from the audience but from the actors, which must have ruined the whole play, had I not goodnatureedly added at the first pause, "Well, now I AM IN for it, sure enough," which was received by a round of applause, and the play passed off without further interruption.

It was in the city of Rochester I found my name was travelling beyond the company I was immediately attached to. Mr. Thomas Robertson, the manager of the Lincoln circuit, unsolicited, made me an offer of one guinea and a half per week, to lead the light comedy and juvenile tragedy in his company. Here, then, was the offer of a regular line of business, and an increase of six per cent to my income. This offer I accepted, and in six weeks from this time I finished my career with Mr. Dowton, leaving the society of Mr. Calcraft, Mr. Marshall, and Mr. Sloman, with regret.

Thus, in four years I had doubled my income, as derived from my professional exertions. The last part I played in Rochester was Don Lodowick, in the Jew of Malta, for Mr. Hamerton's benefit. I passed two days in London, with my family, and then proceeded "en route" to Peterborough, Northhamptonshire.

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## CHAPTER V.

Peterborough—Joe Cowell—Wilkinson and Meadows—Singular Loss of Memory—Shameful Breach of Decorum—Out, out, Damned Spot—A Just Manager, and an Honest Man—Mr. Thomas Robertson—Offers of New Engagements—Damnation of Mr. Buck's Tragedy of the Italians, at Drury Lane Theatre.

I ARRIVED in Peterborough on the 10th of June, 1818, making my first appearance, in Mr. Robertson's company, as Richmond, in "Richard the Third," following it by Rover, in "Wild Oats," which had become quite a favorite character with me. The company consisted of Mr. and Mrs. T. Robertson, Mr. Fortescue, Mr. Henry, Mr. Collins, Mr. Frederick Robertson, Mr. Cooke, Mr. J. O'Connor, Mr. Redward, Mr. Beresford, Mr. Perry, Mr. Stanhope,

Mr. and Mrs. Brooke, Miss Danby, Miss S. Danby, Miss R. Stannard, Mrs. Norris, Mr. Cowell and Mr. Wemyss.

The manager was pleased to express to me his satisfaction at my success, and during the time I remained a member of his company, which was nearly two years, I enjoyed as much felicity as ever falls to the lot of a country actor. Respected by the manager, one of the few members of the company admitted to his private parties, held in estimation by the audience, my pockets well filled, my theatrical wardrobe increased until it had become an object of envy to many of my brother performers, I had nothing left to wish for—but—a London engagement. Could I have divested myself of ambition, I could have terminated my theatrical career in the Lincoln circuit, possessed of a handsome competence. We visited Peterborough, Spalding, Boston, Lincoln, Newark-upon-Trent, Grantham, Wisbeach, Whittlesea, and Huntington, in each of which towns I had the fourth part of a benefit; that is to say, the names of two performers were announced at the head of the bills, and they shared the amount of the house with the manager, after eight pounds. This is decidedly the most equitable mode of giving benefits—the actor risking nothing but his personal exertions, in case of failure; if successful, the manager received a portion of the gain, to bear the loss of a less profitable night—by which means every actor was certain of obtaining some little emolument from the night intended for his benefit. My finances were never in such a flourishing state, although I have received ten times the amount of weekly salary.

A country actor, of rising reputation, looks forward with feverish anxiety to the moment that will allow him the opportunity of trying his powers before a metropolitan audience—that test of merit which proves fatal to so many, and from which there is no appeal. Let an actor, on his first appearance in London, be rejected, and his prospects are blighted forever. He returns to the country a ruined man, (professionally,) managers rarely feeling disposed to offer engagements, under such circumstances, and the public, ready to pronounce his failure a just retribution for his presumption. But let success crown his efforts, and the theatres in which he has previously played will be scarcely large enough to admit the audience which will nightly flock to witness his performance, each town claiming the merit of having been the first to discover and foster his talent.

Formerly, a London engagement was the *ne plus ultra* of an actor's wishes. Once successful there, he was fixed for life, or during good behaviour. Not so now. A London engagement is

the *most* precarious; caprice of managers, desire of new faces on the part of the public, with a hundred other minor causes, render the London actor (unless on the topmost round of the ladder) the most dependent of his tribe. He is not sure of his engagement from season to season. Thus, country actors have lost half those ardent feelings of romance, which determine to stop at nothing short of the accomplishment of their desires. The ultimate reward of their poverty and professional toil, has faded from their view, the spirit of emulation slumbers, if it be not entirely destroyed, and without a vigorous effort to reform existing abuses, the drama, which has withstood for ages the attacks of bigots, will fall a victim to the suicidal acts of its own professors.

In September, 1818, Mr. Cowell left us, in the city of Lincoln, to try his fortune at Drury Lane. He appeared there, on the 8th of October, being fully successful. We all felt pride at his having established himself with the London public: he was extremely popular with us, both before and behind the curtain. His loss was supplied by Mr. Meadows, of Bath, whom I had not seen since he left Butler's company, and from whom I learned I was indebted to him for my recommendation to the situation I now held. Our acquaintance was renewed, and ripened into a friendship which remains firm to this day. He is one of those members of the profession of whose friendship I feel proud, and whose conduct does honor to the stage. He spent the summer season with us, and returned in the winter to Bath, where he was held in high estimation.

He was succeeded by another equally worthy, but quite an original, *Wilkinson*, of the English Opera House, London, whose admirable performance of Geoffrey Muffincap, in Peake's farce of "Amateurs and Actors," stamped his fame as one of the best low comedians of the day. He passed the winter with us, in Boston, and returned to London in the spring. He is another who may be held up as an example of what actors ought to be—upright, honest and honorable in all his dealings, a warm friend, and an excellent husband and father.

During the race week at Huntingdon, in the autumn of 1819, while acting the part of Charles Surface, in the "School for Scandal," my memory suddenly abandoned me on the stage, notwithstanding the word was freely given, not only by the prompter, but by the actors on the stage. I could *not* recollect one single sentence, but was forced to retire up the stage, and seat myself. The audience, knowing I was generally correct in the words of my author, loudly applauded, while I remained at least a minute,

unconscious of any thing around me ; when, bowing to the audience, I resumed the part as fluently as if no interruption had taken place. How to account for this singular event, I am at a loss, even now, twenty years after its occurrence. I had played the part before, was perfect to a monosyllable, yet could not think of a single word, and exhibited a degree of childish sensitiveness whenever the subject was alluded to. Never afterwards did I appear on the stage in this character without a feeling of doubt and fear, and an anxiety to finish the second speech in the fourth act as rapidly as possible.

From Huntingdon we went to Whittlesea, in the Isle of Ely, where, for the first and only time in my theatrical career, I appeared upon the stage in a state of intoxication. Being holiday time, I was induced to taste some old English ale, brewed expressly for this festival, kept by all the substantial farmers in the neighborhood, who vie with each other as to the age and strength of their malt liquor, freely disbursed among their friends. Although I did not drink more than one glass, so powerful was the effect that I soon became aware I was "*non compos*:" however, to the theatre I hied. Whether the glare of the Float aided the fumes of the liquor, I know not, but well do I remember, that no answer did I return, but a laugh, to all Rob Roy's flaming speeches—not one word of the part of Rashleigh Osbaldistone did I utter during the whole performance. I laughed, and the audience laughed with me, or at me ; had they hissed me it would have been more to their credit, and what I richly merited. The crime carried along with it the punishment—a sick headache—and long did I remember the feeling of shame with which I encountered my manager on the following morning ; he said not a word, but he looked—what he thought he ought to say. According to the rules of the theatre, I had forfeited all claim to my salary, and wishing to avoid a lecture, I did not go near the treasury until sent for, when Mr. Robertson addressed me nearly thus :—" Young man, your own sense of right and wrong, and the deep contrition you have shown for your impropriety of conduct, will make a more lasting impression than any harshness I can inflict—there is your money—your only reproach will be never to mention the subject again."

This well-timed lenity had its effect ; but Mr. Robertson always knew how to make himself respected, even when compelled to censure. The collected profession could not have surprised me off my guard, on any occasion, after this, when I had my duty to perform at the theatre in the evening ; but such was the just man-

ner in which the Lincoln manager conducted all the affairs of his company ; it was a rule with him, that all forfeiture of salary, for neglect, belonged to the actors, and should, on no occasion, be allowed to find its way into the manager's pocket ; the forfeits, therefore, were cheerfully paid, whenever incurred, and a fund created, from which actors in distress were occasionally relieved, and from which the members of the company derived a source of gratification, and social intercourse—a supper or dinner being given regularly, once a year. If the forfeits amounted to a sufficient sum, they were appropriated to defray the expense. If the calls upon this fund had been too frequent, or no forfeitures had been incurred, the manager cheerfully made good the difference, with a complimentary speech, on the good behavior of the company for the preceding year. Mr. Robertson was regarded more like the father of a family, than the director of a theatre ; and were I asked to point out a strictly just and honest man, Mr. Thomas Robertson, the Lincoln manager, *would be that man*. Health, happiness, and prosperity to him and his, is my fervent wish. We parted the best of friends ; and, should fate ordain we meet again, the hearty shake of the hand, that genuine mark of friendship, would be cordially reciprocated.

Of Mrs. T. Robertson, it is unnecessary to say more than she has been an excellent actress ; and although somewhat impaired by age, there are few of the younger ladies in the profession who possess her flow of animal spirits, added to which she is an authoress of some merit, and a woman possessing a strong, well cultivated mind.

In the month of August, 1819, I received an offer from Mr. Macready, lessee of the Theatre Royal, Bristol, of two pounds per week, and the clear half of the receipts of a benefit. Before accepting this offer, I laid it before Mr. Robertson, asking his advice, which he gave in the most friendly manner, adding, “ I shall be sorry to lose you, but I think your reputation will be increased, and I would make the trial ; but I exact from you a promise, if you find yourself uncomfortable, that you accept no other situation without first writing to me.” I therefore closed with Macready, in the full hope that my appearance in Bristol would be the stepping-stone to a London engagement.

The Bristol Theatre was to open on Monday evening, the 15th of November ; and the last time I played in the Lincoln company, was on the 18th of October, 1819, on which occasion, Mr. Rayner, now of Covent Garden Theatre, made his first appearance as Tyke, in the “ School of Reform.” I played Mr. Ferment ; and how a

London audience could tolerate Mr. Rayner's Tyke, with Emery's performance of the same part vivid in their recollection, is a theatrical paradox which not unfrequently occurs. Without any disparagement to Mr. Rayner's talents, Mr. Meadows was as far superior to him, in Tyke, as Mr. John Kemble ever was to Mr. Barrymore, in Hamlet.

Before bidding a final adieu to Lincoln, I ought to mention, that in a trip of pleasure to London, to spend the Passion Week, I saw on Easter Monday, Mr. Buck's tragedy of "The Italians," *darned* at Drury Lane Theatre. It was the first time I had ever witnessed any thing of the kind, and it had at least the charm of novelty to recommend it. The pit, to a man, indulged in the motion formerly known as the "O. P. dance;" this, with the discordant yells of the gallery, the hissing and clapping of hands in the boxes, laid in a reasonable stock of headache for a week. The first signal of decided hostility was shown to Mr. H. Kemble, who played one of the heroes; "Kemble, do your duty," from an auditor in the pit, was the signal for a general attack. Had Mr. Buck's friends been less noisy, the play might have escaped, but the display of a placard, prepared for the purpose, reading thus—"Will a British public suffer an insolent actor (alluding to Kean) and his pot companions, to trample on deserving merit?" sealed the fate of the play. Mr. Rae and Mr. Hamblin were the only two individuals who obtained any thing like a hearing, while the ladies, Mrs. Glover in particular, came in for their full share of censure. Mr. Stephen Kemble at length came forward, and commencing an address, with, "Ladies and gentlemen, I assure you I was called out of town"—a wag in the gallery, asked, in the same tone of voice, "Why the devil did you not take 'The Italians' with you?"

This was followed by a roar of laughter, and the manager could no longer succeed in obtaining a hearing. The noise and tumult became louder every moment, until a placard was displayed, in front of the stage, with the words, "'The Italians' is withdrawn."

Three cheers followed the annunciation, and in a short time the house was empty, leaving the actors to enjoy the Castle of Wonders by themselves.

## CHAPTER VI.

Theatre Royal, Bristol—First Night of the Season—Darkness Made Visible—Success in Rover—Macready the Manager, and Macready the Tragedian, Father and Son—Bath Theatre—Domestic Afflictions—Infringement of Managerial Discipline—Departure for Exeter—Melancholy Reception—Royal Deaths—Fire—Actors Losses—Kindness of the People at Exeter—Oppression of Managers—Open Rebellion—First Attempt at Management.

I LEFT Lincoln on Wednesday, the 20th of October, 1819; spent a fortnight in London, during which time I visited the theatres every night, and arriving in Bristol on Saturday morning, the 13th of November, found my name announced for Rover, in "Wild Oats," for Monday evening. I waited upon Mr. Macready, to report my arrival, and securing lodgings in King's street, a few doors from the theatre, prepared to open the campaign, which the manager himself had announced in the following manner:—

"MR. MACREADY most respectfully acquaints the ladies and gentlemen of Bristol, and its vicinity, that during the vacation every possible exertion has been made to complete the decorations and embellishments of this theatre, in a style worthy the inhabitants of a city second only to the metropolis of the nation. In this undertaking, the gratification and accommodation of the public in general, have superseded every other consideration. The first mechanics have been employed, and without any comment on the actors' abilities, their efforts will be submitted to the *opinion, judgment, decision,* and support of the Bristol audience."

On entering the theatre on Monday morning, I was rejoiced to find Miss Leigh, whom I had formerly known in Canterbury, was engaged as the first comedy actress; this was an agreeable meeting to both parties, for of all the annoyances to which an actor is subjected, there is none so horrible as a first rehearsal in a new company. The nods, the winks, the observations, made sufficiently loud to be overheard, and the strictures passed upon the newcomers, have shaken the nerves of some of the oldest stagers.

However, time, which waits for no man, brought on the hour to commence the performance. During the day I had felt more than usually nervous; the thought of playing Rover on those boards, where Lewis, Elliston, and Stanley, had in turn been the favorites of



the audience, in the same character, which was to prove the touchstone of my own abilities, had rendered me doubtful of success.

On my first appearance I was most cordially received by an excellent house; the first scene passed off smoothly, but in the middle of my second scene, the *gas* was suddenly extinguished, and the whole house left for several minutes in complete darkness. This was an awkward occurrence, but it put the audience in good humor, and the play proceeded with much spirit. As I left the stage, at the end of the fourth act, I received two distinct rounds of applause, the most cheering sounds to me I ever heard within the walls of a theatre. I was again warmly applauded in the scene in Banks' cottage, and was flattering myself with a triumph, all but won, when the unfortunate gas was again extinguished, and all efforts to rekindle the flame proved abortive. We had to finish the play by the aid of a dozen tallow candles, hastily caught up from all quarters of the theatre. Thus ended my first appearance in Bristol. The press, the following day, was loud in my praise, and I was convinced I had made a most favorable impression on my audience.

The company consisted of Mr. Macready, Mr. Gladstaines (the stage manager,) Mr. Newton, Mr. Raymond, Mr. Denning, Mr. Garthwaite, Mr. Lascelles, ("facetious Billy," as he was termed,) Mr. Johnson, Mr. Telbin, Mr. Darley, Mr. Parker, Mr. Bond, Mr. Boyle, Mr. Percival, Mr. Brown, Mr. Lewis, Mr. J. Brown, Mr. Wemyss, Mrs. Stuart, (afterwards Mrs. Denville,) Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Newton, Mrs. Denning, Miss Leigh, Miss Desmond, Miss Morton, Miss Parr, Miss Denman, Miss Cooke, and Miss Patty Cooke—an array of talent capable of supporting the reputation of any theatre.

My second appearance was in Doricourt, in the "Belle's Stratagem;" my third, as Sir George Airy, in the "Busy Body;" then Dick Dowlas, in the "Heir at Law," &c. &c.

I was never better received by any audience before whom I have had the honor of playing, than by the citizens of Bristol. Congratulated upon my success from all quarters, I looked forward to a pleasant winter season, but my sojourn with Mr. Macready was destined to prove of short duration.

I received a letter from London, dated December 3d, 1819, informing me of the death of my beloved grandmother. This blow, although long expected, was a painful bereavement. Brought up under her eye, born under her roof, and accustomed to regard her with even more reverence than my own parents, it was but natural I should be anxious to pay the last mournful office of respect

by being present at her funeral. I requested Mr. Macready's permission, which he had the brutality to withhold. I resolved at all hazards to go to London, and communicated to him my resolution; his answer was in keeping with his previous refusal. He told me "to go at my peril." *I did go*, and the breach of my engagement was the consequence.

I left Bristol on Thursday evening, and returned in the night coach on Saturday, ready to play Colonel Mannering on the Monday, for which I found myself announced. He refused to pay me a single shilling for the past week, and when I expressed myself perfectly willing to leave the theatre, and abandon my engagement, which was for the season, he insisted upon my giving him six weeks' notice. This I complied with, and immediately wrote to Messrs. Bennet & Hughes, of Exeter, from whom I received an offer of engagement, by the return of mail. No sooner was Macready acquainted with this fact, than he expressed a desire to retain me. At the expiration of the six weeks he insisted upon my remaining one week longer, to make up the time I had devoted to my domestic troubles, and for which he had already deprived me of a week's income. This it was impossible to comply with, and he retained a balance of five pounds sterling, which he owed me, and which I never received, although, after my departure, feeling somewhat ashamed of his conduct, he asserted publicly in the green-room that he had sent the money after me. It might have been so, for I believe he was an honest man, but if such a letter was ever forwarded to Exeter it never came to hand.

Notwithstanding the great cause I have to complain of Mr. Macready's conduct toward me, yet I learned more during my short stay in his company, of the practical part of my profession, than any two years of past experience had afforded me. He was a strict disciplinarian—one of the best instructors of acting I ever met, but a perfect oddity in his manner of imparting *that* instruction. Billy Lascelles, of whom many singular anecdotes are related, was the only man who knew completely how to manage him. Many a pound note, in addition to his regular salary, has he received for obligations conferred, by acting parts at short notice, when a sudden discharge of some member of the company, for real or supposed offence, had created a vacuum in the dramatis personæ of the play of the evening.

One anecdote I will relate, before I bid him adieu, which will serve to illustrate his general character, and manner of transacting business. Mr. Darley and Mr. Garthwaite, sustaining two charac-

ters in a play, in which it was necessary for both to wear their hats, Mr. Darley had neglected to take his on the stage, for which he forfeited both the actors, alleging that Mr. Darley had transgressed the rules of the theatre by appearing on the stage improperly dressed, and that Garthwaite deserved to be forfeited, for not laying his hat aside, and thus exposing to the audience the fault of his companion. To this act of injustice Garthwaite refused to submit, and actually left the theatre. He was engaged from the York Theatre some time afterwards, but refused to treat with Macready until he consented to return the forfeit, and acknowledge himself in error; not a very difficult matter to effect, for once convinced he was wrong, he was ever willing to make reparation.

While in Bristol I first met

MR. WILLIAM MACREADY,

a gentleman who deservedly ranks high, as one of the most finished actors of the English stage. Indebted to nature for no personal requisite, but by laborious study, and love of his profession, attaining eminence. He is a polished scholar and a gentleman, although an irascible one. In the study of his profession, he possessed advantages, in the tuition of his father, which must have made an actor of any young man possessing one-tenth of Macready's ability. No wonder, then, he rose so rapidly to fame, aided by such parts for originals as Gambia, Pescara, Amurath, and Ludovico, and surrounded by such actors as Young, Charles Kemble, and Miss O'Neil, to call forth all the powers of a cultivated mind. To Mr. Shiel's tragedies he owes his present position; and well did he repay the author for confiding to his hands the daring villains of his creation.

On his first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre; it wanted but one laugh to have turned all the labored efforts of the actor into ridicule. Had the tittering which commenced on the first bench of the pit, extended a little further, this gentleman, who justly prides himself on having placed the plays of Shakspeare before his countrymen in their proper garb, would have returned to the country a broken-hearted and rejected actor! few men, like Vandenhoff, possessing iron nerve sufficient to encounter two failures, yet finally make good his position on the London stage.

He acted with us but two nights, "Coriolanus" and "Richard the Third." By a singular chance, Kean played the same part at Bath on the same night, which, as I had seen Macready play the part

at Covent Garden, I took the opportunity of paying a visit to my friend Meadows, for the purpose of witnessing. At Bath I was introduced to Mr. Woulds, Mr. Rowbotham, Mr. Conway and Mr. Paul Bedford, and many pleasant hours we spent together.

In the month of January, 1820, I started from Bristol, in a snow storm, on my journey to Exeter, where I arrived in safety, and found myself underlined for Rover, on Wednesday evening; but I found the whole city in a state of commotion, in consequence of the death of the Duke of Kent, (the father of Queen Victoria,) for whose reception a box had been splendidly fitted up at the theatre, which he was to have visited on Monday evening. By the advice of the mayor, the theatre was closed for one week, as a mark of respect to the memory of the royal duke. Thus, the managers not only lost the profits of an overflowing house, but the actors lost their week's salary; this was the first stumbling-block in this most unlucky of unlucky seasons.

On the following Monday I opened in Rover. The company consisted of Mr. Bennett and Mr. Hughes, (the managers,) Mr. Harvey, Mr. W. H. Bennett, Mr. Dawson, Mr. J. Dawson, Mr. Butler, Mr. J. Salter, Mr. Libby, Mr. Harris, Mr. Southey, (brother to the poet laureat of England,) Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Bennett, Mrs. Dawson, Mrs. Harvey, and, shortly afterwards, Miss Leigh. My first appearance was pronounced most satisfactory, both to the audience and the managers; but fortune treated us most scurvily. Scarcely had I played one week before the death of the King, (George the Third,) again closed the theatre, during a general mourning of three weeks.

The managers devoted this forced vacation to the production of the burletta of "Rochester," which had been so successful in London, at the Olympic Theatre, under the direction of Mr. Elliston. This piece was furnished with new and appropriate scenery, dresses and properties, was well rehearsed, and placed before the audience in a style of perfection not often witnessed in a provincial theatre. The house was crowded on the first representation, and the success perfect. After the second performance, about one o'clock in the morning, I was aroused by a violent knocking at my bed-room door, and a request from Mr. Bennett, who was much afflicted with asthma, for God's sake to take the key and run as fast as possible to the theatre—*which was on fire*. I was the first actor who reached the spot, just in time to see the roof fall in: all hope of rescuing any thing from the theatre, was at an end. By great exertions the flames were prevented from spreading devastation all around. The morning dawned on a heap of

smouldering ruins, and a company of actors out of employment. This was the first theatre I ever had the misfortune to belong to which was destroyed by fire, although conflagrations, during my career, have been very numerous.

The people of Exeter, with a praiseworthy spirit, set on foot a subscription for the relief of the actors, and in less than forty-eight hours a sum amounting to one hundred and seventy pounds was received, which was distributed among those actors who had lost their theatrical property by this fatal occurrence.

The directors of the New Assembly buildings, leading on to the Northernay, at that time only roofed in, granted the use of the building to Messrs. Bennett and Hughes, and by almost magical rapidity, we played in an entire new theatre on the following Monday. The scenery was brought from the Dock (now Devonport) Theatre—the dresses for “Rochester,” made up by the assistance of countless volunteers. We opened to a splendid house, and “Rochester” had a most successful run. This misfortune occurred on the 5th of March, 1820.

The managers were not insured, and consequently were heavy losers; but by exertions of the most indefatigable nature, they succeeded in having their theatre rebuilt, and opened on the 10th January, in the following year, 1821. It is without exception the most beautiful theatre out of London. How the old building was destroyed must ever be matter of surmise, but it was generally attributed to the introduction of the gas. An immense chandelier was suspended from the centre of the dome, from which the audience part of the theatre was solely lighted; the continued heat in so confined a space, was supposed to have produced spontaneous combustion: the fire originated in the roof, and cannot reasonably be attributed to any other source.

This season was a most disastrous one to the actors, who lost six weeks' salary in four months. It is true the managers, also, had been great sufferers, but they possessed many resources—they had a theatre in Plymouth, another in Dock, besides Weymouth and Totness, and a theatre in the Isle of Guernsey; to any one of which they could have repaired, with an assurance of success. They preferred availing themselves of the sympathy of the public of Exeter, warmly awakened in their behalf, and had no cause to complain of the result, their receipts having exceeded their most sanguine expectations. It was with feelings of surprise, therefore, we saw a notice posted in the green-room, that the salaries would be reduced during the ensuing season at Plymouth.

This proposition, under the circumstances, was illiberal and

unjust. The actors had borne patiently the deprivations of the season, which had curtailed more than one-third of their income—they had, one and all, strenuously contributed to the completion of the temporary theatre, so fortunately thrown in their way—the managers had reaped a rich harvest from those exertions, and the reward of the actor was to be a permanent reduction of his salary during the whole season, at Plymouth and Dock, (Devonport,)—a most ungenerous and ill-timed parsimony, which I, for one, determined not to submit to.

A meeting of the company was called, to take into consideration this proposition of the managers, at which I offered a resolution, that rather than submit to the terms offered, we should form a strolling expedition, on our own account, or take the Plymouth Theatre on our own responsibility, as a commonwealth, paying the managers such a rent for the use of their property as might be agreed upon between us. This last proposition was rejected by Messrs. Bennett and Hughes, and the alternative presented, to accept their terms or close the theatre altogether, until the summer season at Weymouth.

I now offered to advance forty pounds sterling, without any consideration but the re-payment of the money at the first moment the treasury should contain as much over the current expenses, for the strolling expedition. This plan was organized by myself, Mr. Dawson, Mr. J. Dawson, and Mr. Butler, who seceded from the theatre, taking with us Mr. and Mrs. Southey, Miss Leigh, Mrs. Dawson, Mr. Harris, and Mr. Libby, adding Miss L. Leigh, and Mr. and Mrs. Osbaldistone. I am sure the latter gentleman then never dreamt of being the lessee of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, London, or F. C. Wemyss of being manager of the Chesnut street Theatre, Philadelphia, when we entered our first managerial speculation, into which we were driven more by necessity than choice.

## CHAPTER VII.

Rural Wanderings—Castle of Launceston—Great Torrington—Liskeard—Plymouth—Letter from an Aged Relative—Boeth and Clara Fisher—First Offer of a London Engagement—Robert Gore Elliston, the Napoleon of the Drama—All at Coventry—Actors in Durance—Pageant of the Coronation—Politics Interrupting Pleasure—Wigan—American Engagement all but Abandoned—First Staring Expedition—Preparations for a Long Voyage.

We commenced our new arrangement at Great Torrington, in Devonshire, a very pretty romantic little town, about thirty miles from Exeter. Our plan was to pay one pound sterling per week to each individual, the overplus to be appropriated to a general fund, to provide against reverses. Mr. Wemyss, Mr. Butler, Mr. Osbaldistone, and Mr. J. Dawson, were appointed managers—one of the four to have sole and undivided control of the affairs of the company, alternately, in each town we might visit. We cast lots for precedency, and it fell to my lot to commence; consequently, I had all the trouble of organizing our new scheme. The scenery was really handsome; we hired a tolerable wardrobe from Mr. Libby, and started, at the close of the Exeter season, well equipped.

In Great Torrington, I first wielded the theatrical sceptre, over a small but very merry and contented set of subjects. We remained in Torrington three months, at the expiration of which, we had neither added to nor diminished our funds: we paid our way, and no more. Having secured the wagons to transport our baggage to Liskeard, in Cornwall, according to agreement, I surrendered the power into the hands of Mr. James Dawson, who was to be our next governor, as the actors facetiously termed us.

J. Dawson, Butler, and myself, started to walk to Launceston, where we intended to sleep, and proceed leisurely the next day to Liskeard, the Cornish mountains and scenery rendering this mode of travelling preferable to riding; but it was so long since I had indulged my walking propensities that I soon regretted the cross-road we were travelling. Before I had proceeded two-thirds of the distance, I found myself unequal to the task, and was glad to avail myself of a conveyance, for a few miles, in a lime cart,

which overtook us, in which I enjoyed two hours as sound sleep as ever fell to the lot of a tired mortal. Dearly, however, did I pay for this luxury; a drizzling rain, denominated a Scotch mist, had been falling during a portion of the time, which, saturating my coat with unslacked lime, literally burnt it off my back, and left me, on my arrival at Launceston, *minus* that precious garment, falling to pieces wherever it was touched. This misfortune was soon replaced, although it caused many a laugh at my expense, in Liskeard.

Whether it was that I was tired with our expedition, and thought the goal reached, gave me a favorable impression of the town, I am not prepared to say, but I think Launceston, with its old fashioned and ruined castle, the most beautiful and picturesque place I ever saw, surpassing Richmond, in Yorkshire, for beauty of situation. Tired as we were, we rambled about for three or four hours, and were really loth to leave the place, which we did, having fully determined to visit it professionally at the first opportunity.

While in Liskeard, in answer to a letter wherein I had recapitulated the sad mishap of my wearing apparel, I received the following from my grandfather; so characteristic of the sprightly humor of an old gentleman in his seventieth year, that I must give it an honorable place in these recollections.

(COPY.)

LONDON, August 22d, 1620.

DEAR FRANK:—

The best answer to your melancholy letter is the enclosed £10 bank post bill. You shall not be lost while I have a shot in the locker for £10, and you shall still have the £20 in October, when you write for it; for how the devil can the service, if we withhold the supplies, go on; and I should be very loth to let my lord duke go to bed supperless.

These little, and sometimes greater disasters too, oft happen to gentlemen of the sock and buskin.

Mr. and Mrs. Abbot are well, but at the country house—will not see your letter until evening, and I was loth you should wait another day for the needful. Uncle George joins in love, and I remain,

Your affectionate grandfather,

(Signed) THOMAS COURTNEY.

Mr. FRANCIS COURTNEY WEMYSS.



In Liskeard we remained five weeks, under the management of Mr. J. Dawson, and added a few pounds to our common stock : we then made an arrangement with Bennett and Hughes for the Plymouth and Dock Theatres, where we passed the winter of 1820. Butler was the manager here, but was too lazy and indolent to attend to the duties of his position. He requested me to officiate for him, for which he was to give me as handsome a suit of clothes as I chose to order.

In Plymouth I met Mr. Booth and Miss Clara Fisher, (then a child of seven years of age, and a most extraordinary instance of precocious dramatic talent,) to both of whom I was under obligations for their liberal conduct, particularly the former, whom I had met previously at Harrowgate.

Plymouth and Dock, although only two miles distant, have each their own peculiar audience. The Plymouth Theatre enjoys the privilege of a patent, is elegantly built, and as capacious as Drury Lane, or Covent Garden, being capable of containing, at country prices of admission, from three to four hundred pounds sterling, yet rarely yielding in its nightly receipts more than thirty pounds, and not unfrequently falling below five pounds. From its size and beauty, and being so seldom filled, it had, at the time I speak of, acquired the significant title of the *Theatre of splendid misery*. The Dock Theatre, on the other hand, is one of the most inconvenient in England ; but for the fact of possessing a regularly built stage, and an excellent stock of good scenery, it is more like a country barn furnished up for theatrical representation, than a theatre situated in a large and flourishing town. When full, it will hold about eighty pounds sterling ; but throughout a long season you can calculate upon an average of twenty, the inhabitants being partial to theatrical amusement, and having the garrison and dock-yards to assist in filling the house.

Here both Mr. Booth and Clara Fisher played to good houses in comparison to their receipts at Plymouth, and by a strange perversion of taste, the inhabitants of Plymouth would ride over to this inconvenient theatre to see a play, when their own palace, with the same attraction, would be utterly deserted.

In Plymouth and Dock we passed four months very agreeably, Osbaldistone alone contriving to make himself and others as uncomfortable as possible. Fortunately, his power to do injury was very limited, and finally fell entirely upon his own shoulders.

It was in Plymouth I received the first offer of a London engagement, from no less a personage than

## MR. ROBERT ELLISTON,

the Napoleon of the drama, of whom it has been justly said, if thrown overboard, in rags, from one side of a ship, he would appear before his tormentors could turn round, upon the other side of the deck dressed as a gentleman, ready to begin the world again; who, as the manager of a minor theatre, led the town captive, daily infringing the rights of the patentees of the Royal theatre, with impunity, and who as the lessee of a patented theatre, forthwith brought civil actions against the minor theatres for infringing *his rights*; the favorite of the public by whom he was spoiled; honored by the smiles of royalty, until on one occasion at least, he actually imagined himself a king—in representing the character of George the Fourth, in the pageant of the coronation responding to the applause of his audience by the emphatic phrase of “*Bless you, my people.*”

One of the best actors on the London stage, decidedly in talent, the most versatile of those by whom he was surrounded, crowning the play of the Iron Chest with that success, which has made it keep possession of the stage, by his excellent acting in a part in which John Kemble, with all his popularity, had failed, although written expressly for him by Colman the younger—whose merry laugh and quizzical expression of countenance in comedy, would force a stone to laugh with him; whose known powers of guiding the unruly passions of the most offended audience, has never been equalled by manager or actor; to whom no man could talk without being persuaded, against his reason and his will, that he was wrong. The well authenticated anecdotes of Elliston would fill a volume, from the perusal of which no one would rise fatigued.

An offer from such a man, for which I presume I was indebted to Mr. Munden, was not to be slighted, or an opening at Drury Lane Theatre, of which he was lessee, thrown aside without due deliberation. The great desideratum of my hopes and fears was within my reach; once lost, the opportunity might not readily occur again; I therefore resigned into the hands of the Messrs Dawson all my right and title to the occupation of the theatres in Plymouth, Dock, Liskeard, Bodmin, Penzance, Truro, and Falmouth, laid down the managerial truncheon, and departed for London, full of anticipated honors. On my arrival I found the situation for which my services were required, so many degrees below the object my ambition aimed at, that I at once declined it, and not even the wishes of Mr. Munden, that I should play any character of my own selection for his benefit, which was shortly

to take place, could induce me to abide such a result. I concluded an engagement with Mr. Elliston as a member of his country theatres at Coventry, Leamington, Spa, Northampton, &c., &c., where I spent a delightful summer.

Previous to my departure I acted *Sponge*, in the burletta of *Where Shall I Dine*, at the Adelphi theatre, for my friend Wilkinson's benefit, in fulfilment of a promise, made when we were together in Lincoln, from which I could not recede, so that I made my first bow before a London audience on Monday, April 2nd, 1821. I was loudly applauded throughout the whole of this performance, receiving no less than three different offers of engagement before I left the theatre that evening, all of which I refused, having suddenly taken up a whim to visit the United States of America.

At Coventry, where I first played under Elliston's banner, I met my old friend Meadows. Mr. S. Penley, of Drury Lane, was the manager, and a more gentlemanly young man, or one more calculated to conciliate the good will of a company of actors, it would be difficult to find. The company consisted of Mr. S. Penley, Mr. Meadows, Mr. Wemyss, Mr. Farrell, (the late manager of the Pavilion theatre, White Chapel) Mr. Montague Penley, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Julian, Mr. Manford, Mr. Kent, Mr. Shakspeare, (this gentleman was the last remaining descendant of the immortal poet, consequently a great lion,) Mr. Cleaver, Mr. Hughes, Mrs. Edwin, (of Drury Lane,) Miss Turner, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Hughes, Miss Davis, and Miss Brown.

Meadows and myself lived in the same house, and were companions on all occasions. The summer of 1821 was a series of delightful jaunts to Warwick, Birmingham, Northampton, Weldon, &c., &c. During the season at Leamington Spa, we acted every Wednesday night at Coventry, on which occasion the manager provided vehicles for our conveyance, then well known at Spa as pleasure cars: six were generally crammed into each, and we returned after the play to Leamington. During these excursions, we usually disturbed the good people of the village of Kenilworth about one o'clock in the morning, by singing *God save the King*, in full chorus, in honor, as we were pleased to say, of the revels of the Earl of Leicester to Queen Elizabeth.

Everybody acquainted with English theatricals is aware, that by law, actors and actresses playing without a license, are liable to be apprehended as sturdy vagrants and vagabonds, and as such, committed to the house of correction. Some squabbling having taken place between Mr. Elliston and the magistrates of Coven-

try, in which the latter felt themselves insulted by the dignified patentee of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, they resolved upon avenging their wrongs upon the unconscious actors. And on our arrival from Leamington, while dressing for the play of Venice Preserved, a gentleman with red collar and cuffs to his coat, usually well known as a police officer, walked into the room, and informed us in the most polite manner, that we were his prisoners; that none of us must leave the building, until the return of Mr. Penley, who was forthwith summoned before the mayor. We enjoyed this joke highly, feeling really disappointed, when Penley returned, after an absence of an hour and a half, and informed us everything was amicably arranged. Had we have been committed to prison, as threatened, it would have created a sensation in the profession throughout the country, and in all probability have made the fortune of more than one of our community, who, whatever might have been the opinion of the public as to their merit as players, were universally respected for their deportment off the stage.

The curtain rose about half past nine o'clock to a much better house than we should have had, if no excitement had existed. I played Jaffier in the play, and Carwin in *Therese*, afterwards.

This dilemma arose out of the question of the termination of the license, the manager construing his right to play sixty nights, when and how he pleased, during one calendar year, while the magistrates insisted that the sixty nights, to which the license extended, must be played consecutively, excluding only the Sabbath day, which they contended was the meaning of the act of Parliament, and in accordance with this decision we closed the Theatre.

The first time I acted with Mr. Elliston was in Coventry, the part of Ennui, in the *Dramatist*, on which occasion he was pleased to compliment me very highly, and renewed the old offer to play the following season at Drury Lane. However, I could not forget that he had tried to persuade me at our first interview, that Willoughby in this same play was an appropriate part to make a debüt before a London audience. What a difference between the Mr. Elliston, manager of a country theatre, and the same gentleman, lessee of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. In the former character he was a delightful companion, promoting fun and frolic, joining in it heart and soul, the merriest among the merry, idolized by the actors, who, accustomed to this familiarity, on a visit to London, ventured sometimes to address him as an old companion, but were sure to meet the cold and haughty shoulder,

which plainly said, "I am astonished at your impertinence: do you know to whom you are speaking? keep your distance—*here*; I know you not."

During the summer of 1821, took place the coronation of George the Fourth as King of England, a spectacle which brought together the rich, the noble, and the talented from every quarter of the globe; an event which had not occurred for better than half a century before, which was celebrated in a style of gorgeous splendor, recalling the days of chivalry and tournament, the nobility of England vying with the representatives of royalty throughout Europe, and eclipsing many of them in extravagant display of unbounded wealth.

This august ceremony was afterwards given in mimic display by Elliston at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. The "fac simile" of the original received the approbation of the citizens of London and Westminster, the King himself condescending to visit the theatre, during the representation, of course stamping it with fashion. It was, in fact, as perfect as such a representation could possibly be.

The manager having reaped a golden harvest in London, wisely resolved, at the close of the season, to represent this magnificent scene throughout the provincial theatres, commencing in Northampton, to which place we were summoned, where, under the direction of Mr. Lee, formerly the stage manager of the Adelphi Theatre, (under Rodwell and Jones,)—who has immortalized his name in the annals of theatricals by his exquisite performance of Muddle, in the burletta of Rochester. It was produced, with all the requisite properties and dresses, Mr. S. Penley personating the King; Mr. Montague Penley, Prince Leopold; Mr. Wemyss, Lord Castlereagh; the two last named dressed in the full order of the garter. Every gentleman in the theatre was required to personate not only one, but in some instances, half-a-dozen characters. I have only particularized those who, speaking theatrically, could not double, the costliness of their costume, which required at least half an hour to adjust properly, preventing the possibility of a rapid change of dress. The procession, in passing, occupied at least three quarters of an hour.

In Northampton, everything passed off with great éclat, and is remembered by those who witnessed it, as the most delightful theatrical representation ever seen. The champion, and the procession accompanying the King into the body of the cathedral, passing through the very centre of the audience, had a magical and grand appearance:

From Northampton, we proceeded to Coventry, decidedly at that time one of the most radical towns in England. Here the actors had to endure the groans and hisses of the audience, as the representatives of those persons, politically offensive to the spectators. The procession was a scene of tumult, each character being received with tumultuous applause, or with hisses, catcalls, and other deafening noise. I, as Lord Castlereagh, was the first obnoxious person who made his appearance. From the moment I placed my foot upon the stage, until the last page supporting my train disappeared, it was one cry of "Shame! Shame!" "Off! Off!" "Queen!" "Queen!" "Who sold his country?" "Ha!" "Off!" "Go along!" mingled with hisses and groans. This ceremony generally occupied about two minutes. The Duke of York followed me, and the change from hissing and hooting, to applauding and huzzaing, was wonderful. The next who incurred their displeasure were the King's Attorney General and the Judges. Prince Leopold was favorably received; but for his Majesty, it was reserved to try the strength of the parties. Here the row generally terminated in a fight between his majesty's loyal subjects, and the admirers of the queen, which lasted until the scene changed to the banquetting hall. This was repeated on every representation; and when the last night arrived, I felt relieved from the most disagreeable task I ever had imposed upon me during my theatrical career.

We returned to Northampton for the season, and here Meadows left us, to make his first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre; as Scrub, in the Beaux's Stratagem. He was very favorably received. The greatest proof of his success is, he still remains there, and I hope will there continue, until of his own accord he retires from the turmoil of an actor's life. I never hailed the receipt of a letter with greater pleasure, than the one that announced his toils were repaid, and his anchor cast on a sure foundation.

In Northampton, I received a letter from Mr. Miller, the agent of Messrs. Warren and Wood, of Philadelphia, so unsatisfactory, that I abandoned all thoughts of pursuing the application in that quarter any further, notwithstanding I had refused London offers, in order to meet the wishes of my friends Hughes and Wilkinson, whose strong recommendations in my favor had opened the correspondence.

The Leamington company was now disbanded, the London actors returning to their winter engagements in the metropolis, and the others wandering, no one knew whither. Among many good fellows this happy season introduced me to, I must not for-

get the leader of our orchestra, Paddy Day. Many a tedious hour was relieved by his good-fellowship.

Mr. Howard, the manager of the Lancaster circuit, offered me an engagement, at a guinea and a half per week, to join him immediately at Wigan, which I accepted, and once more turned my face towards the north. I opened with him in Tangent, in *The Way to Get Married*. The company consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Holland, Mr. and Mrs. Howard, Mr. Southwell, (playing under the assumed name of Francis,) Mr. Waldron, Mr. Richard Collier, Mrs. Collier, Mr. Plumer, Mr. Michel, Mr. Aiken, Mr. Atkins, Mrs. Murray, whom I met in Mrs. Butler's company, and Miss S. Danby, whom I had left at Lincoln, with both of whom I was delighted to renew my former friendship.

My stay with Howard was unusually short. However, the cause of separation was so truly laughable, it deserves to be recorded. Having to act *Kenmure*, in the Falls of Clyde—at that time a very popular piece in every country theatre—in the duel scene, in which *Kenmure's* being wounded, and supposed to be dead, turns the rest of the plot of the drama; the pistols missed fire, and were again cocked with no better success. Another pair of pistols was furnished by the property man; this only added to our difficulty, as mine exploded; but not all the efforts of my adversary could induce his pistol to go off. Now, as I was to be killed and not him, the only option left was to fall without cause, or to lower the curtain and begin the scene again. We adopted the latter course; for which, the manager in anger, made use of expressions both harsh and unnecessary. At last I cut the argument short by saying, "If you please, Mr. Howard, you will accept my six weeks' notice, and we will part." "Certainly, sir. You have only been rather too quick for me. I should have proposed the same thing at the close of the performance, for your airs of grandeur are only fit for Covent Garden or Drury Lane, and won't do for my theatre."

During my six weeks' expiation, for an unintentional error, with Howard, I received the following letter from Mr. Miller, which again directed my views to the United States of America:

(COPY.)

LONDON, Feby. 25, 1822.

DEAR SIR:—

I am fully authorised to conclude an engagement with you, and am inclined to think it would answer both yours and the managers' purpose. Our friends, Mr. Wilkinson and Mr.

Hughes, speak in high terms of your abilities, and I am satisfied their report is correct. Still, if it is likely I can have the pleasure of seeing you play in or near London within the next few weeks, I should be glad to do so. This, however, shall not stand in the way of an arrangement. Will you be good enough to say what you think of the terms offered to you in September last? If I recollect rightly, I made you a distinct and detailed offer. I cannot just now turn to Mr. Wood's letter, though I have it on my file, and he does not in his last letter recapitulate them. The new theatre opens on the first of December, so that we have plenty of time. I hope, and indeed feel assured, that you would make it extremely well worth your purpose. Hoping to hear from you shortly, I remain, dear sir,

(Signed)

JOHN MILLER.

69 FLEET STREET.

Before the receipt of this letter, I had engaged to play six nights at Kirkham, with the manager of the Kendal theatre, (Mr. Cooper,) at the close of the season in Wigan. It was from Kirkham, therefore, on the 4th of April, 1822, that I finally agreed to the terms offered by the American managers, and began to prepare for my departure. In Chorleigh, I again met my old friend Jack Emley, reduced to a mere shadow of his former self, surrounded by a house full of noisy children, the complete picture of a strolling actor rapidly sinking into oblivion. I could scarcely believe that any man, possessing superior talent in the profession of his own choice, could have suffered himself to recede so far in the estimation of the public for want of energy—the highest object of his ambition, being a pipe of tobacco and a pot of porter. So long as he could command these without much trouble, he seemed perfectly indifferent to every thing around him; laughing as merrily, as if his pockets were lined with guineas, and he had nor a care in this world. He accompanied me as far as Preston, where we shook hands, and parted to meet no more. “Good bye, Jack.” “God bless you, Frank, my boy, and send you safe across the herring pond,” were the last words we exchanged. He returned to Chorleigh, and I made the best of my way to Kirkham.

Here I met Mr. Cooper, who was anxiously expecting my arrival. I opened in Vapid, in the Dramatist. Being announced as the star of the company, I was of course received well by the audience. The company was by no means a bad one, consisting of Mr. Cooper, (the manager,) Mr. Robson, Mr. Lardner,



Mr. Lardner, jr., Mr. Egerton, Mr. Hall, Mr. Hutchinson, Mr. Goddard, Master Stanley, Mrs. Cooper, Mrs. Lardner, Mrs. Robson, Mrs. Lardner, jr., and Mrs. Aldis, (formerly Mrs. Stanley, of the New York Theatre.) I played Marplot, Rover, Bob Handy, Florian, Gratiano, and repeated Vapid for my benefit. In the farces, I likewise acted Tiptoe, in Ways and Means; Wildlove, in the Lady and the Devil; Edward, in the Irishman in London; and my Lord Duke, in High Life Below Stairs.

From Kirkham, I proceeded direct to London, to make the requisite preparations for the voyage, which was to commence a new era in my theatrical life. In the year 1822, it was a difficult matter to induce an actor to cross the Atlantic; and even Mr. Miller, the agent of Warren and Wood, told me he could scarcely calculate upon my departure until he saw me on board of the packet, although I assured him, that having pledged my word, no offer on this side of the Atlantic could induce me to stay, although they might expedite my return. Offer upon offer was made, and many urged even to rudeness, but without being able to shake my resolution—until it became a standing joke among those actors with whom I was upon terms of friendship, to ask whenever they met me, “Well, Wemyss, when do you retire into banishment?”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Expectations of America—Windsor Theatre—Last Engagement in England—Captain Sherburne, and the Ship Robert Edwards—Departure from England—Arrival at New York—Yellow Fever—Park Theatre—Journey to Philadelphia—First Impressions of the Quaker City—The New Theatre in Chesnut Street—Introduction to Messrs. Warren and Wood.

HAVING determined to cross the Atlantic, my first care was to provide myself with a new stage wardrobe, determined, if I failed in the United States of America, that it should not be for want of exertion on my own part. I expended on my outfit, three hundred pounds sterling, adding such of the dresses I then possessed, which I deemed sufficiently handsome. A better wardrobe, or of more general utility, no actor ever commenced an engagement with. Yet I was not buoyed up with any extravagant ideas of brilliant success; my plain calculation was, having been considered a

respectable actor in my own country, surrounded by competitors of every grade, I have a right to expect I may be considered something more than respectable in America, where numbers prevail not; and such aid as external ornament could bestow, I was resolved to have.

What could induce Mr. Wood to send to England for a light comedian, while he was himself sustaining all the principal parts, and in high estimation as an actor, with the public, I am at a loss to conjecture. Had I been in possession of that secret before my departure, never should I have left England on such a Quixotic expedition. Expecting to find a clear field for exertion, which I was promised, I was willing to make the attempt; but to sail three thousand miles to oppose an established favorite, was an idea that never entered into my calculation, and for which, I certainly never would have abandoned my prospects in England, which appeared most favorable, during my American negotiation.

Fate ordained it otherwise; and many a bitter hour of regret I experienced during the first year of my engagement, of which I shall speak in its proper place.

Surrounded by offers on all sides, I accepted an engagement for six weeks, from Mr. Smith, the manager of the Windsor Theatre, where I could superintend my preparations, and attend to my theatrical duties at the same time. This was the last theatre I acted in, in England. The company consisted of, Mr. Jeffries, (the stage manager,) Mr. Dodd, Mr. Stackwood, Mr. Ford, Mr. Sheldon, Mr. Douglas, Mr. Clarke, Mr. Gow, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Harley, Mr. Darke, Mr. Hall, Mr. Musgrave, Mr. S. Beverly, Mr. James, Mr. Gaide, Mr. Harding, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Wemyss, and Mr. Smith, the manager; Mrs. Sheldon, Mrs. Askey, Miss Williams, Miss Hill, Miss Angel, Miss Routh, and Miss Jones. This last young lady, I expected to have been my fellow passenger to New-York, having been engaged by Mr. Price, the American manager; and to the failure to fulfil her contract, the American public were indebted for their favorite, Miss L. Kelly, who was engaged to supply her place in the Park Theatre. What would have been the result of Miss Jones' visit, it is impossible to say; but fame and fortune were the reward of Miss Kelly, who visited America the following year.

Miss Jones was a pupil of Mr. Foote, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. She made her first appearance in Windsor, in the character of Donna Violante, in the *Wonder*, on which occasion, I played Don Felix. She was quite successful, and being, moreover, very handsome, produced a sensation with the playgoers of

Windsor and Eton. She and I were to have had a benefit conjointly, under the patronage of the Earl and Countess of Harrington ; but Dr. Keat refused his permission to extend the season one night, for that purpose. To have acted without it, would have led to a scene, similar to that already encountered at Coventry, but which might not have terminated so agreeably.

We were thus deprived of our benefit altogether. She afterwards played at Covent Garden, and became the wife of my old friend, Jack Hughes.

During the season at Windsor, I met with an accident, which had nearly kept me in England, against my will, and in face of all my declarations. In acting *Corinthian Tom*, in the *Burletta* of *Tom and Jerry*, I had one of my knees so twisted, as to render it doubtful whether I should be able to act for months ; however, I was determined it should be no trifle which should prevent the fulfilment of my engagement, which I subjoin.

COPY.

DEAR SIR :

I am favored with your letter, dated 1st May, and agree, without hesitation, on the part of the proprietors of the Philadelphia Theatre, (Messrs. Warren and Wood,) to secure to you an engagement for three years, at a salary of six guineas per week, with the accustomed benefits and advantages, on your engaging to play the light comedy of the theatre, and being with Messrs. Wood and Warren, by the first of December, 1822, the time fixed for opening their new theatre. Should you require a more formal and detailed agreement, previous to your sailing, I engage to have it prepared and witnessed.

I am, dear Sir, Yours truly.

(Signed,) JOHN MILLER,  
(Agent to the Theatre.)

69, FLEET STREET, LONDON, }  
May 22d, 1822. }

Every thing being ready for my departure, I secured a passage in the ship *Robert Edwards*, from London to New-York, there being no vessel in port whose destination was Philadelphia. My baggage was placed on board, and I started for Portsmouth, to join the ship on her arrival at the Isle of Wight.

On the 26th of September, 1822, I placed my foot upon her deck, where Captain *Sherburne* welcomed me on board, and on the following day, with a fair wind, we tripped our anchor, and I bade adieu to my native land

We had an agreeable, although a very long passage, arriving in New-York on Saturday, the 16th of November. On reaching Sandy Hook, the first intelligence we received from the Pilot was very flattering to a foreigner ; it was simply this, " Gentlemen, I think you had better not venture up to the city, the yellow fever rages there very badly."

What a delightful reception, after a long voyage ; however, we *did* go up to the city, and without any evil effects, although the populous city of New-York, looked like a deserted village. The gloomy impression made on my first approach, has never been totally obliterated ; the words, "infected district," will occur whenever I think of my arrival. I slept the first night at the Courtland House ; but by the recommendation of Capt. Sherburne, removed the following morning to Niblo's Hotel, corner of William and ——— street, where I remained until my departure for Philadelphia.

On Saturday evening, myself and fellow passengers visited the Park Theatre, to see Mathews play Dr. Ollapod, in the Poor Gentleman. The house was not crowded, and the play very indifferently acted, giving me a most unfavorable impression of the actors. It was certainly the worst company I had ever seen in a metropolitan theatre.

After the performance, I met my old friend Joe Cowell, who was attached to the theatre, having arrived in America only a few months before me. He afterwards became very popular, both in New-York and Philadelphia.

In his company I wandered through the streets of New-York, visiting such places as he pointed out to me, and feeling as only those *can* feel, who in a foreign country, meet a friend whom they know takes some interest in their welfare, relieving the horrible knowledge of being *alone* among multitudes.

On Saturday, the 23d of November, 1822, I took my departure from New-York for Philadelphia, and by some unaccountable mistake, got on board the wrong steamboat, so that, instead of proceeding to New-Brunswick, I found myself with all my heavy baggage landed at Elizabethtown Point, with the prospect of remaining until Monday, or proceeding by a private conveyance to Trenton, by land, and so endeavor to reach the boat before her departure from that place. I therefore hired a dearborn to convey me thither. At New-Brunswick, the negro who drove informed me that one of his horses was so lame, it would be impossible to proceed before the morning. I ordered him to hire another, with which we proceeded to Kingston ; where I arrived at two o'clock

on Sunday morning ; and finding it impossible to reach Trenton in time for the boat, I resolved to remain. This was the first country inn I had seen in America ; it is on the top of a hill, on the left hand side of the road, coming from New-York—by whom kept, I am ignorant to this day ;—but never was way-faring passenger better treated ; every thing was as clean and comfortable as it was possible to be. I have seen a great many inns in my time, good, bad, and indifferent, but never enjoyed myself more, than on the present occasion.

I slept soundly until ten o'clock, when I ordered breakfast, and an excellent one it was ; despatched the black man home, who had driven me from Elizabethtown ; concluded a bargain with the landlord, to convey me and my baggage to Philadelphia that day, in an extra stage—so that I may say, I arrived in my carriage and four in that city, on Sunday evening, the 24th of November,—this journey from New-York having cost me nearly sixty dollars.

At Judd's Hotel, in Third street, (now Congress Hall,) where I alighted, quite an animated scene met my view ; the house was crowded in every part, travellers flocking from all quarters to witness the great race at Washington City, between Sir Charles and Eclipse, which ended in disappointment. This scene, from its novelty, was most agreeable to a stranger ; and although I had travelled over some very bad roads—that is, bad by comparison, for our English roads being so good, made the contrast more forcible ; I had reached my destination in time for the fulfilment of all my engagements.

My first impressions of Philadelphia were most favorable. There was something in the bustle of the hotel, which pleased me ; the rush to the dinner table on the sound of the bell ; the rapidity with which the ample provision disappeared from the table, really amused me. During my first dinner at Judd's Hotel, I shall record a circumstance at which I have laughed at least a hundred times, in presence of the gentleman who caused my surprise. A high-minded and honorable young man, from the State of Georgia, having indulged in potations deep of champagne, (which, bye-the-bye, at American tables flows as freely as water,) was involved in some wordy quarrel at the upper end of the table, which he suddenly terminated by rolling an apple with some force the full length of the table, exclaiming at the same time, if anybody wanted to fight, he has only to bring me that apple. There must have been from forty to fifty people seated in different knots, of four and five in each party, who only laughed at the sudden ebullition of feeling ; nor would I have noted the occurrence, but to shame

the host of travellers who, passing through America with rail-road speed, retail these anecdotes as illustrative of the general character of the Americans ; although in what they term the polite and polished circles of Paris and London, isolated cases, far more disgraceful than the present, occur daily without producing any remarks, excepting from the party where the breach of good manners occurs.

I came to America with all the prejudices of an Englishman, —have involved myself in many scrapes in defence of England, which I never hear assailed without defending ; but I have lived for upwards of twenty years among the Americans, and I do not think any inducement could prevail upon me, permanently to take up my abode in my native country ; yet it does not follow that I should sit quietly by and hear England reviled for those very qualities which form the boast of a native American—namely : love for the land of their birth. And never do I hear an Englishman loudly denouncing his native land, that I do not quietly repeat the lines of the poet :

“ ——— For be it understood,  
He left his country for his country's good.” —*Alcum!* ———

But to return to Philadelphia—the cleanliness of its streets, their uniformity, the hurry of business at this time decidedly in her favor, as compared to the lengthened visages of the citizens of New-York just emerging from the scourge of the yellow fever, formed a pleasing contrast, reviving my spirits.

The most striking object was the Bank of the United States, built in a prominent situation in Chestnut street, and in a very chaste style of architecture ; the State House, from whose halls issued that declaration which severed from the English Crown, the brightest gem in her colonial possessions ; the Museum, in the same building ; the Academy of Fine Arts—all in Chestnut street—and last, not least, the New Theatre then building in the same street, were viewed with different feelings of interest.

The language spoken by all around me, the nasal twang with which it was pronounced, alone revealing the secret that I was not in England, but making me feel a stranger in what I might otherwise have conceived to be the land of my fathers, spoke to the feelings of the heart, pronouncing *me* to be *the foreigner*.

I waited upon Mr. Warren at his house in Sansom street, leaving my card and a letter from his agent, Mr. Miller. He called at the hotel in the course of the day, and appointed the following morning, (Tuesday, the 26th of November,) to meet him at the theatre, where he would introduce me to his partner, Mr. Wood,

to whom he wished me to talk about matters of business, and most hospitably invited me to spend the evening in his society.

I was very much pleased with the appearance of the Chestnut Street Theatre, then nearly completed; its only eyesore in my estimation, being the chandelier suspended from the dome, which by others, was considered its greatest beauty; but the fate of the Exeter Theatre immediately occurred to my mind; and another objection to this mode of lighting the theatre, is, that it exposes to view, that very portion which should be kept as much as possible in the shade, and which has contributed more to the downfall of the drama, than all the other causes put together; I allude to the third tier of boxes, where licentiousness prevails in its worst form.

I was introduced to Mr. Wood, with whose urbanity and apparent kindness I was more than pleased, and distinctly remember saying, among other foolish things in his praise, that he was the most perfect gentleman I had met in the profession. As regards outward appearance, I have had no reason to alter my opinion; but if his conduct towards me, stripped of his specious manners, are to form his claim to that character, he must not choose me hereafter for his biographer: yet I may well afford to forgive all his transgressions, in that he provided me with a wife. Had he kept me engaged in professional duty, in all probability I should never have thought of marrying; and in this important event of a man's life, at least, I never can regret my visit to America.

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## CHAPTER. IX.

Opening of the New Theatre—List of the Company—Mr. Cooper—First Appearance in America—Reception—Newspaper Criticisms—James Wallack—His Address to the Baltimore Audience—Booth in America—Mathews—Convivial Parties—Marriage—Tom and Jerry—Stephen Price—First Appearance in Baltimore—Washington City—Return to Philadelphia—Season of 1823 and 1824.

THE theatre opened on Monday, the 2d of December, 1822, with a neat address, written, as the play-bills informed me, by Mr. Sprague, of Boston, and very well delivered by Mr. Wood. The play was, *The School for Scandal*, which was admirably acted—

*Warren* playing Sir Peter Teazle ; *Wood*, Charles Surface ; *H. Wallack*, Joseph Surface ; *Jefferson*, Crabtree ; *Francis*, Sir Oliver Surface ; *T. Jefferson*, Sir Benjamin Backbite ; *Hathwell*, Rowley ; *Burke*, Moses ; *Darley*, Careless ; *John Jefferson*, Trip ; *Green*, Snake ; *Mrs. Wood*, Lady Teazle ; *Mrs. La Folle*, Lady Sneerwell ; *Mrs. Francis*, Mrs. Candour ; and *Mrs. H. Wallack*, Maria.

Mrs. Wood was the only person in the play with whom I was not perfectly satisfied ; although I afterwards became one of that lady's warmest admirers. As an actress, in smooth, level speaking, she had no equal on the American stage ; but she must forgive me for saying, I think her sister, Mrs. Darley, would have been a much better representative of Lady Teazle.

This comedy was followed by the melo-drama of the Wandering Boys, which was also very well performed, but did not give me an exalted opinion of the talent of the artists, the scenery being decidedly bad, and entirely out of keeping.

The manner in which these pieces were acted, convinced me I had a harder task before me, to insure success, than I hitherto suffered myself to suppose. The members of the Philadelphia company were veteran actors, who understood their profession, and whose exertions were duly appreciated by a discriminating audience. They consisted of—Messrs. Warren and Wood, the managers ; Mr. Henry Wallack, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Burke, Mr. Francis, Mr. Wilson, Mr. T. Jefferson, Mr. J. Jefferson, Mr. D. Johnston, Mr. Darley, Mr. Green, Mr. Wheatley, Mr. Hathwell, Mr. Parker, Mr. Bignall, Mr. Murray, Mr. Andes, Mr. Scrivener, and Mr. Lopez, the prompter ; Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Darley, Mrs. Entwistle, Mrs. H. Wallack, Mrs. La Folle, Mrs. Burke, Mrs. Francis, Mrs. Jefferson, Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Simpson, Mrs. Green, Mrs. Murray, Miss Hathwell, Miss Parker, Miss L. Hathwell, Miss H. Hathwell ; to whom was now to be added, Mr. Wemyss, and, before the end of the season, Mr. and Mrs. Mestayer and family.

With such an array of talent, every part was filled by an actor fully competent to sustain the reputation of the theatre ; and the unfavorable opinion I had formed of the state of the Drama, from the first play I witnessed in the city of New-York, was converted into a feeling of gratification, at the regular manner in which the business of this theatre was conducted.

It was agreed upon by Mr. Hood and myself, that I should make my first appearance as Vapid, in the Dramatist ; to be followed by Marplot, in the Busy Body ; and Rover, in Wild Oats,



but no night was fixed upon. I had stipulated for three parts, at the opening of my engagement, to insure a fair hearing, and avail myself of an opportunity to make, if possible, a favorable impression upon the audience. Had I supposed the first part would have been the touchstone, I should have selected Marplot, which was decidedly at that time my best effort, and which I purposely reserved, either to follow up a successful *debut*, or to retrieve lost ground, which I knew it would do, in case of failure. But my manager had determined I should not succeed, before I placed my foot upon the American stage—that is, if he could, by any means, prevent it.

The first object of curiosity to me, in the theatre, was the announcement of

MR. THOMAS COOPER,

a name bright in the annals of theatrical fame—at one time the pride and boast of the American stage—who has received more money from the public, and drawn more into the treasury of the theatre, than any actor of the present day—whose name, at the head of the play-bills, was the assurance of a well-filled house—whose style of declamation was held up as worthy of imitation, both by the pulpit and the bar—who has, in most inclement weather, travelled a hundred miles a day, over roads almost impassable—playing on alternate nights, in the cities of New-York and Philadelphia, to delighted audiences, until he was denominated “the flying actor”—whose haughty demeanor and rudeness, amounting almost to insult to his brother actors, rendered him an object of fear instead of admiration.

As an actor in the vigor of his fame, he must have been one of the best of the Kemble school. It was not my good fortune to see him until he was in the wane; but even then, his performance of Damon, in Damon and Pythias, was a masterpiece of art, which all who now perform the part on the American stage—from Mr. E. Forrest to those of humble pretensions—have imitated as closely as possible. Carrying his energy almost to the verge of caricature, who that has seen Mr. Cooper in this part, can forget the manner in which he receives from Lucullus the intimation of the death of his horse, upon whose swiftness of foot depended the life of his dear friend, perilled by this act; the perfect stupor which for an instant overcomes his whole frame, suddenly roused to phrenzy by the ideal picture of the blood of Pythias flowing for him; his stern resolution to sacrifice on the instant both himself

and the slave, who, from affection for his master, had wrought the ruin of his honor. Nothing on the stage—not even the third act of Othello, by Kean—ever surpassed this. It was painfully true to nature, equalled only by his delirious joy when he arrives just in time to save his friend, and falls exhausted by the effort at the foot of the scaffold,—receiving, instead of tumultuous applause, the tears of his audience. This was the conception of a master-mind. For my own part, after witnessing it, I always wished to leave the theatre that nothing might break the charm for the evening.

What a pity it is that great actors should remain upon the stage after they have outlived their reputation ; yet how few retire until old age has so impaired their faculties, that respect for what they have been, alone restrains an audience from open insult. Of all professions, the player contemned and despised, as he frequently is, possesses no means of recording to posterity the triumph of his art ; therefore, the recollection of his taste and beauty should be at least preserved intact by the generation in which he flourishes.

And here let me ask, why an actor should not receive from society the honors due to talent ? The physician, the barrister, the clergyman, the soldier, are all received with the honor due to their occupation. The player, whose toil is equal, and whose task to gain eminence is more severe, is only received as a clever buffoon, tolerated, but not accepted in the bosom of society. It is true, the Kemble family form an exception to this general rule of exclusion ; but even they hold their position upon suffrance, not upon right.

On the 6th of December, I first saw Mr. Cooper act Virginius, which, in my humble opinion, was a failure. The play was so mutilated, that with difficulty I could recognize Knowles' Tragedy—a liberty no manager or actor should take, unless to remove indecent language, or allusion, which must mar any work. It matters not who the author may be ; the more celebrated the name, the more disgraceful the outrage : but for caprice to mangle the work of an absent author, is, to say the least, a most unfair proceeding.

It was not until I saw Mr. Cooper play Damon that I would admit his claim to rank as an actor of the highest merit, notwithstanding his popularity ; but after that performance, it required but little rhetoric to persuade me he was capable of any effort which could be required from a man of genius, feeling that the reputation he enjoyed was justly merited.

On Wednesday, the 11th of December, I made my first appear-

ance in America, as Vapid, in the Dramatist. The play was cast in the following manner: Lord Scratch, Warren; Vapid, Wemyss; Floriville, H. Wallack; Neville, Darley; Willoughby, D. Johnston; Peter, J. Jefferson; Lady Waitford, Mrs. Francis; Miss Courtney, Mrs. Anderson; Marianne, Mrs. Darley; Letty, Mrs. Green. I was ever a fortunate fellow, on a first night before a strange audience, and on this occasion, the most important to me in my theatrical life, Dame Fortune was not inclined to let me off without some freak to annoy and disturb me.

In the first scene of the second act, the house was suddenly filled with smoke, inducing a belief that the theatre was on fire, which caused a simultaneous movement of alarm towards the doors, until Mr. Wood stepped forward and explained from whence the smoke proceeded. This satisfied the audience, who resumed their seats; but such an incident on a first appearance in a foreign country, of whose manners I was totally ignorant, was calculated to shake firmer nerves than mine.

However, all progressed smoothly enough, and the scene between Lord Scratch, Lady Waitford, and Vapid, behind the sofa, was received with both applause and genuine laughter, which Mr. Warren's excellent acting as Lord Scratch, aided very much in producing, and I left the stage with the applause of the audience ringing most gratefully in my ears.

But it was in the fourth act that the approbation of the audience became so decided, that by the advice of Mr. Warren, and elated by my own feelings, I agreed to speak the Epilogue, which I had declined in the morning. I had cause to regret this conclusion, as, passing through the ordeal of a five after-act play, a gentleman in the boxes, favored me with a smart hiss, (for pronouncing, as he said, the word *girl like gal.*) It was instantly drowned in applause; but it gave to Mr. Wood the plea, of which he took such ungenerous advantage, to declare to Mr. Miller that I was obnoxious to the audience. *The fact*, I have no wish to conceal; it was the first and last hiss ever directed at me on the Philadelphia stage for years. Of the next, I shall have occasion to speak more in detail; the circumstance is well known to every frequenter of the theatre, and the uproar it created had nearly been productive of serious consequences to others beside myself.

I had no reason to complain of my reception. Mr. Warren congratulated me upon my success, and Francis, who had witnessed the whole performance, assured me it was satisfactory to the audience. One thing is certain, whatever may have been the opinion of the public on the present occasion, I was a better actor when

I first played in Philadelphia, than I ever esteemed myself at a later period of my life, when established as an acknowledged favorite in the Chestnut Street Théâtre. That the performance of Vapid could not have been very bad, the proof is, that unknown to a single individual out of the theatre, it should have been received with sufficient approbation to call forth the congratulations of one of the managers who had sustained a principal part in the play. I will dwell no further upon it than to add the opinion of the press on the same character, on the 11th of December, 1822; and on the 12th of April, 1826, during the whole of which period I was a member of the theatre, containing the best stock company ever assembled within its walls.

From the Philadelphia Gazette, Dec. 12, 1822.

“NEW THEATRE.—The house was very respectably attended last evening, to witness the revival of ‘The Dramatist, or Stop Him who Can.’ The only novelty presented in the *dramatis personæ* consisted of a Mr. Wemyss, who made his first appearance in the character of Vapid. Report had spoken in golden terms of his theatrical acquirements. That he possesses a great degree of merit as a young performer, will not be denied; but it is equally manifest, from his last night’s representation, that study, experience and practice, are to be superadded to his natural accomplishments, before he can expect to tread the stage with great credit to himself.

“He appears to possess a great flow of fine feeling, and an elasticity of spirits, which, prudently martingaled, may in a few years render him respectable in the light and fashionable walks of the stage.

“His voice did not appear to have attained its proper pitch. This may be obviated when he becomes more familiar with the house. Upon the whole, with a suitable degree of application, we consider he may become an acquisition of no inconsiderable value to our theatre.

From the United States Gazette, April 12, 1826.

“ \* \* \* \* \*. Vapid, the Dramatist, was written for Lewis, as indeed, also, the principal character in each of his (Reynolds’) comedies; and it is said, the author, in drawing the portrait, sat for himself: Supported as it was by Mr. Wemyss, Mr. Reynolds could not have wished for a better representative; if we are not mistaken, this gentleman made his first appearance in this city in the same part. We well remember, however, of

witnessing his enaction of Vapid about four years ago ; but the gratification we then experienced was considerably augmented by the improvement we discovered in his performance of it this evening. Whatever might have been the execution of Mr. Lewis, we feel convinced that Mr. Wemyss could not lose by comparison with him, were he now alive : he may be allowed to plume himself upon and consider it as a *chef d'œuvre*. \* \* \* \* \*

We cannot forbear mentioning the two scenes where Mr. Wemyss showed to so much advantage, that no one who saw him could refrain from expressing their approbation of his excellence. The first and second scene in the second act, when starting from his concealment behind the sofa, he exclaimed—"Prologue or epilogue!"—"I'm the man!"—"I'll write you both." To describe the expression of his countenance, his situation, the amazement, not unmixed with horror of Lord Scratch, and the confusion of Lady Waitfort, would be a subject fit for an Hogarth, and the last scene of the fourth act. There were other parts where he was admirable ; but we may not stop to enumerate them, dismissing him by observing it was a finished performance."

These two opinions were written, the *first* when I was perfectly unknown, and the *last* when I was surrounded by friends and needed not the encomium of the press to designate my position with the audience. It is scarcely possible, taking into consideration I was an actor of eight years' standing and repute before I came to the United States, that in four years after my arrival, there should have been so marked a difference in the performance of the same part, as to entitle me to such lavish praise, unless I had deserved a little more than I received at the hands of the first critic, considering also that I did not act the part more than four or five times between the first and last representation.

From the 11th of December until the 18th, my name was not mentioned in the play-bills. On the following Wednesday, I was announced for Rover, in "Wild Oats," Mr. Cooper having played on all the intervening nights. This was giving a stranger a fair field with a vengeance ; and I had discovered the secret,—a most disagreeable one to me,—that no light comedian was wanted ; but a walking gentleman was the only department in which this excellent company was deficient, and which I determined should never be filled by me.

Although my third appearance should have been in the play of the Busy Body, as Marplot, I found myself announced on the 21st of December, for Doucourt, and I heard no more of the play of

the Busy Body for many months, when I agreed to act Sir George Airy, to Mr. Bood's Marplot, which I found to be a favorite character of the manager.

Of all the characters in the varied round of the drama, which a light comedian may be called upon to assume, Doricourt, in the Belles Stratagem, is decidedly the most difficult. Until an actor is firmly rooted in the good opinion of his audience, the necessity of extravagance in the assumed mad scene, and the fear of carrying that extravagance too far, in a case where the actor and his audience are strangers to each other, places the former in a most delicate situation; yet this was selected by Mr. Wood for my third appearance. Fortunately, the excellent tuition of Mr. Macready, in Bristol, had made me perfectly conversant with the business of the play, and enabled me to escape on this occasion the censure of the audience, and even to carry off no small share of approbation.

On the 23d, I again appeared as Colonel Freelove, in the Day after the Wedding, to the Lady Elizabeth of Mrs. Tatnall, an actress of some little repute, but by no means equal either to Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Darley, or Mrs. Entwistle; but it was on the 28th I had to perform the most difficult task yet placed before me. A stranger in the city of Philadelphia, in the fifth part I played was one entirely new to me, the words of which I had to commit to memory, and to appear before the public, in one of Mr. Wood's most popular characters, without the audience being apprised of the fact that it was a first attempt. This was Prince Hal, in Shakspeare's play of Henry the Fourth. Cooper played Hotspur, and Warren, Falstaff, (and who has not enjoyed the rich humor of this part in his hands.) I endeavored to avoid this, in vain; Mr. Wood was peremptory, and it was my business to obey. I can at least say, I was perfect in the language, but it was a *most execrable exhibition*, and the applause I received was most undeserved.

On the 1st of July, 1823, I played Hans Gayvelt, in Colman's play of the Law of Java, which, although well got up, was a failure, being played twice, and consigned to the "Tomb of the Capulets," notwithstanding it had the aid of Henry Wallack, Jefferson, and Warren, in the principal characters, and the music very well sung, led by Mrs. Burke, at that time the principal female vocalist in the United States, and an universal favorite, aided by the other ladies and gentlemen of the theatre.

On the 17th of January, Mr. James Wallack made his first appearance in the new theatre as Rolla, in Pizarro, a character so decidedly his own, that competition was sure defeat: he was at

that time very popular, or I should rather say, attractive. His popularity was never diminished, but his attraction wore out from frequent repetition of the same characters. As a manager, he was the best qualified who ever assumed the reins of an American theatre, and the termination of his career, by the burning of the National Theatre in New York, was a retrograde movement, of twenty years at least, to the just taste for theatrical amusement, which his judicious arrangements in every department was fostering.

He was not only popular as an actor, but as a man; and his address to the audience at the Holiday Street Theatre, in Baltimore, in the year 1835, was a just and manly rebuke, to that ridiculous custom of calling for a favorite performer at the close of every engagement, to return thanks for patronage received, even in a failing engagement. I give it as copied in the "Vade Mecum," of the 17th of October, from the Baltimore papers.

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I appear before you at your call. I am unaccustomed to extemporaneous speaking; but however reluctant I may usually be to address a public audience, I am free to confess, that I never felt more embarrassment than on the present occasion. I am but a plain man, and speak the words of truth, notwithstanding my profession leads me to assume the garb of fiction. If I were to tell you that I leave Baltimore gratified, I should tell you a lie—for, of the ten nights I have played in this city, this is the only audience I have had the pleasure of witnessing, and you have my sincere thanks for honoring my name by your appearance this evening. I am aware of the duties—of far more importance to you than my poor services—that have prevented your honoring me with your attendance, which, otherwise, if I may be allowed to judge by the audiences I have received in other cities, would, I doubt not, have been more general. I therefore repeat, that I thank you most kindly for doing me the honor you have, by appearing here to-night; and, with the hope that when I may come among you again, I shall at least occasionally see such an audience as the one before me, I bid you farewell.

Mr. Wallack acted six nights by himself, and afterwards appeared with Mr. Cooper, in Venice Preserved, Douglas, Othello, Julius Cæsar, King John, and Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, when he took his departure for the season, and shortly after returned to England.

On the 15th of February, I had the pleasure of shaking hands with Mr. Booth, who was announced to appear as Richard the Third, on the 17th. Always eccentric in his movements, he sud-

denly left England, without the place of his destination being known, and made his first appearance in America, in Richmond, Virginia—thus losing the aid of the press, in the eastern cities, in promulgating his arrival and preparing the audience for the reception of a really great actor. Where he passed his time, previous to Kean's first visit, is unknown; but he lost the opportunity of first impression, by his delay, and had again, in the New World, to combat the charge of imitation—whereas, by using common prudence, he might have turned the similarity of size and style of acting between Mr. Kean and himself to such advantage, before an American audience, (by securing that judgment in his favor which he subsequently obtained,) as to have made him a formidable rival to the great master of his art, on his first appearance in the United States.

Unheralded as he was, with the recollection of Kean fresh on the minds of the audience, his first appearance in Philadelphia was a failure. The house was indifferently attended. Although the judgment of the few was in his favor, the million could not, at that time, be persuaded to see him. After a few nights' performance, the engagement was postponed until after the appearance of

#### MR. CHARLES MATHEWS.

A more honorable or honored name is not to be found in the catalogue of dramatic worth than the eccentric individual here named. A man, of whom the stage may justly feel proud—irreproachable in his private character, a giant in professional talent, atlas-like, supporting, on his own shoulders, the burden of entertaining an audience throughout the evening—it will scarcely be credited, that he was permitted to retire from the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, because his talents were considered too limited, being esteemed only as a mimic, not an actor. But, if his Sir Fretful Plagiary, in the Critic, and Morbleu, in Monsieur Tonson, be not considered acting of the highest grade, I have yet to learn what acting consists of.

His assumption of character in his monopologue, proved to the managers, when too late, the treasure they had lost.

By his own exertions he succeeded in filling the English opera house, night after night, with the élité of London; acquiring independence, and being perfectly independent of managers or actors, although always "*At Home.*"

A more nervous, irritable, fretful creature, never trod the stage.



Inattention or loud talking by the audience would at any time overthrow his best exertions, and render him not only uncomfortable but really unhappy.

In social intercourse he was a delightful companion, inspiring all around him with his own hilarity; the life and spirit of any party of which he was a member. Those who have been amused by his droll caricatures upon the stage may form a slight idea of his power to add to the pleasure of a convivial party. But even here he would brook no rival: "*aut Cesar, aut nullus,*" appears to have been his motto both on and off the stage. If any one attempted to share with him the task of moving the risible faculties of his guests or companions, Mathews would yield at once the contest and become a silent observer.

In derision, it has been said, he was after all *only* a mimic. Now, in what does acting consist but the *power* of mimicry? The rapid changes of face, of voice, of manner, which Mathews possessed in a pre-eminent degree, are the very claims of a *comic* actor to public favor, without which he can never hope to succeed. Then shame upon such slander, which had its origin in professional pique. Mr. Mathews was one of the best comedians belonging to the British stage—gainsay it; who may.

He made his first appearance on the Philadelphia stage, in the characters of Goldfinch and Morbleau, on the 24th of February, 1823, playing a round of dramatic characters to the delight of crowded houses, before he favored the audience with his "Trip to Paris," "Country Cousins," "Mail Coach Adventure," and his "Youthful Days." His benefit was the most crowded house I ever witnessed in the Chestnut street Theatre.

A misrepresentation on the part of Mr. Wood, to Mr. Price, manager of the Park Theatre, New-York, respecting the character of Tom King, procured me an introduction to the private circle of Mr. Mathews' friends, which rendered me his most intimate acquaintance, during his residence in Philadelphia; Mr. Warren, Mr. Burke and myself, being the only actors present at the delightful dinner parties which took place at Mr. Head's, in Washington Square.

I afterwards partook of his hospitality at his cottage, near London, when he appeared much annoyed and hurt at the manner in which his "Trip to America" had been spoken of on this side of the Atlantic, declaring his resolution to visit the United States again, for the purpose of presenting it to the American public: this he carried into effect; and the ungenerous reception he met, although partially healed by acts of subsequent kindness, sunk

deeply into his heart, and hurried him into the grave, lamented by all his brother actors.

Booth returned to finish his engagement after the departure of Mr. Mathews ; but the result was the same. The reason assigned for not visiting the theatre when he acted before, was—every body was waiting to see Mathews. Now, everybody had spent the money appropriated to amusement, and were tired of the theatre ; Mathews had gone, and the theatre was no longer a place of fashionable resort.

It was not until Booth played Hamlet, for the benefit of the Greek Fund, when he appeared before a large and fashionable audience, that he began to be appreciated, and steadily increased in popularity, until he became the greatest favorite in certain characters belonging to the American stage. He purchased a farm in Maryland, near Baltimore, between which and his profession, he was steadily employed—during the day selling produce in the market, and at night performing the hero of one of Shakspeare's tragedies, at the Holiday street Theatre.

Mr. Wood having quietly disposed of my pretensions, by good-naturedly placing me upon the shelf—a term my theatrical readers will perfectly understand—to be used when, and how, he pleased, I had so much time upon my hands, that for want of better employment, I began to make love, remembering that a celebrated author had said, “ whenever doubts or fears perplex a man, the form of woman strikes upon his troubled spirit, like the rainbow stealing from the clouds, the type of beauty and the sign of hope.” Like Rolando, in the Honey Moon, I resolved to marry ; and on the 10th of April, 1823, I was united to Miss Strembeck, the youngest daughter of the late worthy Sheriff of the city and county of Philadelphia. “ *How dost thou, Benedict, the married Man.*”

Tom and Jerry, or Life in London, was produced in Philadelphia, on the 25th of April ; and to the success of that compound of flash and folly, which turned for a time, the heads of the play-going community, both in England and America, am I indebted for the favor with which I was henceforward received by the public. Corinthian Tom was the first part in which I had an opportunity of displaying my extensive wardrobe, of which I availed myself to the fullest extent. From the complete success which crowned our efforts in this piece, I nightly gained ground ; and ultimately, notwithstanding all obstacles, I reached the object of my wishes, the unqualified approbation of a Philadelphia audience.

The season closed on the 30th of April, with a new play, and Tom and Jerry. What induced the managers to cut short a

piece which was crowding the house nightly, is a mystery, known only to themselves; however, the proprietors of the Circus, in Walnut street, were indebted to them, for Cowell instantly produced it there, and played it without intermission, to the close of his season; so that Warren and Wood created a desire to see Tom and Jerry, for the benefit, not of themselves, but of Messrs. Price and Simpson, who reaped a golden harvest, while we were playing to miserable houses, in the city of Baltimore.

During a season in Philadelphia, commenced on the 2nd of December, 1822, and continued until the last day of April, 1823, my services were called into requisition on twenty-two nights only, and but in sixteen characters—Vapid, on the 11th of December; Rover, in Wild Oats, on the 18th; Doricourt, in the Belle's Stratagem, on the 21st; Col. Freelove, in the Day after the Wedding, on the 23d; Prince of Wales, in Henry the Fourth, on the 28th; Hans Gayvelt, in the Law of Java, on the 1st of January, 1823, and again, on the 6th; Sir Charles Racket, on the 11th; repeated on the 4th of February; Col. Freelove, on the 8th; again, for the third time, on the 15th, with Frederick, in Fire and Water; (*quite an event, two parts on the same night*;) Young Philpot, in the Citizen, on the 19th; again, on the 4th of April; Bustleton, in the Manager in Distress; and Dick, in the King and Miller of Mansfield, for Mr. Warren's benefit, on the 9th; (*married on the 10th*;) Alfred Highflyer, on the 14th; Belmour, in Is he Jealous, on the 19th; Don Carlos, in Lovers' Quarrels, on the 21st; Corinthian Tom, on the 25th, 26th, 28th, and 30th;—sixteen parts only, in six months, for which I received six hundred and two dollars. What would actors give to be paid in that manner now; but *tempora mutantur*, 16 dollars for 602 parts, is more like what they receive at present.

Before bidding adieu to my first season in Philadelphia, Mr. Price made me an offer for New York, which my engagement with Warren and Wood did not permit me to accept.

At what time

#### STEPHEN PRICE

became connected with the stage, I am utterly ignorant; but it was in the year 1823, that the success of Mathews' engagement induced him to form, and carry into execution, the bold idea of *farming*, if I may be allowed the expression, the talent of those actors belonging to the London stage, which he thought might be made available in the United States, thus making Philadelphia,

Boston, and Baltimore pay for the amusement offered to the public in New York; acquiring for himself in England the title of "Star Giver General to the United States," and for the Park theatre, the reputation of being the first in the country; which, until this period had been claimed, and (judging from the talent of the actors engaged at the two establishments,) justly so by the Chestnut Street Theatre of Philadelphia, the critical acumen of whose audience was the severest ordeal the English stars had to encounter.

To Mr. Price's exertions the Americans are indebted for the opportunity of witnessing the performance of Mr. Kean, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Macready,\* Mr. Conway, Mr. Charles Kemble, Mr. Power, Mr. Wood, Mrs. Wood, Miss Fanny Kemble, Miss Clara Fisher, Madame Vestris, and Miss Ellen Tree, with a host of talented artists of minor importance.

He was a *bon vivant*, a glorious companion over a bottle of champagne, an excellent friend, a good manager, in business, a man of honor, although a strict disciplinarian.

After directing for years with profit and success, the destiny of the theatres in the New World, he carried the war into Africa; and boldly seized the helm of Drury Lane for one season, sustaining himself in London against all the odds that could be brought to bear upon him. But the speculation was eventually ruinous to his fortune, but not his credit: the honorable manner in which he paid the demands of his creditors, with a legal discharge in his pocket, ought to have secured him a better reception from his fellow-citizens than he received in New-York, upon his return to his native country.

On the 3rd of May, 1823, I left Philadelphia, accompanied by my wife, for the city of Baltimore, and on the Monday following, (the 5th of May,) opened as Vapid, in the Dramatist, at the Holiday Street Theatre. The season was a bad one; no uncommon occurrence in the city of monuments and churches. Notwithstanding the excitement of Tom and Jerry, which was excellently produced, the managers were unable to pay their salaries; and although the actors agreed to receive two-thirds of their nominal amount as payment in full, the managers were unable to keep the theatre open, and we repaired to the city of Washington, where we remained nearly four months, during which time, I received but six dollars per week; yet I may say I was perfectly happy. In Baltimore and Washington I spent the early days of married life—generally the brightest of man's career—therefore, the annoyance of the theatre was forgotten in the comforts of home.

We returned to Baltimore in September ; and here it was, while smarting under breach of contract in a foreign country, I received a letter from England, containing the intelligence that Mr. Wood had written a most unfavorable account of my reception in America, condoling with me on the event, and strongly urging my immediate return, at any sacrifice.

This led to an angry interview ; and a correspondence, which terminated in a sort of compromise, in which the position I was to hold in the theatre was fully defined. I agreed to play many second rate characters, which, by the nature of my contract, I might have refused, but retained the power to reject any which I might deem derogatory.

Here, let me do justice to Mr. Warren, who throughout this early contention, not only openly expressed his dissent to the course Mr. Wood was pursuing, but by his kindness, endeavored to soothe the wounded feelings of professional pride, by acts of private hospitality ; and to his introduction am I indebted for the acquaintance of many of my best and warmest friends, both in Philadelphia and Baltimore.

The company returned to Philadelphia, after a very unprofitable season in Baltimore, and opened in the former city with the play of Henry the Fourth, Duff sustaining the part of Hotspur, and the Three Singles ; Mrs. Battersby, from the Park Theatre, New-York, was also added to the company. On the first of January, 1824, the *Bride of Abydos* was produced, Mr. Cooper sustaining the part of Selim, and Mrs. Duff, the heroine. On the 7th of January, took place the benefit in aid of the Greek Fund, on which occasion Booth played Hamlet, before a very crowded audience, who, for the first time, appreciated his talents as an actor. He returned to the city on the 16th of February, to fulfil an engagement which proved profitable to himself and the managers ; and from that period he rapidly assumed the position of the best actor belonging to the American stage.

On the 21st of January, Pearman made his first appearance as Count Belino, in the *Devil's Bridge* ; but it was not until he played *Jocoso*, in Howard Payne's drama of *Clari*, that the audience gave him credit for even mediocrity of talent ; consequently the houses were not well filled.

De Camp also made his first bow in Philadelphia in the month of January, as *Monsieur Morbleu*, but the recollection of Mathews was too fresh in the minds of the audience to allow a leaf of the bays, which this part entwined around his brow, to wither, and consequently De Camp was not received with much favor—he

was used by the manager as a support to Pearman, but with indifferent success.

On the 12th of March, a tragedy from the pen of James N. Barker, Esqr., of Philadelphia, was produced, entitled, Superstition. As this may be termed my first really *original* part, I will give the cast of the dramatis personæ: Sir Reginald Egerton, Warren; George Egerton, Wemyss; Ravenworth, Darley; Walford, Wheatly; Charles, Wood; the Unknown, Duff; Judge, Greene; Villagers, Hathwell, Jones, Bignall; Officers, Johnston, Murray, J. Mestayer; Isabella, Mrs. Wood; Mary, Mrs. Duff; Alice, Mrs. Durang; Lucy, Mrs. Greene. This play was well acted and well received. But Mrs. Duff so far *out acted* Mrs. Wood, that the manager was careless about repeating a piece which added to the reputation of the former lady, at the expense of his wife, who, although a great favorite, did not happen to "*hit*" the part of Isabella, while Mrs. Duff made an impression on the audience, which rendered her the heroine of the play. It was repeated a few nights afterwards, and then thrown among the MSS. of the library, to be forgotten. I have been surprised, that no manager ever rescued so good a play from oblivion.

On the 30th of March, I essayed my first benefit, choosing for the performance the melo-drama of Kenilworth, and the farce of A Roland for an Oliver. I lost by this night about thirty dollars; but many a thirty I afterwards received from the same source to balance the account.

On the 24th of April, a star of no common magnitude appeared in the person of

#### MR. CONWAY,

a gentleman possessing every personal requisite for an actor, whose unfortunate stature rendered him a victim to the press: and although the cowardly assassin who was *known* to have stabbed his fame saved his person from the consequences of his baseness by falsehood, disavowing publicly in the green room the authorship of his own writings, yet the high minded gentleman and scholar, whose wounded feelings could obtain no redress, retired in disgust from the pursuit of the profession, to which he did honor, and assumed the humble station of prompter, to avoid—what—tell it not in Gath—publish it not in the streets of Ascalon—the ribaldry of a newspaper whose columns were notorious, for want of decency, and whose circulation was upheld only, by that love for reading scandal against our neighbors, inherent in the

human race, but from which we shrink intuitively, when levelled at ourselves.

Theodore Hook drove Mr. Conway from the stage, by his savage attacks in the *John Bull*. Mr. Price endeavored to restore him to the position he felt he ought to hold; but even in America the poisoned shaft had reached him. Although those who witnessed his performance, appreciated his talent; yet he failed to attract anything like a numerous audience, finally burying himself and his sorrows, under the waves of the Atlantic, by jumping overboard, on his passage from New-York to Charleston, having evidently meditated this suicide, when he put his foot upon the steamboat, which he had resolved should never bear him to the shore. His fate met universal commiseration from those who knew him best, and could appreciate the noble qualities of his nature.

He made his appearance in Philadelphia, as *Hamlet*; played an engagement of six nights by himself, and then in conjunction with Mr. Cooper. The theatre closed on the 19th of May, with his benefit; Cooper playing *Brutus*, in *Julius Cæsar*, and Conway, *Marc Antony*, in the play, and Frank Poppleton, in the farce of *Too late for Dinner*.

During the season of 1823 and 1824, nothing occurred to disturb the harmony of the compromise commenced in Baltimore. I was fortunate enough to obtain Mr. Bromley, in Simpson and Co., as an original part, and a lucky one it proved to me, paving the way for the situation I was shortly destined to hold in the good graces of the audience; and so ended my second season in Philadelphia.

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## CHAPTER X.

Building of the Chatham Theatre, New-York—Sudden close of the Chestnut Street Theatre—Offer from New-York—First Appearance in that City—Enterprise of Barrere—Henry Placide—The Actor a Broker—Watkins Burroughs.

It was during the spring of 1824 that Barrere commenced building the Chatham Garden Theatre, in New-York, the first of a host that followed, prostrating the drama by the rapid increase

of theatres, without audiences to support them; yet I must not be understood as casting censure on the enterprise of Mr. Barrere. What he undertook, he carried through with judgment; collecting a company, worthy of the best days of the drama in the United States, which he placed under the direction of Mr. Kilner, the manager of the Federal Street Theatre, in Boston. Among others, he engaged from the Philadelphia Theatre, Mr. and Mrs. H. Wallack, Mr. and Mrs. Burke, and Mr. John Jefferson, thus breaking into the summer arrangements of our theatre; and by withdrawing much of the talent of the company, compelling the managers to announce their determination of abandoning the season at Baltimore, altogether. Thus I found myself out of employment, without the power of obtaining it, unsanctioned by Messrs. Warren and Wood.

The rules of the theatre would not admit of my acting elsewhere during my engagement, which was for three years, from the 1st of December, 1822; but was likely to be reduced one half, by the continued closing of seasons, without any urgent necessity for such a course.

A diplomatic correspondence, if I may be allowed the use of such a term, commenced on the 8th of July, between Mr. Wood and myself, (to enable me to accept an offer, made by Messrs. Fisher and Jones, to act a few nights at Vauxhall Gardens, for which they offered me ten dollars a night,) the cautious style of which might serve as a model to any prime minister. All I wanted was his permission to act elsewhere, without infringing existing engagements, which, having obtained, I felt once more at my own disposal.

While fulfilling my engagement with Fisher and Jones, I unexpectedly received an offer from Mr. Barrere, to play in the Chatham Theatre, New-York, now in the full tide of success. He offered me the same amount of salary paid to Mr. George Barrett, (whose place he wished me to supply,) and a benefit before I left, by which he insured me to make not less than fifty dollars. This proposition I accepted, and made my first appearance in New-York city on the 20th day of September, 1824, as Marplot, in the "Busy Body." My reception was beyond my most sanguine expectations, and the Theatrical Register thus spoke of it:—"Mrs. Centlivre's comedy of the 'Busy Body,' introduced to a New-York audience Mr. Wemyss, (formerly of the Philadelphia Theatre,) in the character of Marplot. He sustained the part well throughout; and if we may judge from the applause which he received, gave general satisfaction. He appeared to



have realized the author's idea of a good-natured, silly, and officious person, having no business of his own, and anxious to be acquainted with that of every body. Mr. Burke personated the part of Sir Francis Gripe with great effect, and exhibited a true picture of the avaricious and amorous old dupe. He was particularly excellent in the last scene, when he found he had been fooled, and the audience testified their approbation by repeated rounds of applause. The parts of Sir George Airy, by Mr. Wallack, and Miranda, by Mrs. Hughes, were all we could wish."

The result of this performance was an offer from Mr. Barrere of a permanent engagement, which my unlucky contract with the Philadelphia managers prevented the possibility of accepting, much to the annoyance of Barrere, to whom I admitted I was not comfortably situated in the Philadelphia Theatre, and who could not understand why I should prefer, under such circumstances, to return, when he offered me terms more advantageous than I could have ventured to propose. Indeed for some days after my refusal, he would scarcely condescend to return my salute, good-humoredly calling me many hard names, of which fool was one of the mildest. I don't think he ever really forgave me, although he did extort a promise that I would listen to no overtures from my present managers, until I communicated with him. Poor fellow, long before the termination of my engagement, he was in the grave, dying regretted by the whole profession.

The parts I acted in New-York, were Marplot; Mathew Sharpset, in the "Slave;" Vapid, in the "Dramatist;" Rover, in "Wild Oats;" Florian, in the "Foundling of the Forest;" Young Rapid, in the "Cure for the Heartache;" Tom Shuffleton, in "John Bull;" Mr. Belmour, in "Is he Jealous;" Wildlove, in the "Lady and the Devil;" Frederick, in the "Poor Gentleman;" Frank Poppleton, in "Too late for Dinner;" Belcour, in the "West Indian;" Sir H. Cholmley, in "Smiles and Tears;" Corinthian Tom, in "Tom and Jerry."

The regular company consisted of Mr. Wallack, Mr. Kilner, Mr. Keene, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Stevenson, Mr. Simpson, Mr. J. Jefferson, Mr. Moreland, Mr. Burke, Mr. Allen, Mr. Stone, Mr. Anderson, Mr. F. Durang, Mr. C. Durang, Mr. Collins, Mr. Wray, Mr. Walstein, Mr. Spiller, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Saunders, Mr. Byers, Mr. Rufus Blake; Mrs. Waring, Mrs. Burke, Mrs. Walstein, Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. H. Wallack, Mrs. Entwistle, Mrs. Fisher, Mrs. Stevenson, Mrs. Allen.

No theatre could be conducted with more spirit and enterprise than the Chathan Garden, during its first season. Notwithstanding

the strength and talent of the regular company, there was not an actor or actress of talent in the United States, whose services could be procured, who were not engaged to give occasional aid. The plays were excellently acted; and I must acknowledge I left New-York with regret, to return to Baltimore, in obedience to the summons of Mr. Wood.

It may be worth recording, that Miss Kelly made her first appearance at the Park Theatre, New-York, on the same evening that I played for the first time in New-York, at the Chatham. Mr. H. Placide was also introduced to a New-York audience during this season; a gentleman whom I have no hesitation in placing at the head of the American stage. As a native actor, decidedly the best comedian the United States has yet produced. There is a finish about all he undertakes, which reminds a foreigner of Farren, to whom he may be compared.

Barrere was, like all his countrymen, irascible; and not speaking English with fluency, he frequently made most laughable blunders. There is one anecdote which I cannot resist relating. All who knew the man, remember how the publication of the note galled him; nothing but pistols and coffee could be thought of—he had sent a free admission ticket to the editor, or reporter of a New-York newspaper, who had thought proper to criticise, rather severely, some performance which had taken place at the Chatham Theatre, which being shown to Barrere, in the anger of the moment he penned the following delightful "*morceau*," which the irritated man of the quill had the cruelty to publish, "ecce."

(COPY.)

SIR :—I send you free admis to my theatur to prase my acturs, you no prase my acturs you shall not have free admis any more.

To this beautiful specimen of composition and bad spelling he attached his signature; and nothing throughout his career humiliated the feelings of his actors so much, although strictly true, and carried to excess, these donations of tickets to editors for puffs, either written or promised. Yet we do not like the system by which the public are often cajoled into the expression of opinions not their own, to be so unceremoniously exposed, to gratify the spleen either of a manager, or newspaper editor. However, "*the quarrel* was a very pretty quarrel," in which the Manager had decidedly the worst of it. Nothing wounds the feelings so deeply as *ridicule*, whether deserved or not.

During my visit to New-York, I had the good fortune to witness the triumphant entry of LaFayette into the city, on his return from Boston. I can readily enter into the feelings of the American citizens, on beholding once more upon their shores, the man who had fought for their independence side by side with Washington; and every honor paid to LaFayette, as the guest of a nation he had helped to form, reflected credit on the heads and hearts of Americans—it was enthusiastic—men, women, and children joining in the welcome, until the whole United States became one grand field of successive rejoicing and illumination.

In Philadelphia, where the time for preparation was ample, his reception was more gaudy, but not more enthusiastic; and it was my fortune also, to witness his reception in Baltimore. He honored the theatre in the latter city with his presence, on which occasion, the *School for Scandal* was performed; and I felt proud in having thus an opportunity of acting before one of the greatest men of the age in which he lived.

The Baltimore season was commenced and terminated without an occurrence, save only the arrival of LaFayette, to render it worthy of a passing notice.

We commenced the season in Philadelphia, on the 4th day of December, 1824. And now, chance, for the first time, opened the fair field to me, promised in England, and which I expected to have found on my arrival.

Mr. H. Wallack visited Charleston on a starring excursion; Mr. Duff was confined with gout; Mr. Wood laid up with quincy; and Mr. Wemyss, nightly placed before the audience in the most favorable position, rapidly rose in their estimation.

Misfortunes they say never come singly, so with equal truth may it be observed, one lucky adventure is generally followed by another. While I was becoming hourly a favorite in my profession, I received from home between thirteen and fourteen hundred dollars, the proceeds of about three hundred pounds I had left invested in the British funds; but which the uncertain payment of Messrs. Warren and Wood, rendered desirable I should have placed nearer my disposal.

I had formed a friendship with Mr. W. C. Conine, the lottery and exchange broker of Baltimore, who had now visited Philadelphia for the purpose of extending his business, by opening an office in this city. The party with whom he was to have associated himself, not making his appearance according to promise, he requested me to superintend the fitting up of the office, promising to return before the drawing of the Union Canal Lottery. So well pleased

was he with the arrangements I had made on his behalf, that he acceded to a proposition made by me. We commenced business in Third street, trading under the name of W. C. Conine.

Prosperity seemed now to flow in upon me from all quarters. The favorable impression I had made upon Mr. Kilner during my short stay in New-York, induced him to offer me a situation in Boston, at the old Federal Street Theatre, of which he was the manager; Finn, his partner, wishing me to name my own terms and expectations.

Being now really serviceable to Warren and Wood, and established with a rising reputation, in favor with my audience, Mr. Wood urged me to renew our business relations, and bury the recollection of past grievances. A proposition was made, agreeable to all parties, which I accepted, and stated to Mr. Finn my regret that I could not at present accept his offer, having formed a further engagement in Philadelphia.

My original engagement would have expired by limitation, on the 30th of November, 1825. But I was now, in a pecuniary point of view, independent of the managers; my business yielding me a greater income than I received from the treasury of the theatre. The mutual assistance we were enabled, each to render the other, was now the only bond which continued our connection.

The first star of the season was Booth, who played Richard the Third, on the 6th of December, followed by Cooper. Conway also paid us a short visit, playing to miserable houses. On the 8th of February, 1825, "Cherry and Fair Star," with its looking-glass bower, and innumerable reflected representations of dancing cupids, was produced with great success, not only attracting crowded houses, but giving general satisfaction to the audience. On the 2nd of March, in the character of Romeo,

#### MR. WATKINS BURROUGHS

was introduced to the Philadelphia audience. This gentleman was of a *minor* order of stars, who afterwards found their way by dozens into the United States, possessing no talent above mediocrity, and frequently placed in comparison with the stock actors by whom they were surrounded, to a disadvantage.

Until Mr. Burroughs appeared as Young Mirabel, in the "Inconstant," (for the success of which, he was indebted to his excellent imitation of Mr. Charles Kemble;) his engagement was a failure, both as regarded money and reputation. How could it be otherwise? His name being announced with all the lofty pretensions

of a Kean or a Cooper, could he expect to be weighed in such a balance, and preserve the equilibrium of the scale, in a theatre where H. Wallack, Duff, Wood, Jefferson, Warren, &c., &c., were to be found as regular actors, possessing the advantage of the approbation of their audience, against which he had nothing to oppose, but what might be gained from the novelty of his appearance, unaided by extraordinary talent.

Mr. Burroughs was a good melo-dramatic hero, and in the Surrey Theatre, where he acquired his reputation, he was a valuable actor. He belonged exclusively to a minor theatre; out of which sphere he was lost. His *Geraldi Duval*, *Fitzjames*, in the "*Lady of the Lake*," and the "*Protæan Bandit*," were excellent in their way, well calculated to elicit applause and render an actor a favorite with spectators who assemble to witness scenery and costume; being better pleased with tin foil, and Dutch metal, judiciously displayed, than with the finest poetry, well delivered. As a regular actor, Mr. Burroughs would have been a valuable acquisition to any theatre; but as a star, his pretensions were generally annihilated by a first engagement, seldom being able, on a second visit to any city; to muster an audience, numerically respectable, except on the occasion of his benefit. The play of the "*Inconstant*" was performed to the first well-filled house during his engagement, and was the most successful piece of the season. It was repeated several times; but with it expired the ephemeral popularity of Mr. Burroughs, never to be revived. He returned to us during the season; but all curiosity to see him had subsided. Balls, Abbott, Ternan, J. Sloman, Bristow and Charles Mason, I place in the same rank with Burroughs, making allowance for the different shade of talent possessed by each; but none of them deserving to be rated as *stars*—all good actors, nothing more. I shall hereafter devote a chapter exclusively to all those actors, good or bad, who have been announced in large letters on the play bills, as an attraction presented to the public; if, good reader, some names therein inserted provoke not thy laughter, you have no turn for the ludicrous, and I shall dismiss you as incorrigible.

On the 18th of March, the opera of "*Der Freyschutz*" was produced, with the aid of a double orchestra; but it did not improve the receipts of the treasury. Music was decidedly at a discount during the season of 1824 and 1825: it was not fashionable; and in that one word may be summed up the fate of any thing like an opera.

Mr. Pelby played a few nights. I had heard so unfavorable an account of his ability, that I was agreeably surprised on wit-

nessing his performance, which, although not great, was infinitely superior to the account given by Mr. Wood of his pretensions.— He evidently understood what he was talking about, which is more than I can say of half the pretenders of modern days, who would be better employed in learning their English Grammar than murdering poor Shakspeare *by wholesale*.

The Theatre closed on the second of May, with the "Exile," and "Simpson & Co." To me it had been a laborious season; but I had been almost nightly before the audience, in whose estimation I had gained that vantage-ground which I never lost, until I can, with a safe conscience, declare I was esteemed *second* only to Mr. Wood; and *that*, in Philadelphia, is no small praise, although my vanity might whisper, that I considered myself at least his equal, and in many characters his superior.

We visited Baltimore, during this spring, but, as usual, no salaries paid; yet I have been told, before my time, that Baltimore paid the rent of the Philadelphia Theatre. All I can say is, for the sake of the managers, I hope I may be able to record one instance in which the actors shall receive their income from the theatre, during one season. It is decidedly one of the prettiest but worst attended theatres in the United States.

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## CHAPTER XI.

Brilliant Prospects of the New Season—Kean, Miss L. Kelly, and E. Forrest  
—Row Extraordinary—The Acting American Theatre—Neagle, the Artist  
—The Author in Trouble—National Prejudices—Foolish Quarrels.

THE season which commenced in Philadelphia, on the 21st of November, 1825, with the "West Indian," and "Love, Law and Physic," was one, rendered memorable by the second visit of Kean, the first appearance of Miss L. Kelly; and last, although by no means least, the introduction of Mr. E. Forrest, as a *star*, in his native city—three events, of themselves sufficiently important to make an "*epoch*" in the history of the drama.

Cooper was the first star of the season, as usual, attracting good houses, although his Richard the Third was an execrable performance. Strange as it may appear, he was not even perfect in the text, for which he was justly handled by the able critic of the

United States Gazette, who wrote under the signature of "Jacques."

Watkins Burroughs also played an engagement, in the early part of the season, and had an excellent benefit—but, "cetera desunt."

Mr. Kean arrived in New York during the fall of 1825: of his reception no one is ignorant. The insult said to have been offered to the citizens of Boston, during his first visit to the United States, by refusing to act, because the house was not sufficiently filled, was felt and resented by every city in the Union. In New York, after the first and second night, the storm was hushed, and peace restored between the actor and his audience; but in Boston, the only city who could plead justification, and in whom resentment was praiseworthy, he was not permitted to act,—flight alone preserving his personal safety. He had entered into an engagement with Messrs. Warren and Wood, to play in Philadelphia; but after his reception in New York and Boston, Mr. Wood became alarmed, and wrote to Kean that while the present excitement continued, if he came to Philadelphia in fulfilment of his contract, he could not be answerable for the consequences.

The manager having thus expressed his fears, it naturally followed that Mr. Kean should decline a contest so unequal—*a whole nation in arms against a single individual, and that individual a foreigner and an actor!*

In New-York, he published the following Card in the Courier and Enquirer:—

MR. EDITOR:—Sir—With oppressed feelings, heart-rending to my friends, and triumphant to my enemies, I make an appeal to that country famed for hospitality to the stranger, and mercy to the conquered. Allow me to say, sir, whatever are my offences, I disclaim all intention of offering anything in the shape of disrespect towards the inhabitants of New-York. They received me from the first with an enthusiasm, grateful, in those hours, to my pride—in the present, to my memory. I cannot recall to my mind any act or thought that did not prompt me to an unfeigned acknowledgment of their favors as a public, and profound admiration of the private worth of those circles in which I had the honor of moving.

That I have committed an error appears too evident, from the all-decisive voice of the public; but surely it is but justice to the delinquent, whatever may be his enormities, to be allowed to

make reparation where the offences were committed. My misunderstanding took place in Boston—to Boston I shall assuredly go to apologize for my indiscretions. I visit this country now under different feelings and auspices than on a former occasion. Then I was an ambitious man, and the proud representative of Shakspeare's heroes. The spark of ambition is extinct, and I merely ask a shelter in which to close my professional and mortal career. I give the weapon into the hands of my enemies; if they are brave they will not turn it against the defenceless.

(Signed,) EDMUND KEAN.

On the evening of the 9th of January, in answer to a call from the audience, Mr. Wood, after what had passed, had the temerity to inform them that it was his wish, as well as his interest, to gratify the audience; but he had no power to drag Mr. Kean before them. If he declined fulfilling his engagement, Mr. Wood had no power to compel his appearance.

Knowing what had taken place, I could not suffer a friend, to whom I was indebted for many acts of kindness, to labor under a charge which was adding fuel to fire. I stated to several gentlemen, who felt an interest in his cause, that Kean would willingly visit the city, if assured of personal safety; that Mr. Wood had written to him that his life might be endangered by the fulfilment of an engagement he had openly this night accused him of violating.

The result is known. Mr. Mortimer was despatched to New York to inquire into the truth of all the statements; the theatre was closed for two nights; and on Wednesday, the 18th of January, Kean appeared in "Richard the Third." The row which followed was a serious affair—the outrages perpetrated disgraceful to a civilized community. Rotten eggs, children's bullet buttons, and other small missiles, were thrown upon the stage in countless numbers: long before the opening of the doors the approaches to the theatre were blocked up by a dense mass of human beings, eager to obtain admission. The appearance of Kean was the signal of assault. In vain he attempted to make himself heard amid the din and uproar. In pantomime, he proceeded; leaving the stage, to be greeted in a similar manner upon his re-appearance. His was a situation in which his worst enemy might have pitied him. At length, wearied by their own exertions, the noise partially ceased, and afforded him an opportunity of addressing a few words to the audience:—"Friends of the drama, this is your quarrel—not mine." From that moment he



was suffered to proceed with less interruption—the curtain falling amid hisses and applause so nearly equal, as to render it doubtful which party had obtained a triumph. Many there were, who, having shown their disapprobation of his conduct, by saluting him with a sharp hiss on his first appearance, became warm advocates for his engagement to progress without further insult. A vast crowd assembled around the stage door in Carpenter street, to witness his departure from the theatre. As he entered the carriage, a gentleman on the steps proposed three cheers for Kean, which were given with hearty good will, and in those cheers, his pardon, so far as Philadelphia was concerned, was pronounced. He had erred—he had been punished—and the attempt to renew the scene when he appeared as Othello, was suppressed promptly; the offenders being so small a minority, were ejected from the theatre, and his engagement brought to a prosperous conclusion on the 2nd of February, 1826, during which he played Richard the Third, Othello, King Lear, Sir Giles Overreach, Sir E. Mortimer, Reuben Glenroy, Macbeth, Brutus, and Hamlet. The theatre, on the night of his benefit, when he repeated Richard the Third, was crowded from the pit to the gallery. When the curtain fell he was loudly called for, and addressed the audience nearly in the following words:—"Ladies and gentlemen—my life has been a chequered one—at one time reaching the pinnacle of ambition—at another sunk in the lowest ebb of misfortune. I appeared before you at the commencement of my present engagement, sick and dejected by the gloom which the malignity of enemies had thrown around me, anxious and willing to resign the contest; but the kindness of a Philadelphia audience has dispelled these visions of despair, and I hope I shall have the honor, early next season, of appearing before this kind auditory." He retired amid the cheering of the audience, which lasted several seconds after he left the stage, Mr. Wood appearing and promising he would perform Hamlet on the following evening, the only night he had at his disposal.

What a compound of generosity, talent and folly, was Edmund Kean; he never forgot an act of kindness, and was sure to repay it tenfold: but the following anecdote will prove that he was also tenacious and unforgiving of wrong.

When, in the height of popularity, while performing at Portsmouth, England, he was requested by the manager, and two or three of his friends, to accompany them after rehearsal to the Inn, and take a glass of Madeira, the landlord being apprised that Mr. Kean was of the party, ushered them into an elegant room,

thanked the *actor* for the honor that he did him, and overwhelmed him with civilities. Kean, fixing his eyes upon the landlord, and looking as only *he* could look, said: "Mr. ———, I came into your house at the request of these gentlemen, to partake of some refreshment, not to be pestered with your civilities, which, to me, are so many insults. Look at me, sir—well—do you recollect me? I see you *do* not—but you *know* that I am Mr. Kean—Edmund Kean, sir—that same man that I was fifteen years ago, when you kept a small inn, and I was a member of a strolling company of players, who acted at your fair. I remember well that I went one day into the bar of your house, and called for half a pint of porter, which, after I had waited your pleasure patiently, was given to me by you with one hand, while the other was extended to receive the money. Never can I forget your insolent demeanor, or the acuteness of my mortified feelings. Look at me again, sir. What alteration beyond that of dress do you discover in me? Am I a better man than I was then? What is there in me now, that you should overwhelm me with your compliments? Keep your wine, sir—it would choke me. Come, gentlemen, let us leave his house;" and the actor walked away from the mortified and abashed landlord. This was related to me by an eye-witness, and was, I believe, published in the London Theatrical Observer, some years ago.

In consequence of the active part I had taken in bringing the engagement of Mr. Kean before the public, Mr. Wood looked upon me with no very favorable eye; all the old prejudices between us were revived, and he was not long in finding, as he supposed, an opportunity to make me feel his power. To this cause I attribute the fracas which took place some time afterwards, in the play of "Columbus," of which I shall have occasion to speak more at large in its proper place.

In the month of January of the present year, (1826,) in conjunction with Mr. Lopez, the prompter of the theatre, I commenced the publication of a work entitled "The Acting American Theatre," embellished with portraits of the actors belonging to the American stage, intended as a companion to "Oxberry's English Drama." This work, although a losing concern to me, deserves a kind remembrance, for having placed conspicuously before the public a most deserving young artist, who now stands acknowledged as one of the first portrait painters in the United States; I allude to Mr. Neagle, whose picture of Patrick Lyon has procured him a well-merited reputation. He painted for me for this work the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Francis, Mr. and Mrs. Duff, Mr.

Wood, Mr. Warren, Mr. Hilson, Mrs. Hilson, Mr. Cowel, Mr. and Mrs. Barnes, Mr. E. Forrest, Mr. Macready, Mr. Wemyss, Mr. Booth, Mr. Kean, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Foote, Mr. Lee, Miss Kelly, Mrs. Waring, Mrs. Burke, Mr. Thayer, Mr. Roberts, and Mr. Macready.

Mr. Durand, of New York, and Mr. Longacre, of Philadelphia, then considered the best artists in the United States, were engaged to engrave these portraits; but after issuing sixteen numbers, I found my subscription list daily languishing. The work was unfortunate from the commencement; Mr. Poole, the publisher, failed, involving the accounts in a maze of difficulty. I found it impossible to extricate them. Murden, the theatrical publisher of New York, the agent for the work, also failed, making no return of sales. The only parties to whom I was indebted for attention, and prompt remittances, are my old friend Boole, of Baltimore, and Mr. Bourne, of New York. The unsold numbers were purchased by Mrs. Neale, next door to the Chestnut Street Theatre, where some of them may yet be purchased, and I discontinued the publication, Mr. Thomas Desilver purchasing the plates. The plays published were "Wild Oats," "Much Ado About Nothing," "Marmion," "The Old Maid," "Honey Moon," "Superstition," "Turnpike Gate," "Simpson & Co.," "A Woman never Vexed," "Every one has his Fault," "School for Scandal," "School of Reform," "Sweethearts and Wives," "Isabella," "Pizarro," "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," forming four handsome volumes. It was in this work, also, that Mr. Louis A. Godey, so well known to the ladies of the United States as the proprietor of the *Lady's Book*, first appeared in the character of a publisher.

Tuesday, the 3d of February, 1826, introduced to Philadelphia one of the greatest favorites who had trod their boards for years, in the person of

#### MISS LYDIA KELLY.

Perhaps I am scarcely justified in recording Miss Kelly's name as a *star* of foreign growth—her popularity being purely American. Mr. Stephen Price engaged her in London, in consequence of Miss Jones having refused to cross the Atlantic; the popularity of her sister, Miss Fanny Kelly, the melo-dramatic heroine of the British stage, lending a charm to her name, of which the American manager judiciously availed himself.

No opportunity ever offered more favorable to the views of a

young and fashionable girl to take the town by storm. The Philadelphia audience were tired of the faces of the ladies belonging to the theatre: although Miss Kelly's features were too masculine to be considered handsome, yet the dashing figure and lively spirit of her acting at once carried the feelings of her audience captive. She made her curtsy in the character of Letitia Hardy, in the "Belle's Stratagem," with triumphant success. Engagement following engagement in rapid succession; she must have remained at least two months during her first visit, leaving the theatre with a reputation established as a leading star in the theatrical hemisphere.

Everything seemed to operate in her favor. The ladies having been prevented from visiting the theatre during Kean's engagement, on his departure, appeared to claim exclusive right to occupy the dress-boxes. So strongly did they turn out in Miss Kelly's favor, that a gentleman might consider himself highly favored if he could obtain a seat. She was the reigning goddess of comedy: and the excellent manner in which they were acted was a constant theme of praise—their continued attraction, a proof of the gratification received by the audience. We had Wood, Warren, Jefferson, Duff, Wemyss, Francis, Burke, and occasionally Cooper and Burroughs; while in the female department, no theatre in America could approach us in talent, Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Duff, Mrs. Darley, Mrs. Burke, Mrs. Anderson, and Mrs. Francis, all ranging throughout the dramatis personæ.

Philadelphia has contributed largely to that fortune which Miss Kelly boasts she has acquired, without receiving from a manager a single dollar until all his expenses were fully paid, sharing the profits only, and entailing no extra expenses upon the management—an example all stars ought to follow.

Although thus generous, she was rigid in exacting her rights. On one occasion, during the management of Lamb and Coyle, she refused to proceed with the fifth act of "Know your Own Mind," until the money due her was forthcoming. It was ridiculous enough to see Lady Bell, sitting on the stage, receiving in her lap the roleaus of silver, handing them to her Irish waiting-woman to count, who bore them off in triumph before the eyes of the poor actors, who knew too well the consequence of this drain upon the treasury. *No salaries for them.*

She was a termagant, but an agreeable one: quarrelling with you to-day, and to-morrow willing to make any reasonable concession to reinstate herself in your good opinion, it was impossible to be

angry with her for any length of time. She had a difficult task to "*manage managers*," but she was fully equal to it.

As an actress she will be remembered with pleasure, as one whose popularity remained undiminished to the last hour of her appearance; retiring from the stage with her fame in its meridian, she played Letitia Hardy, Beatrice, Lady Teazle, Rosalind, Miss Harcastle, Mrs. Oakley, Lady Bell, Violante, Juliana, Juliet, Emily Tempest, Lydia Languish, Portia, Miss Dorrillon—and had likewise considerable pretensions as a vocalist. She left us on the 25th of March, playing a longer consecutive engagement than any star within my recollection.

I now approach a period of my theatrical career which had almost terminated it abruptly. The play of "Columbus" having been revived, I was cast the part of Harry Herbert, an English adventurer. During the first rehearsal I had carelessly neglected to bring my written part of the character to the theatre, and was reading the following passage from the prompt-book:—

"Will you, great sir, condescend to indulge the last wish of vanity, and when you have nothing else to do, write to England the story of my fate, that when my fortunes shall be inquired after, my friends, with joy sparkling through a tear, may say, 'Herbert stuck to his commander to the last, and died as every Englishman should.'"

Mr. Wood interrupted me by exclaiming, "You must *not* say *that*, sir: say 'brave man,' *not* 'Englishman.'" Not perceiving any reason for such an alteration of the language of the author, I merely asked the necessity for such a change—the answer was, "The necessity is *my will and pleasure*." This led to "*a scene*," not very creditable to either party. If I failed in the respect due to my manager, he certainly did not adopt the course best suited to convince me of the impropriety of openly violating the established rules of the theatre. Threats were exchanged, which rendered it impossible for me, without loss of self-respect, to withdraw from the position in which I found myself most unexpectedly placed.

I was officially informed by the prompter that if I persisted in speaking the sentence, as printed, the manager had instructed him to forfeit me my week's salary. And here the matter should have rested, until the overt act, which rendered me liable to the penalty, had been committed; but a second communication produced a result in which the feelings of both parties were totally disregarded; nor will I insult my readers by transcribing the gross language which took place between us.

On the afternoon of the 17th of April, a friend called at my lottery office, in Chestnut street, to inquire whether there was any truth in the report that Mr. Wood and myself had had a serious quarrel. When answered in the affirmative, he told me there was a party formed to hiss me, during the performance, which was to take place in the evening. I was inclined to laugh at this, deeming it improbable that any audience would trouble themselves about the disputes of managers and actors, where their own amusement was not interrupted; but I found that he was correct, and that I must be prepared to meet the result. As the play progressed, the actors began to think I should yield the point; however, at the proper time I delivered the obnoxious speech, exactly as I found it in the prompt-book. Two or three slight hisses followed, and I was congratulating myself that this tempest in a tea-pot had subsided. In this I was deceived; when I next appeared I was saluted by such a general hiss as is seldom heard within the walls of a theatre.

I immediately dropped my assumed character, and addressed the audience:—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—These are sounds I am so unaccustomed to hear directed towards me within these walls, that it would be folly to pretend ignorance of their cause. I am to attribute them to a misunderstanding between Mr. Wood and myself, relative to the word “Englishman,” which I uttered when I last left the stage. Allow me to ask you whether the name of England is a disgrace. [No, Wemyss, no.] I am an Englishman, and now appeal to *you* as *Americans*—what would you think of an American, who, on the other side of the Atlantic, should have occasion to pay a compliment to his country, in these words, “Die as an American citizen ought,” who should be told “It is my will and pleasure that you insert ‘Englishman,’ or I will snip your ears off;” what would you think of him who, under such a threat, would be dastard enough to submit? [Bravo, Wemyss—well said—bravo!]

Mr. Wood now made his appearance. In his address to the audience he stated that his predecessor, Mr. Wignell, had erased the words, which *he*, with a pen, *scratched from the prompt-book, after our altercation had taken place*, and with his own hand wrote the word *brave* over the printed word *English*. Nor was this the only mis-statement which caused me to form the sudden resolution of placing the whole facts as they occurred, before the audience.

When he had finished, the audience called loudly for the continuation of the play, when I requested their indulgence for one minute, commencing :—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Allow me *one* word. There is not a syllable of truth in what Mr. Wood has uttered. (Hisses.) He has boasted he can turn the Philadelphia audience around his finger at any moment. I acknowledge he possesses a fluency of language which I do not, but situated as I now am, it becomes necessary that the whole truth should be known. He said he had *cowed* every Englishman he ever had to deal with, and he would *cow* me too. He threatened, if I dared to utter that speech, he would forfeit me. Under excitement I *did* say, if he did, I would thrash him, and so I will.

Here I was interrupted with a shower of hisses, cries of “go on with the play,” &c., &c. My first appeal was received enthusiastically ; and had I stopped there, my triumph would have been complete and unalloyed ; but, in losing my temper as I listened to gross misrepresentation, I perilled my cause. My final triumph was more owing to the words of my author, than to my adroitness in managing my case.

In returning to my assumed character of Harry Herbert, my first speech ran thus :—“I have not had a bit of fighting for a long time, and damme, if this has *not* given me a relish for it.”

Those only who were present can form an idea of the electrical effect produced upon the audience, the theatre fairly shook with applause and laughter. This turned the tide once again in my favor. When Mr. Wood appeared shortly afterwards as Columbus, the hisses were both sharper and louder than those directed against me, in the commencement of this disgraceful and humiliating scene, and so continued to the close of the performance.

On the following day, the “*row*” at the theatre formed the general topic of conversation. Opinion being divided as to the justice of the decision of the audience, and a general belief that the contest between the manager and the actor would be resumed, became prevalent, my friends demanded from me a pledge that I would remain quiet and leave my cause as it stood, entirely in their hands. To this I could scarcely object, and I entered the theatre on the evening of the 18th, expecting, I hardly knew what, but determined to meet it boldly.

When I appeared as Captain Bolding, in the *Rendezvous*, there was a slight attempt to hiss, promptly silenced. As I raised my

eyes, I saw two gentlemen, busily engaged with foot and hand, each ejecting from the pit an offender, the audience apparently enjoying the scene. The enemy being routed, my friends prudently desisted from showing any marks of disapprobation towards Mr. Wood; and so far as the public were concerned, the matter was set at rest forever.

This was the *Roland* dealt to me by Mr. Wood, for the *Oliver* administered to him by me in the affairs of Kean. However, he missed his calculation, as the event proved, but he made the attempt boldly.

In consequence of this fracas, for four years we acted together, in the same theatre, without exchanging words, off the stage; but like all other foolish quarrels, time has nearly obliterated its recollection, and Mr. Wood and Mr. Wemyss are upon the same terms as when they first met.

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## CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Thomas S. Hamblin—Play of the Hypocrite—Mr. Francis' Farewell of the Stage—Oh, Shame! where is thy Blush—First Appearance of Mr. E. Forrest as a Star—Portrait of the American Tragedian as Rolla—Account of his First Appearance in London.

ON the 18th of April, *Macbeth* was performed for the purpose of introducing to the Philadelphia stage

MR. THOMAS S. HAMBLIN.

No name belonging to the American stage is now better known; but it is not, as an actor, I would attempt to place him at the head of the profession; although he has occasionally drawn money as a star, he was not a successful one. His handsome face and person, being more than balanced by the husky, disagreeable tones of his voice, which always gave the appearance of hard labor to everything he undertook, yet his tact in forming engagements, procured him higher terms than his talent as an actor should have commanded, leaving the managers to lament their folly and the loss of their dollars, firmly resolved to make no fur-



ther engagements with him : but he was a man not thus to be denied. Finding obstacles to the accomplishment of his wishes singly, he united his fortunes with Booth, Cooper, Wallack, or any other actor of celebrity, whose popularity was sure to attract an audience, thus preserving himself in the high position from which he was in danger of falling, and acquiring credit for filling the houses.

But as a manager, a man who seized the reins of the Bowery Theatre, under the most desperate circumstances, when all around him was ruin and despair, when the fortune of the drama appeared prostrate, without the possibility of resuscitation, successfully combating adversity, triumphing over it, boldly throwing down the gauntlet to the Park Theatre against fearful odds, coming out victoriously from the contest, accumulating a handsome fortune, the bulk of which was wrested from his grasp in one night by the destruction of his property by fire ; retrieving lost ground by energy and perseverance, raising the Bowery Theatre a second time from its ashes—these are deeds which place him as the equal of James H. Caldwell, of New-Orleans. Like him, subject to the same vicissitudes of fortune, struggling undismayed against reverses which would forever have prostrated common men, and rendering his name a finger-post, as an example of what industry could accomplish.

The American stage is more indebted to Mr. Hamblin for discovering and fostering native dramatic talent, than to all his contemporaries. His domestic troubles have occupied too large a space in the public eye, obtaining for him the unenviable title of a libertine ; whether justly so or not, it is not my business to enquire. I first saw him act in London, in Mr. Buck's tragedy of "The Italians," when he and Mr. Rae alone succeeded in obtaining a hearing, being permitted to proceed without interruption on that eventful night which consigned the play to oblivion.

He played Macbeth, Rolla, Virginus, and William Tell ; but he was never a favorite actor. In Philadelphia, Mrs. Hamblin also played a short engagement.

On the 5th of May, I produced the play of the Hypocrite for my benefit ; being compelled, by the illness of Mr. Duff, to whom the part was originally cast, to sustain the character of Dr. Cantwell, rather out of the line of a light comedian. However, the play was so successful, that it was repeated for four nights, presenting the unusual spectacle of actors, changing the long announced pieces, and substituting the Hypocrite for their benefit, much to my annoyance, although I could not, without ill nature,

refuse to act the part. Every actor is privileged to make a fool of himself on the night of his benefit; but it was rather hard to make me continue my folly several nights in succession to humor the caprice of others. Jefferson's Mawworm was a delightful piece of acting; with his usual judgment, keeping the audience in a roar, apparently unconscious that they were laughing at him, and nightly encored in his extemporaneous sermon, the risible muscles of the actors sometimes preventing their utterance of the few speeches which finish the play, after Mawworm leaves the stage; the curtain descending amid the joint laughter of actors and audience.

On the 18th of May, Mr. Francis, the oldest actor in the United States, and one to whom the Philadelphians were indebted for many a hearty laugh, announced his farewell benefit, previous to his retirement from the duties of an arduous profession. I almost blush to write, that it was one of the worst houses, not only of the season, but which had ever been seen in the present theatre. I cannot better express my indignation than to quote from the correspondent of the United States Gazette. "Mr. Francis' unsuccessful appeal is a stigma on our city; but thus it ever is—the favor of the public is lavished on *stars*, while the deserving but less aspiring performer is neglected and disregarded. Although flattered and applauded, he is suffered to sink into want and penury. This evening may afford the useful lesson to performers particularly, that public favor is no surety.

—He that depends upon 't  
Swims with fires of lead,  
And hews down oaks with rushes.

The current of popularity is as changeable as the winds which blow from all points of the heavens, and he acts most wisely who makes the best of it when it sets in his favor. The public are neither just or generous in the distribution of its patronage."

The performance selected for the occasion was the comedy of "She stoops to Conquer," and a new farce which had been written for me, entitled "Exit in a Hurry." Poor Francis did not survive this mortification many months.

The 16th of May, 1826, is a night not easily to be forgotten by those who take an interest in theatrical matters. It was on the occasion of Mr. Porter's benefit, on this evening that Mr. E. Forrest returned to his native city, which he had left as a boy to seek for fame in the far West. His acting as Jaffier, in Otway's tragedy of Venice Preserved, was warmly, nay enthusiastically applauded,

and as the curtain fell, an engagement called for, which was announced for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The theatre, however, was closed on Thursday, but Mr. Forrest acted Rolla, on Friday the 19th of May, and repeated it again on Saturday, when the theatre closed for the season.

When I first met

MR. EDWIN FORREST,

behind the scenes of the Chestnut Street Theatre, in the month of May, 1826. He was a modest, unassuming young man, who scarcely mustered courage sufficient to enter the green-room, where were assembled many of the best actors the American stage could boast. Mr. Charles Porter introduced me to him, and expressed a wish that I should see him act the part of Jaffier. I took my seat in the boxes, determined to be pleased; and I was so. I expressed myself warmly in his praise to Mr. Frederick Huber, who took much interest in his welfare. He said, "Frank, if you really think what you say, do me the favor to publish his likeness in the next number of the 'Acting American Theatre;' it will serve a very worthy young man, and do you no harm." "Very well, you get his assent to sit for the picture; I will instruct Mr. Neagle when he visits New York to paint it." I addressed a letter to Mr. Forrest on the subject; the result was the publication of the first engraved portrait of the American tragedian, as Rolla, in "Pizarro." Thus commenced an intimacy which has continued ever since.

Whenever chance and talent unite to place one member of a profession above all competitors, it is not surprising that weak mortals should have their brains turned by unlooked-for and unhoped success. When moving himself in a very humble position as an actor, he was loud in his denunciation of Mr. Cooper, for the "*brusque*" manner which he thought proper to adopt towards the members of the profession less fortunately placed than himself. Such conduct is any thing but becoming, and deserves not only the censure of the profession, but the public; yet Mr. Forrest has carried this rudeness to much greater extent than ever Cooper did in his haughtiest day of theatrical power. He possesses many excellent traits of character, and none more than his affectionate care and forethought for his mother and sister, to whom he devoted the first fruits of his rising popularity. He can also at times be generous to his less fortunate brethren of the sock and buskin. But there is one blot on his escutcheon which

never can be erased : he suffered Mrs. Gilfert, the widow of the man to whom he owed both fame and fortune, to be buried by a subscription raised by the actors of the Philadelphia theatres, although he was aware of her distressed situation before her death.

Mr. Forrest owed his rapid rise in public favor as an actor, in the first place, to his birth as an American ; secondly, to nature, for the endowment of great personal advantages ; and thirdly, to that chance, without which the two former would have been useless. On opening the Bowery Theatre, in the city of New York, in 1826, Mr. Gilfert, the manager, (and as shrewd and capable a one as ever directed a theatre,) knew it was necessary to find some one whom he could place in a prominent situation, to arouse the curiosity of the public, and direct their attention to his new building. He found the material in young Forrest, and left the press and his own ingenuity to work out the result. His appearance at the Park Theatre, in *Othello*, for Woodhull's benefit, gave the *cue*, and Mr. Forrest was forthwith announced as a star of the first magnitude, and so upheld at all sacrifices, until he really became what in the first instance he had no pretensions to be considered. However, Shakspeare says, "some men are born to greatness, others achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." Of this latter class was decidedly our young tragedian ; but endowed with strong common sense, he watched his opportunities, and availing himself of every chance, he finally in his native city of Philadelphia obtained from Rufus R. Blake the enormous sum of two hundred dollars per night, to which he has since adhered, or only departed from for the still more ruinous terms to the managers of one-half of the gross receipts of each night's performance.

Keeping steadily in view the fortune he was determined to acquire, he offered a premium of five hundred dollars for the best play in five acts, written by an American author, of which he was to be the hero. The prize was borne off by Augustus Stone, who produced the play of "*Metamora*," in which Mr. E. Forrest has drawn more money than in all his subsequent efforts. His representation of the Indian Chief is a finished piece of acting, which may be equalled, but never will be excelled. His *Spartacus*, in Dr. Bird's tragedy of the "*Gladiator*," is also a part which, being his own by copyright, there will never be an opportunity of drawing comparisons ; and if there were, they certainly would not be to his disadvantage ; but as this was the character in which he staked his reputation before a London audience, I subjoin the

account of his first appearance, taken from the London Times of the 18th of October, 1836.

“DRURY LANE THEATRE.—Mr. Edwin Forrest, who has established a high reputation in America, his native country, as a tragedian, appeared for the first time before an English audience at this theatre, last night. The character selected for his *debut* was that of Spartacus, in a tragedy of that title, written by Dr. Bird, also an American. Mr. Forrest was received with a hearty warmth, which, from the first moment of his appearance, left no doubt, if any could have been entertained, that the audience were well disposed to accept his exertions for their entertainment. He is a tall, rather robust man, of some thirty years of age, not remarkably handsome, but with expressive features, and that cast of countenance which is well suited for theatrical effect. His voice is remarkably powerful, his figure rather vigorous than elegant, and his general appearance prepossessing. The subject of the tragedy is one admirably adapted for scenic representation, and has already been essayed in the French and German theatres. Dr. Bird appears not to have borrowed from any of his predecessors, but to have preserved in the main features of the drama the historical facts relating to his hero. In concentrating the interest and the action of the play in the character of Spartacus, he has bestowed very slight pains in the delineations of the other characters. The consequence of this is, that all the scenes in which the hero is not in action, are languid, and all the other personages in the play are very faintly sketched. With such materials as history furnished him, he might easily have done more and better. The wife of Spartacus is said to have accompanied him in his exploits, and by her supposed skill in divination, to have prompted and encouraged some of his most daring enterprises. This hint might have sufficed to make Senona a more important personage than Dr. Bird’s fancy has created. Our business, however, is with the play as we find it, not as it might have been. [Here follows a description of the plot of the play.]

“The latter part of the play is less vigorous than the former; but there are some scenes of stirring interest in which Mr. Forrest made a powerful impression on the audience. The poetry of the drama is rather powerful than polished; and although it contains some passages of considerable beauty, it is more generally characterized by a rough passionate strain, in which gracefulness is sacrificed to force. One speech, in which Spartacus describes the beauty of his Thracian vallies before the invasion of the

Romans, and contrasts it with the devastation which had followed their footsteps, struck us as being particularly happy. At the conclusion of the play Mr. Forrest was called for, and began to address the audience, a practice not usual nor safe, at least on this side of the Atlantic. He thanked them for the reception they had bestowed on him, and expressed his satisfaction at finding in that reception a proof of their good will towards America. Now, although their praises were warm and hearty, they were given to him personally, and simply because they thought he deserved them, and would have been just as freely bestowed if he had come from Kamtschatka as from New York. There are no national prejudices between an audience and an actor, nor any elsewhere in this country, which could make it for a moment questionable that a deserving artist would be well received, from whatever quarter of the globe he arrived. When, however, Mr. Forrest, encouraged by the applause, began to thank them for the favors they had shown to the tragedy, he provoked some dissent, the audience not seeming to think as highly of the poet as of the player—so Mr. Forrest made his bow and retired.

“We shall be glad to see him in some other character, and if he acquits himself hereafter as well as he did on this occasion, he will have no reason to be dissatisfied with his voyage, and the theatre will have engaged an able performer, who, to very considerable skill in his profession, adds the attraction of a somewhat novel and a much more spirited style of playing than any other tragic actor now on our stage.”

I will now give the cast of the play on its first representation on the London stage.

Marcus Lucinius Crassus, *Warde* ; Gellius, *F. Cooke* ; Lentulus, *Hooper* ; Jovius, *Bartley* ; Bracchius, *Matthews* ; Florus, *Brindal* ; Spartacus, *E. Forrest* ; Phasarius, *Cooper* ; Enomais, *Baker* ; Crixus, *Duruset* ; Mummius, *Mears* ; Scrophia, *Honner* ; Boy, *Miss Marshall* ; Centurion, *T. Matthews* ; Julia, *Mrs. Hooper* ; (her first appearance ; ) Senopa, *Miss Huddart* ; (first appearance in five years.)

Also the original cast in New York :—

Marcus Lucinius Crassus, *Richings* ; Lucius Gellius, *Povey* ; Scrophia, *Wheatley* ; Jovius, *Woodhull* ; Mummius, *Hayden* ; Bracchius, *Lentulus*, *Blakeley* ; Florus, son to Lentulus, *Field* ; Bracchius, *Thorne* ; Spartacus, *E. Forrest* ; Phasarius, *Barry* ; Enomais, *Nixsen* ; Crixus, *Reed* ; Centurion, *King* ; Slave, *Bisset* ; Boy of Spartacus, *Miss E. Turnbull* ; Julia, *Mrs. Wallack* ; Senona,

*Mrs. Sharpe. Gladiators, 20; Roman Guards, 16; Lictors, 6; Patricians, 6; Ladies, 8; 6 Female Slaves; 2 Children.*

A fac-simile of the manager's announcement, in the under-line of the London play-bills:—

Mr. Edwin Forrest,  
The eminent American Tragedian,  
Whose first appearance last evening on the British stage, (before one  
of the most crowded audiences ever assembled in this theatre,)  
elicited those enthusiastic testimonials of success, which  
have stamped him  
one of the Greatest Actors  
that ever graced an English Theatre, *will*, in consequence of the  
unbounded applause with which he was received in the  
New Tragedy of  
The Gladiator!  
have the honor of repeating the character of *Spartacus* three times  
every week, until further notice.

Mr. Bunn was determined to make the most of his bargain, and doubtless reaped a rich harvest from the exertions of the American tragedian.

Mr. Forrest's Shakspearian characters, with the exception of Othello, where his terrific energy in the third and fourth acts holds his audience in breathless amazement, are not above mediocrity; his Richard the Third, and his Macbeth, do not even deserve that name; but in those characters which have been written for him, in which his physical requisites have been brought into play in the most favorable manner, he maintains a reputation which will be cherished so long as the American drama, of which he may be called the founder, shall exist.

There is no name I shall have occasion to refer to more frequently than Mr. Forrest's, as I progress, or of whom I shall have more to write.

The Philadelphia Theatre having closed for the season, the company proceeded to Baltimore, where we opened with the play of the "Stranger;" but our season was brought to an abrupt termination by the "Kean row." From the opening, there was a feverish anxiety to know when Kean's engagement would commence, or whether he intended to visit Baltimore. No sooner did the announcement of his name appear, than it became evident his reception would not be a friendly one, although he hoped, and his friends were sanguine the result would be the same as in New-

York and Philadelphia—an expression of public feeling which would subside. He had requested me to play "*Richmond*," knowing that so long as it was possible to hold our ground, I should never desert him, although the prospect of being hooted and pelted, was by no means a pleasant one. When he appeared as Richard the Third, the hubbub as usual commenced, but had apparently subsided during the third act, when everything was so restored to quiet, that I left the theatre to obtain some portion of my dress from the Shakspeare, where I boarded. I was surprised on my return to find the storm raging more furiously than ever. This was owing to the injudicious conduct of Kean's friends, who ruined his cause. During the early part of the evening, they had displayed two placards in front of each stage box, the one bearing the motto, "*Let the friends of Kean be silent*;" the other, "*Kean for ever!*" Had they adhered to their maxim of silence, their triumph would have been complete, but although their tongues were silent, their hands were too active; on the slightest opposition, they seized the aggressor and ejected him from the theatre. Those treated in this unceremonious manner, for exercising what they conceived to be their right, formed a group before the doors of the theatre, recapitulating their wrongs to the already excited populace, waiting only for a leader to commence mischief; a brickbat thrown at the windows of the saloon, was followed by a rush towards the door. The theatre was saved from destruction by the spirited conduct of Mr. Montgomery, the mayor of the city, who interposed his person, assuring the mob, that none could enter that building for the purpose of mischief, except over his body; a pause took place, and that pause, in all probability saved the life of Kean—who was enabled to make his escape from the theatre; every carriage was searched, and it was not until assured that the object of their vengeance was beyond their reach, that the crowd dispersed, some remaining on the ground until daylight.

And where was the manager during all this riot and confusion? Mr. Wood, fearful of some serious mishap, left the city in the steamboat at five o'clock, on a plea of business; thus depriving Kean of the aid of that tongue, which for a long series of years, had guided the taste and quelled the unruly spirits of the theatre. Policy might have dictated his retreat, but justice to those under his control, should have held him fast at his post, in the hour of danger. He is a bad pilot who deserts the helm when his vessel is in the neighborhood of breakers.



Thus ended Kean's performance at the Holiday Street Theatre, in June, 1826. On the following morning, Col. Benjamin Edes, a respectable and respected citizen of Baltimore, called upon me, and said, "Wemyss, if you are a friend of Kean's, get him out of the city; if he attempts to play to-night, we shall *tar and feather him*; and he may think himself lucky if he escapes with no further injury." Assured it was useless to endanger his safety, I proceeded directly to his hotel, told him he had no time to lose, but must prepare to leave the city without an instant's delay; that the excitement against him was increasing every moment, and that violence would attend any attempt to appear again upon the stage. He said, "My God! what shall I do? I have not a cent with me; this is so totally unexpected, *where* is it to end?" I enquired what sum would be sufficient for his immediate necessity, he replied, about two hundred dollars; this I procured from my friend Conine, and succeeded in getting him safely out of the city. While many were enjoying, in anticipation, the scene they expected, Kean was safely on board the steamboat, on his way to Philadelphia. I accompanied him, leaving my wife and children in the charge of Mr. Jefferson. The theatre in Baltimore was closed for the season, and the company returned to Philadelphia.

- Kean was received in Philadelphia with open arms; a reaction had taken place in the public sentiment. Conceiving he had been sufficiently punished, pity assumed the place of resentment, and he was looked upon as an ill-treated man. The theatre was reopened on the 12th of June, and he appeared as Richard the Third, with the tide of popular favor as strong in his behalf, as ever it had been in his proudest days of success, and although he did shed tears at the idea of playing Shylock, for a quarter of a dollar, all he received, (his terms being to share the receipts with the management, after deducting \$200, each night,) yet that night (the cause of which should be buried in oblivion,) erased from his engagement, his attraction continued undiminished. The last night he played in Philadelphia was on the 26th of June, 1826, when he appeared as Cardinal Woisey, in "Henry the Eighth," and Sylvester Daggerwood, for his benefit, leaving the stage in what mountebanks call a *flip-flap*, really well executed. But what a ridiculous association in the minds of his audience; the great tragedian, and the clown of a circus, both seen in the same person, and for the last time. Before he left the city he sent me the following note, enclosing the money borrowed in Baltimore:—

(COPY.)

DEAR WEMYSS,—

208 thanks!

Take an opportunity of visiting our crib on the banks of the Hudson: you will find as honorable a gang as ever cried "stand" to a traveller, and fattened on pillage; though the captain may happen to be on duty, the troop delight in the swindling fraternity, and you will be truly welcome.

Success, dear Wemyss.

(Signed,) EDMUND KEAN.

Addressed thus:—

— Wemyss, Esqr.,  
Tragedian, Comedian,  
Fencerenian, Lotterenian,  
Omnenian, *non*,  
Alterenian!!! Philadelphia.

I never had the pleasure of seeing him again. He was in Dublin when I was in England, in 1827; although hourly expected in Liverpool, I sailed, on my return, before his arrival. He never possessed a warmer friend, or more enthusiastic admirer. He sat for his portrait to Neagle, for the Acting American Theatre, which picture was afterwards purchased by George Munday.

Mr. and Mrs. George Barrett played a short engagement; after which Mr. E. Forrest returned and played his first regular star engagement, at the Chestnut Street Theatre, commencing on the 5th of July, with Othello; Rolla, on the 6th; William Tell, on the 7th; Earl Osmond, in the "Castle Spectre," on the 8th; Jaffier, on the 10th; and Othello, on the 11th; when the theatre was closed, and he accompanied us to Washington city, where he *first* acted Damon—since, one of his most favorite characters.

It was at the close of the summer season of 1826, that Mr. Wood retired from the management, having dissolved partnership with Warren. His situation as stage manager was filled by my old friend, Joe Cowell; and the season of 1826 and 1827, I may honestly say, was the most pleasant year of my American engagements. I heard with regret of his retirement, although I was fixed upon as his successor. In his "Thirty Years among the Players," he does injustice to Warren, and has made it appear that the actors engaged by Mr. Hallan, for Cowell and Simpson, surpassed in talent and attraction those engaged by me for the Chestnut Street Theatre; yet every play-goer knows he retired from the contest, and when he returned to renew it, after Warren's

theatre had been opened thirty-five weeks, he was obliged to close ; the "Gnome King" having so far surpassed his "Sleeping Beauty," that his theatre was deserted, while the Chestnut Street Theatre continued to be well attended to the close of the season.

### CHAPTER XIII.

Baltimore Season not worth even a passing record—Cowell's management—Macready's first appearance in Philadelphia—His disagreeable manners producing quite an excitement among the Actors against him—Great Effect of his Colloquial Acting—Sensible Conduct under Undeserved Reproach—Note to the Author—First Appearance of Mrs. Knight, late Miss Povey—Her Great Success—Compliment to the Author—First Appearance of Miss Hester Warren—First Appearance of Miss E. Jefferson, afterwards Mrs. S. Chapman—First Attempt at Management in the United States—Preparations to cross the Atlantic—Instructions and Departure.

THE Baltimore season concluded, we opened in Philadelphia on the 4th of December, 1826, with the play of the "Stranger," and the farce of the "Turnpike Gate." The talent of the company was inferior to any season I had yet known, and complaints were loud in all quarters, yet Cowell's name was a tower of strength. He was deservedly popular, both with the actors and the public, and no one regretted more than I did his retirement, notwithstanding I was selected as his successor. Mr. Macready was the first star of the season. He opened on the 10th of January, 1827, as Macbeth, and at once received that approbation which his high character as an actor deserved. He played Hamlet, Virginius, William Tell, Pierre, Coriolanus, Damon, and Petruchio.

It was during the performance of "William Tell," a circumstance occurred which might have proved fatal to his future prospects in the United States. The property man (worthy old Charley Ward) had, through negligence, forgotten to provide an arrow to break before Gesler, in the fourth act of the play, compelling Macready to devote from his own quiver, one so loaded and poised, as to prevent the possibility of a failure in the most critical situation of the play. Not being one of the mildest tempered men, and irritated at the moment by the loss of, to him, a valuable stage property, he said, in anger, to the offending property man,

who was waiting to make his apology, "*I can't get such an arrow in your country, sir,*" which was thus translated for him, "*I can't get wood to make such an arrow in your country.*"

The anonymous letters sent to the then respectable conductors of the daily press, were enclosed to Mr. Macready, who, of course, disavowed their contents. He assembled the company upon the stage, by special request, read the accusation, and appealed to them, collectively and individually, to say whether any one present had ever heard him make use of such an expression.

All remaining silent, he made a neat appeal to their feelings, stating, if he had personally offended any one of them, he regretted it, and held himself personally responsible; but he hoped none who heard him were base enough to make use of such means as the letter he held in his hand, in revenge for supposed slight.

It is really singular that, deriving all, or nearly all, the acting plays from England, applauding and constantly in association with the best English actors, there should exist, behind the scenes of the American theatres, such an inveterate hatred to the foreign artist, that every little word uttered should be construed into an intentional national insult, which, magnified by the malign report of the lower order of actors and their tavern companions, is introduced before the curtain, to the annoyance of at least two-thirds of the audience assembled for amusement; who, provided the actor entertains them for the moment, care nothing about him or his opinions, except to furnish a subject of conversation for a few minutes at their next evening party. Had the penny press been in existence during Macready's engagement, a rash word, harmlessly spoken, to a negligent property man, would have been sufficient to have terminated his career on the American stage. The poison once disseminated, no opportunity would have been offered for justification: he would have been driven home in disgrace for an offence—never committed.

In rehearsing the play of *Virginius*, an occurrence took place which caused a hearty laugh at the expense of Mr. William Forrest, (brother to the tragedian) who was the  *Icilius*. Caught by the natural tone and manner of Macready, who, turning suddenly, said, "Will you lead Virginia in, or do you wait for me to do it." "Whichever you please, Mr. Macready," was the ready answer, followed by such a laugh as only actors can enjoy. He even deceived the acting manager, Mr. Cowell, old and experienced as he was, in a similar manner in *William Tell*. When speaking to young Wheatley about his shoe being untied, Cowell said rather pettishly, "Don't keep us here all day, Mr. Macready, about the

boy's shoe—go on with the rehearsal.” These are compliments to the colloquial skill of Macready, as great as was ever paid to any actor by his professional brethren.

His Damon was by no means so good as Cooper's; it was too labored, too cold and artificial, to reach the feelings of his audience. He confessed it was not a favorite character, and only assumed in compliance with the wishes of the manager.

He sat for his portrait to Neagle for the acting American Theatre, and the plates sent to him on that occasion produced the following note.

(COPY.)

Mr. Macready presents his best compliments to Mr. Wemyss, to thank him for his elegant collection of theatrical portraits. He can only regret that he has so little title to Mr. Wemyss's acknowledgments, and that he has had no ampler occasion of testifying his respect for one among the few members of his profession whose deportment and manner he has observed as creditable to it.

*Approbation from Sir Hubert Stanley is praise indeed!*

The next star was Mrs. Knight, (late Miss Povey,) who made her first appearance in Philadelphia, on the 29th of January, 1827, as Floretta, in the “Cabinet.” Who does not remember the bewitching simplicity of

MRS. KNIGHT?

The archness and vivacity displayed in her acting, greatly enhancing the pleasure derived from the sweet tones she warbled forth in her ballads. She was the first female singer of cultivated taste, who had visited the United States since the days of Miss George, the Wowski of Coleman's “Inkle and Yarico.” Her attraction and popularity remained undiminished for many successive seasons. It was not only in opera she was a universal favorite, but her acting in Kate O'Brien in “Perfection,” and Betty Finikin in “Gretna Green,” was truly excellent; it would have puzzled the most snarling critic to have found just cause for censure in the first named piece. So completely did she take her audience by surprise, that at the fall of the curtain, the Pit actually rose by acclamation, demanding a repetition, a compliment so very unusual in those days, when the habit of calling for every actor at the close of an engagement was not in vogue, that it was appreciated as no mean honor. She was pleased to thank me

personally for my performance of Charles Paragon, insisting that I was entitled to my full share of the unexpected but highly valued compliment. Never was a more general shout of approbation heard within the walls of a theatre, than greeted my announcement of Mrs. Knight's compliance with the wishes of the audience. As I can call to mind no other instance on record, during my knowledge of the American stage, of such an occurrence, in justice to all concerned, I will record the cast.—Sir Laurence Paragon, Mr. C. Green; Charles Paragon, Mr. Wemyss; Sam, Mr. John Mills Brown; Kate O'Brien, Mrs. Knight; Susan, Mrs. C. Green. A more just estimate of the merit due to the actors, may be formed from the knowledge of the fact, that not one of them were in possession of their written parts, until the rehearsal on the day previous to the performance, which so gratified the brilliant audience assembled on the occasion of Mrs. Knight's benefit. It was a proud night for star, managers, and actors. It is needless to add, it was repeated to an excellent house, and has retained possession of the stage ever since. I have seen many Kate O'Brien's, including Miss Kelly, Clara Fisher and Miss Rock; but never one who approached Mrs. Knight in excellence. It was indeed "Perfection."

On the 28th of February, Booth acted the tragedy of "Scylla." Mr. E. Forrest appeared as Damon, on the 7th of March. And during his engagement, which was not a profitable one, he played Othello, Rolla, William Tell, Sir E. Mortimer, King Lear, Jaffier, and on the 14th of March, Richard the Third; the worst representative of that character I ever witnessed; nor do I think he has ever improved upon his first false conception of the character. I may be wrong—but such is my opinion.

Macready returned to us on the 26th of March, commencing with Othello—playing the Stranger, Hamlet, Cardinal Wolsey, Macbeth, Romont, in the revived play of the "Fatal Dowry; Henry the 5th, Virginius, King John; and Felix, in the "Hunter of the Alps."

On the 27th of March, 1827, Miss Warren, the daughter of the worthy manager, made her first appearance upon any stage, in the character of Fidelia, in T. Moore's play of the "Foundling:" of all the debutantes I ever saw, she was the best; it was the performance of a finished actress, rather than a novice. The audience testified their approbation in repeated rounds of applause, at the termination of each scene. Yet so nervous was she, that, had it not been for her cousin, Mrs. Anderson, suddenly, but not rudely, thrusting her upon the stage as her cue was given, she would

have fainted. Once fairly before the lamps, she recovered her self-possession, and after the first few speeches, astonished her friends, by the graceful ease of her manners. They crowded behind the scenes, to congratulate her upon her success. Every care and attention had been lavished on her education, which a fond father and mother could devise. And although Mr. Warren designed her not for the stage, and gave his unwilling consent, he felt justly proud of her performance. The play was cast in the following manner:—Sir Roger Belmont, Green; Sir Charles Raymond, Wood; Young Belmont, Wemyss; Villiard, Hathwell; Faddle, Cowell; Servant, Murray; Rosetta, Mrs. Wood; Fidelia, Miss Warren. It would be difficult to say who in this cast was most attentive—all were equally anxious for her success.

Having acted the part of her lover, in this first mimic scene, it is somewhat singular I should have crossed the Atlantic to furnish her a husband in real life. The same observation may apply to her cousin, Elizabeth Jefferson,—one marrying Mr. Willis, the other Mr. Samuel Chapman.

Miss Warren having made such a favorable impression, public curiosity was raised to witness her second appearance, which shortly took place. As Mary Thornberry, in "John Bull," she did not, however, realise the expectations of her friends; and for several years played no part half as well as Fidelia. It was not until after the death of Mr. Willis, that she could be considered an actress of talent; and while rapidly rising to the summit of her profession, she sank into an early grave. She died in Boston, in 1842.

On the 16th of April, 1827, (Easter Monday,) Henry Wallack, who had become, since the death of Barrere, the lessee of the Chatham Garden Theatre, was engaged to produce the spectacle of "Brian Boroihome," which had drawn crowds in the city of New-York. It was well prepared, the scenery excellently painted, and would doubtless have been successful, with its play-bill surrounded with "Harps," and its "Erin go Bragh," in flaming red letters;—but, Mr. Webb, an actor of some repute, who was to have been the representative of Voltimar, had been studying ancient history too closely, and came to the conclusion, taking Shakspeare for his authority, that the Danes were powerful drinkers, and therefore, appeared upon the stage so perfectly undisguised in liquor, that the audience thought proper to hiss, which he resented, by walking out of the theatre. Mr. Heyl read the part; and the piece, in consequence of Webb's misconduct, was unequivocally damned. If ever a penal code should be enacted,

for the sole punishment of actors, drunkenness should be a penitentiary offence, without the possibility of pardon. How many managers have had a prosperous season ruined, by the misconduct of *one* actor; and hundreds of dollars judiciously expended, lost forever, by this worst of evil habits. The correction is in the hands of the public alone: while they permit an actor who has thus insulted them, to appear again, as if no offence had been committed, reformation is hopeless. Had Booth been banished, the stage might have lost an admirable actor; but the example would have deterred others, who possessed not his talent, from venturing upon the experiment. George Frederick Cooke was tolerated in his brutality, which, if properly checked and rebuked, would have prevented Edmund Kean from offending in the same manner. It is said, genius will be erratic,—this may be true; but like the madness of the confidant, in Sheridan's farce of the "Critic," let it, by request, be kept in the back ground.

For the benefit of Mr. Jefferson, whose name was sure to fill the house, his daughter, Miss E. Jefferson, made her first appearance upon any stage, as Rosina, in the "Spanish Barber." If Miss Warren was the best "debutante" I had ever seen, Miss Jefferson was decidedly the worst; she spoke so low, and so completely lost all self-possession, that, had it not been for respect to her father, she would scarcely have escaped derision. The only redeeming point, was her song of "An old man would be wooing," in which she was feebly encored. From such an unfavorable beginning, little was to be expected. But in the race commenced between Miss Warren and herself, although distanced in the first attempt, she far outstripped her in her future career; rising step by step, until she became, as Mrs. S. Chapman, the leading actress of the American stage, in the Park Theatre of New-York, justly admired by every frequenter of the theatre; proving that the race is not always with the swift, or the battle with the strong. She married a second time, on the death of Mr. Chapman, Mr. Augustus Richardson, of Baltimore, retiring from the stage.

There was a similarity of fate in the career of these two ladies; both handsome, and both possessed of talent, both married to foreigners, both left widows at an early age, and both entering a second time into the state of wedlock; one dying in the zenith of her fame; the other having reached the highest goal of her ambition, voluntarily resigned the plaudits nightly bestowed upon her in the first theatre of her native country, to enjoy the blessings of domestic life, in retirement.



The play of "John Bull," established Mr. John Green in favor of the audience, as a good delineator of Irish character. His Dennis Bulgruddery was the greatest charm of the play, which was repeated four nights at the close of the season. Mr. Warren's benefit took place on the 12th of May, 1827; the theatre closing with the play of the "Cure for the Heartache," and the "Agreeable Surprise."

We proceeded as usual, to Baltimore, for the spring season, and while there, I was taken one morning by surprise, by an offer from Mr. Warren, to accept the acting and stage management of the theatres under his direction; to cross the Atlantic, and recruit his dramatic company, by engaging new faces from England. The offers he made were so liberal, that I desired a few days for consideration. My friends whom I consulted on the occasion, strongly urged my acceptance; among others, Mr. Lewis T. Pratt, little dreaming that this arrangement would at no very distant period make him co-lessee of those very theatres.

My professional pride was also flattered by the idea, that Mr. Wood's assertion of my total failure in America, would be forever set at rest, by my appearance among my old associates after an absence of five years, as the manager of the Philadelphia Theatre. I therefore agreed to relinquish my lottery business, and on the 26th of May, 1827, made an engagement for three years with Mr. Warren, in which I promised to devote my time entirely to promote his interests.

On the 20th of June, I sailed from Philadelphia, in the *Tuscarora*, commanded by Captain Serrill, to return to my native country, full of hopes and fears for the success of my mission. My instructions, and my views of those instructions, were as follows. How well I performed my duty, the public have placed on record, by their almost unanimous approval of those actors with whom I returned to open the season of 1827 and 1828.

(COPY.) MR. WARREN'S INSTRUCTIONS.

MY DEAR SIR :

In the mission you have so kindly undertaken for me, you will please to observe the following instructions—first, the performers :

A gentleman capable of acting first tragedy, or young men, such as Harry Dornton, Claudio, Laertes,—as to Hamlet, Richard, &c., you know since they have seen Kean, Macready, and such

actors of the present day, to perform such plays without actors of that name and grade, would be useless.

A man capable of sustaining heavy parts, which I am obliged to confer at present, on Wheatley.

A young man who can sing,—on that subject, you understand my views.

A useful man to play low comedy, and if capable of playing Irishmen, the better ; which will be four.

A lady capable of leading in tragedy, Belvidera ; also another lady, who would perform Lady Macbeth. If a woman of the time of life who could undertake both, it would be better.

The salaries not to exceed thirty dollars. I would rather have it, not more than six guineas ; but if an object is to be gained, two dollars will not make any difference.

Passage, and any advance you may make, to be repaid by a weekly deduction.

Every engagement for two years, and the deduction shall be apportioned to the time. It may happen that some of the parties may be married. Any arrangement which you think necessary for their comfort, will be acceded to by me, as I am well convinced that you will do the best you can for the concern.

With respect to Mr. Miller, you will please to enquire what he has sent ; and bring with you, what he has not, that you think will be useful ; but I don't want anything else. He can draw for the amount by way of Carey and Lea.

These instructions I was desired to show Mr. Richard Peters, Junr., of Philadelphia, and to ask his advice upon the nature of them. On the 19th of June, 1827, he addressed me the following letter.

(COPY.)

PHILADELPHIA, June 19, 1827.

DEAR SIR :—I have already delivered to you a bill of exchange for £75 sterling, and have paid to you, by a check to your order, two hundred and thirty dollars. I now hand you a letter of credit from my friend, Mr. W. B. Evans, addressed to Mr. Grey Wilds, London, by which you will be enabled to draw for £150 sterling. These are on account of Mr. Warren, and will be accounted for to me, by him. I have also made arrangements with Messrs. Thomas P. Cope and Sons, by which all persons for whom you may request a passage on board of any of the Philadelphia packets,

by a line addressed to the captains, will be received, and the prices of the passage will be paid here by Mr. Warren. Captain West, of the *Montezuma*, has agreed to charge for the passages, the stipulated price, payable at the par of exchange. This will be a saving of about fifteen dollars in each.

The other captains will do the same, if you insist upon it, and if they will not, there is another line, which sails from Liverpool the 20th of every month. I have thus completed all the arrangements assigned to me by Mr. Warren, and I trust they will be found satisfactory.

A word or two about your project—as Mr. Warren has authorised me to speak of it. I think it fortunate that Hallam has been before you, and has made his selection; you know the force of those he has engaged, and must go beyond him. You will be able to ascertain what the talents of all those he has brought with him are, and you must get persons who are superior to them in talent and in personal appearance, and in reputation. Do not let a guinea a week, or even more, separate you, if they can be obtained. I know Warren will confirm this, and I will get him to say so to you in writing. It will be all-important that you accomplish the object of your visit upon the principles I have stated, and succeeding in it, you will put Mr. Cowell and S. at defiance. Allow me to remind you, that with the audience, who are to be amused at the Chestnut Street Theatre, polished manners, good exterior, and a guarded sense of decorum, are all-important. I claim no more than your knowledge of us will concede, when I say that an actor who does not appear as a gentleman will never succeed here; this deficiency has been the cause of the failure of many. It is not that he shall act the gentleman well, but that he shall be a gentleman who pleases us. Mr. Hallam has not competency to ascertain and judge of this matter, for his gentleman was vulgar, and his taste as low and as coarse as possible. I do you no more than justice to say, you have always exhibited the qualifications so necessary and important.

Let your singer be a gentleman, and capable of playing the parts of opera, as such a person would exhibit their superior voice. High musical attainments are not so essential as expression, feeling, and vivacity; a good singer, not a superior one, who will maintain with respectability his parts in opera, will have much to do next season, with the Jefferson, who promises to be very attractive. I do not exactly understand what Mr. W. means by a female to play *Belvidera*, and another to play *Lady Macbeth*; the lady who can play the first ought to play the second. I think if

you can get a lady to play high tragedy, of middle age, not old, of good appearance, and I should say a lady who can play Lady Teazle, and the females in very high comedy, you would do better. If you could find a person, who with low comedy, can play well in melo-drama and in pantomime, it would be well. Bring out the materials for two or more good pantomimes. Our friend Warren is too much disposed to confidence; I would advise you to establish an agency for him altogether independent of Price & Co., and the New-Yorkers, and let it be private; they will bribe him off if they can, but this you can prevent, by a judicious selection.

Arrangements should be made to have sent out all pieces which hit, if they are of a general nature. You may arrange with Mr. Curwin, to whom I give you a letter, to forward them from Liverpool, and let the agent send them to him; a little expense, &c., incurred, will be repaid. You remember you have active, enterprising, and skilful opponents; they are more—they are without principle, for so I must say of those, who, like Mr. Cowell, *have bribed off Mr. W.'s actors*, and of Mr. Simpson, who said, "*Let Warren get out who he will, I will have them in New York in a month.*" I say this to show you the necessity of exertion, of caution, and of making your contracts explicit and positive.

I also say so to induce you to procure performers of more attraction than those which the circus habits of Mr. Hallam have enabled him to select. Remember the comparison will be between those selected by Hallam and Mr. Wemyss. It will be the test of your judgment and your taste, and I feel satisfied you will surpass in both. I recommend to you, and will get Warren to confirm it, if the payment of the passage out should be made an insurmountable objection, with a performer of high attainments, that you agree to pay it, stipulating that if Warren, to repay himself, desire to put up a benefit, in his or her name, he may do it. It will be very unfortunate, if, under such an arrangement, we would not be repaid the cost of the passage. The plan of making the weekly salary less, and paying the passage, is a good one.

Wishing you a good voyage, and requesting you to say to Mrs. Wemyss, if I can be of any service to her while you are abroad, she may command me,

I am yours, very respectfully,

(Signed) RICHARD PETERS, JUNR.

P. S.—Let me recommend to you to call upon the stars in London, all you think may come here, and tell them not to sell themselves to Price & Co. Put an article in the *Theatrical Messenger*, stating what stars get here when they come on their own account.

I will send you the materials for this by the packet from New York, which sails the 4th of July. This will break up the New-York plans. This will let the *big fish* come here without Price and Simpson, and, in the end, will do more for Warren's scheme than they can counteract. You may leave the document, certified by Warren's treasurer, with the publisher of the article.

Ascertain what agreement the stars would make with Warren, to come out here, and he may write them on your return, or before. This will have two effects : it will give you weight with them, give Warren a standing, and make them hesitate to sell themselves to Price.

All the contents of this letter were afterwards approved by Mr. Warren in a letter addressed to me in London. It will be seen that one of the great objects of my visit to England, was to place the Chesnut Street Theatre on the high ground from which it had lately receded, by treating directly with the stars, in London, instead of receiving them, second-hand, through the managers of the Park Theatre, New-York, with whom it had become a fashion to say, you *must* receive Mr. or Mrs. or Miss ———, on such a day, or they cannot visit Philadelphia at all. The general break-up in theatricals, which took place in 1829 and 1830, alone prevented the success of this scheme. Mrs. Sloman's success induced Mrs. W. West and Mrs. Vining, to enter at once into terms, which, Warren retiring from the management, prevented from being carried into effect.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

Arrival in Liverpool—Meeting of Price and James Wallack—Stars in prospect—Miserable situation of the Provincial Theatres in regard to Talent—Journey to London—An English M. P.—Offer of Alliance, Offensive and Defensive, with Dr. Hart, Agent of the Bowery Theatre—Engagement concluded with Mr. and Mrs. Sloman, Mrs. Austin, Miss George, John Thomson Norton—Numerous Engagements with Clever Actors—Whole Ship-load of Actors for Philadelphia—Safe Arrival—Pleasant Voyage—Managerial Trouble Commencing—Opening of the Season of 1827 and 1828.

I ARRIVED at Liverpool on the 20th July, and as the vessel was made fast to the dock, the first person I saw standing on the wharf was Stephen Price, at that time manager of Drury Lane Theatre.

He, and James Wallack, were anxiously expecting Macready, who, I informed them, I had left acting in Baltimore. They invited me to dine with them, anxious to hear all the news from America. I promised to see them in the evening, which we spent together, proceeding to the theatre, where I met my old friends, Meadows and Paul Bedford.

Price declared to me he had no connexion with American theatricals, and knew no one, except Simpson, whom he would be more happy to serve than Warren, since he had cut adrift Mr. Lignum. I received much valuable information from him, as to the whereabouts of many actors I was anxious to see; but I soon found, on my arrival in London, that Mr. Price was still considered the manager of the Park Theatre, New-York; however, from him I learnt that Mrs. Sloman might be induced to cross the Atlantic if I could make her an offer worth accepting. Having been an intimate associate of Sloman, when we were together in the Canterbury company, I lost no time in addressing a letter to him, requesting to see him as early as possible, after my arrival in London. On the 1st of August we met, and concluded an engagement for one year, for the services of himself and Mrs. Sloman, for which I agreed, on behalf of Mr. Warren, to pay him twenty-seven pounds per week, and allow him all his travelling expenses. This was one of the most important as well as most successful engagements I made.

The mania for theatrical emigration to America was at its height when I arrived in London. Dr. Hart, of New-York, had engaged a strong reinforcement for the Bowery Theatre of that city. The Boston managers were also exerting themselves to meet the opposition preparing for them by the erection of the Tremont Theatre, of which Pelby was to be the manager. Hallam had engaged nearly an entire company for the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, among whom were Harry Smith and John Sefton. Applications from actors of minor repute flocked in upon me by dozens, employing at least an hour a day to answer. My first care was to see what could be procured in the provincial theatres, but never was I more disappointed; with the exception of Miss Huddart and Miss Kenneth, both of Birmingham, and a Mr. Hammond, at Liverpool, there was not an actor worth making an offer to, and I was determined, if I could not meet with those whom my judgment approved, to return to the United States without forming any engagements at all.

Booth had strongly recommended to my notice Mr. S. Chapman, as a young man of talent, worth enquiring after, and I fortunately found him in the humor to answer my purpose. His brother Wil-

liam having been engaged for the Bowery Theatre, I had no difficulty in forming an engagement mutually satisfactory. I agreed to give him five pounds per week, which he thought then a liberal offer, although some time after his arrival in the United States, although regularly paid, he grumbled at exceedingly, because he found others, of less value to the theatre than himself, in receipt of higher emolument.

My next enquiry was after Mr. Southwell, and I must confess my surprise was equal to my pleasure, in finding the dashing Romeo, my old strolling acquaintance, Francis, whom I parted with in Bolton, Lancashire. I had considerable difficulty in prevailing upon him to listen to my proposal; he laughed at the idea; nor do I think even our old friendship would have induced him to listen to my overtures, had he not have had a quarrel with Elliston upon the score of business, when, Irishman-like, acting upon the impulse of the moment, he came directly from the theatre to me, and to prevent the possibility of reconciliation, signed his articles before he left my lodgings, to my no small gratification, although much to the annoyance of Elliston, who threatened to arrest him for breach of contract, if he attempted to sail for America; and poor Southwell felt uneasy until he was safely at sea on board the Montezuma.

Mercer and family next engaged my attention, a most valuable acquisition to any theatre. I now tried Rowbotham, and was equally successful. Miss Emery, of the Surrey Theatre, I was also fortunate enough to engage, and on recounting my recruits, I began to feel proud of my success. A male singer was the only important person I now wanted, and here I was completely baffled, and at last imposed upon by Pearman, who recommended to me his pupil Hutchings, at that time engaged in the York Theatre. He was the only person to whose talent I was a stranger, until I had committed myself beyond the possibility of retracting, and bad as was the bargain, it was Hobson's choice, "*that or none.*" I now turned my attention to a machinist, and materiel for a good pantomime. Mr. Henry Lewis was recommended to me by Barrymore, a most able mechanic, whose failings rendered his talent a source of mortification more than profit, although he was of great service to the theatre. Master and Miss Kerr, and Miss Hawthorn, together with two young ladies named Minter, who failed to make their appearance at the appointed time, Mr. Willis as a melo-dramatic leader, completed my arrangements, and with a feeling of pride I wrote to Mr. Warren, informing him of my success in carrying out all his views.

I now received a note enclosed to Mr. Kenneth, from the Hon. F. H. F. Berkeley, requesting an interview, which I found was an application from Mrs. Austin, which I was most willing to entertain. She was then singing at Vauxhall, where I went to hear her, and was so delighted with her voice, that on the following morning, after a few moments' conversation, I left two proposals for her consideration, to the last of which she replied,—

Mrs. Austin is prepared to accede to an engagement at Philadelphia, as proposed by Mr. Wemyss, for twelve nights, at ten pounds sterling per night, and a half clear benefit, to take place on any day, Friday or Saturday excepted; the strength, or any part of the company being at Mrs. Austin's disposal on that night. Mrs. Austin to appear at Philadelphia (unless indisposed by the voyage) within a week after her arrival; not to play more than three times a week, and to be guaranteed an engagement at Baltimore, sharing with the manager, after the expenses; the balance to be struck between the parties each night; the payment either weekly or nightly, as may please the manager.

This was the substance of the engagement, which was finally arranged, with the option of a renewal for twelve nights longer, on the part of the manager, on the same terms.

(COPY OF MR. H. BERKELEY'S NOTE.)

Mr. H. Berkeley's compliments to Mr. Kenneth, begs to acquaint him, that on Monday he will meet Mr. Wemyss and himself at Mrs. Austin's, at any time Mr. Kenneth may fix, finally to arrange everything. Mr. Berkeley sees no obstacle, but will make every remark on paper, to the most particular iota, for Mr. Wemyss' approval. Mr. Kenneth will be kind enough to acquaint Mr. W. that Mrs. Austin can get an engagement at either theatre in New-York, and appear there *first*, but that she certainly shall consider herself bound to Mr. Warren, and respecting all other engagements in America, shall make a point to be guided by that which will be most agreeable or useful to the Philadelphia manager.

Respecting the ten pounds, nightly, Mrs. Austin will be entirely guided by Colonel Berkeley, who arrives on Saturday at Berkeley House, and it was owing to his opinion, that she made the proposal; but it has removed much objection in her mind to find Mr. Wemyss ready to meet the terms, as it clearly proves his good opinion of the venture. In short, Mr. Berkeley merely proposes Mon-



day, because of the arrival of his brother, the necessity of attending to whom, Mr. Kenneth can very well understand.

Here was a great point gained in a negotiation for a *star*; the Chesnut Street Theatre receiving a preference to either the Park or Bowery Theatres, of New-York, and through a source which might hereafter be turned to great advantage. The patronage of Colonel Berkeley to theatres and theatricals in London, being too well known to require comment.

It was in consequence of this engagement, which was concluded on the Monday, that John Thomson Norton, the trumpeter, *par excellence*, was engaged to try his fortune in the western world—an acquisition to the orchestra of no mean value.

On the Tuesday, August 21st, I found the following note upon my table.

(COPY.)

Dr. Hart, of New-York, has had the pleasure of waiting on Mr. Wemyss, on business relative to the Philadelphia Theatre. If it will suit the entire convenience of Mr. W., Dr. Hart will be glad to see him any time to-morrow, between 12 and 3 o'clock, at his residence, No. 14 Pall Mall.

Tuesday, Aug. 21, 1827.

I waited upon Dr. Hart at the appointed time; the result was the engagement of Miss George, to appear in Philadelphia. He made also an offer which I agreed to, subject to the final approval of Mr. Warren, in Philadelphia. *It was*, If the Bowery Theatre of New-York, of which he was the agent in London, would receive such stars as we engaged, on fair and reciprocal terms, that the Philadelphia Theatre would enter into an arrangement to exclude entirely every star known to be imported by Price and Simpson, and lend our aid to the engagement of Braham and Madame Vestris, for the Bowery and Philadelphia theatres. Dr. Hart further pledged himself, if Warren agreed to this arrangement, that the French Dancers, now on their way to America, or any auxiliary aid from their company, which could frustrate the views of the New-York managers, in Philadelphia, should be at our disposal, by giving one week's notice. He honestly confessed these offers were not made that they loved us more, but that they hated the Park most.

This was a strong blow aimed at the prosperity of the Park Theatre, which, if the Boston managers, who were also tired of

their thralldom, had entered into, would have placed Price and Simpson in the situation of suppliants, rather than the despots which they had hitherto proved.

Gilfert was the first to break this arrangement by an angry publication, stating that Miss George was engaged only for the Bowery Theatre, any other announcement to the contrary notwithstanding, while I had a written engagement in my possession, which, in justification, I published at full length in the newspapers of the day. E. Forrest also, whose movements were dictated by the Bowery manager, to whom he was then engaged, formed another obstacle to the fulfilment of the interests of both theatres, so that no good was ultimately gained by either party from preliminaries which promised so fairly.

Had Gilfert acted in good faith towards Mr. Warren, the Park Theatre must have lost the omnipotent name of *the* Theatre; for, during the winter of 1827 and 1828, it presented the uncommon spectacle of being dependent, for foreign attraction, almost entirely upon the importation of other theatres; Clara Fisher and Mr. Horn being the only new stars over whom they exercised any control.

But the first proposition made to the Bowery Theatre, to exchange stars on fair and reciprocal terms, in the person of Mrs. Sloman for Mr. E. Forrest; (and every body who recollects any thing about theatrical representations knows that Mrs. Sloman's first engagement was a succession of well-filled houses, the worst of which was better than any house Mr. E. Forrest had ever attracted to the Chestnut Street Theatre, at *that* time; except on the occasion of his benefit,) was received almost as an insult, both to the lady and the management.

The disavowal of Dr. Hart's authority to enter into any such arrangement, and the coolness that followed, healed the breach which was threatened between the Park Theatre and the Chestnut Street Theatre; Mr. Warren being perfectly willing to form a treaty, offensive and defensive, with the Bowery Theatre, but by no means anxious merely to change masters, which appeared to be Mr. Gilfert's view of the alliance.

On the 8th of September, I embarked at Liverpool, on board the *Montezuma*, Captain West, on my return to Philadelphia, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Southwell, son and servant; Mr. S. Chapman and brother; Mr. Hutchings; Mr. and Mrs. Mercer, and son; Miss Emery; Mr. J. T. Norton; Mr. Willis; Mr., Mrs. and Miss Ker; Miss Hawthorn and Miss Worghman; Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, and family; leaving Mr. and Mrs. Sloman; Mrs.

Austin ; Miss George ; Miss Minter ; and Mr. and Mrs. Robotham, to follow as early as possible.

I must do Captain West the justice to say he made us all as comfortable, as it was possible under the circumstances, to be ; a merrier set seldom crossed the Atlantic in company. We had one masquerade, two or three concerts, which, considering the musical talent, were excellent, indeed—better than an audience assembled on shore paid a dollar per ticket to hear—and several dances, which we must honor with the name of ball ; all this tending to make a summer passage a pleasant voyage.

On the 17th of October, 1827, I left the ship, with the letter bag, proceeding up to town on the Norfolk steamboat, reported myself to Mr. Warren, found my wife and children in excellent health, and myself once more at my own fire-side. If a man wishes to know the comforts of home, let him be absent three or four months, with a wide expanse of water dividing him from those he holds most dear. It was within one day of four months, since I parted from my wife, during which time I had not been stationary one day ; having been either on board a ship, a steamboat, or a mail coach, at some period during each twenty-four hours of my absence from America.

Mr. Davis's company of French comedians were acting in the Chestnut Street Theatre. The policy of this movement has been much doubted ; certain it is that the fashionables of Philadelphia mustered so strongly in their support, that Mr. Davis was induced to repeat his visit each succeeding summer ; but it had a most sinister effect upon the opening of the English season. Notwithstanding Mr. Warren had expended between five and six thousand dollars for auxiliary aid, the band having been augmented by recruits from Germany, under the direction of Mr. Braun, making the orchestra the most complete ever assembled within the walls of an American theatre, yet the receipts of the first week fell short of the nightly expenditure. It was not until the production of "Evadne," and the "Rencontre," that the season began to assume a favorable appearance, and was brought to a most successful close.

On the 24th of October, a concert was given, to introduce the new band with eclat ; in which I had the satisfaction of hearing Mr. Willis *alone* encoored. This I looked upon as a favorable omen, and received many congratulations from my friends.

The theatre was announced to open on the 29th, with "Romeo and Juliet," and "Is he Jealous," to give Mr. Southwell an opportunity of appearing in Romeo. I soon discovered that the stage

manager's situation was not to be a bed of roses. I received no less than seven anonymous letters upon the subject of Miss Warren's playing Juliet. Mr. Peters also addressed me a letter on the subject, which I subjoin :—

(COPY.)

DEAR SIR,—Will you enable me to comply with the request in the enclosed note—the list you gave me of the performers engaged by you will not furnish sufficient matter. In what line of characters does each person play, and if you could add the parts in which each has appeared with eclat, it would enable me to dilate.

Apropos, and for yourself exclusively, the offer of Miss Warren and Miss Jefferson to sing at the concert, has been a bad measure. It has prevented a good house, and shameful as this is, it cannot be helped. The public will have something new. I had no less than three animated disputes to-day about Miss Warren appearing in Juliet; why does not one of the new performers take Juliet? Because no one is fitted for the character? Then why not give us some other play? We don't want to see those we have seen before.

I would advise you to bring out one of your importation in the afterpiece of Monday. If Miss W. appears in the play, and Miss Jefferson in the farce, it will, after both have been brought forward in the concert, do harm. It is not that both are not admired, but that the public are impatient for novelties, and will have them. Get up a new farce for Monday—you will have all the week to rehearse it. Excuse these hints—I know public feeling.

Yours,

(Signed,) R. PETERS, JUNR.

Who would be a manager! Subject to censure, even before the theatre opened, because he could not declare that each strange face was *entitled* to select one or more characters to make a first appearance in a foreign country; and the arrangement of the theatre must per force for a few nights follow this routine. Yet I felt proud of my own reception in Mercutio; it was hearty, and spoke at least the good wishes of the audience for my success in my new position.

Southwell made quite a hit in Romeo, and Miss Warren, notwithstanding all the hints of secret foes, played Juliet very prettily. On the following evening Mr. Mercer and Mr. Hutchings made their bow; the former gentleman becoming at once a decided favorite. Mr. S. Chapman made his appearance as Pierre,

in "Venice Preserved," under most unfavorable circumstances: Mr. Wood having been announced for the part, but unable from sickness to play. Miss Emery was the Belvidera. Mr. Norton also made his first appearance. The houses during these preliminary arrangements were very bad, but on the production of "Evadne," in which, for the first time, all the strangers were placed before the audience in one play, curiosity filled the house, and from that moment prosperity began to dawn. At the conclusion of the play Mr. Warren publicly returned me his thanks for the able manner in which I had accomplished his mission.

The next successful step was the production of a new comedy entitled the "Rencontre," which, with "Evadne," filled the house for several nights. The non-arrival of Mrs. Austin, as expected, by the Robert Edwards, had left me in uncertainty as to my movements with regard to stars; therefore, it was fortunate that the public appreciated the efforts of our really good stock company.

On the 14th of November Mr. Charles Horn made his first appearance in Philadelphia, as Young Meadows, in "Love in a Village," Mrs. Knight playing Rosetta; although the first stars of the season, they were not very successful.

On the 26th, I received the following letter from the Hon. F. H. F. Berkeley:—

"ALGONQUIN," (at sea.) }  
Sunday, 25th November, 1827. }

MY DEAR SIR:—

Mrs. Austin, Mrs. Sloman, and Mr. Sloman, are here, all in health, as well as

Yours, truly,  
(Signed,) F. H. F. BERKELEY.

This was a weight removed from my mind, although it was unfortunate; the two stars from whom I expected most, arriving in the same vessel. Had Mrs. Austin have come, as arranged, by the Robert Edwards, the money paid to Mrs. Horn and Mrs. Knight would have been saved to the treasury, and her own reception would have been more to her satisfaction. She made her first appearance in America at the Chestnut street Theatre December 10th, 1827.

Mrs. AUSTIN.

This lady, who became so popular in New York, as the first representative of Cinderella in the United States, and who, in conjunction with Mr. Jones, made English opera fashionable, was

engaged by me in London for the Chesnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. She made her first appearance as Rosetta, in "Love in a Village;" the brilliant style in which she executed the music at once established her reputation as a singer of more than ordinary talent, but the taste for music and the opera was in its infancy; to Mr. Warren belongs the credit of its cultivation. The excellent orchestra of the year 1827 and 1828, provided for the Chesnut Street Theatre, deserved a better fate than to be scattered throughout the Union. Three years later, such music within the walls of a theatre would have formed no inconsiderable portion of the evening's attraction.

Mrs. Austin's engagement, although rich in reputation, was a failure, in the most important matter to the manager, "money." Every body who heard her sing, praised her, but circumstances, beyond the control of the theatre, and an unmanly attack in the columns of a newspaper, to gratify the feelings of parties who must not be mentioned, induced the ladies to absent themselves on the nights of her performance. This prejudice, unjustly fostered against her at a later period, she entirely surmounted, and became a great favorite. She played Rosetta, Lucy Bertram, Rosina, Margareta, Florence St. Leon, Diana Vernon, Mary Copp, and for her benefit revived Dr. Ames's opera of "Artaxerxes," in which she gave the music of Mandane with splendid effect; Mercer playing Artabanes; Hutchings, Arbaces; Miss E. Jefferson, Artaxerxes; and Mrs. Darley, Irene. I question if the opera was ever better performed in America than on this occasion. She proceeded to New-York, where she became a reigning favorite, assisted by Horn and Mr. Pearman—repairing the wound Mrs. Sloman's success had inflicted upon her vanity, and turning the tables, as far as attraction was concerned, decidedly in her favor.

## CHAPTER XV.

Mrs. Sloman's First Appearance in America—Great Receipts—Good Generalship—Ridiculous Habits—Hackett—Mrs. Austin—E. Forrest—Play of the "Usurpers"—Grand Flare Up—After Thunder, Clear Weather Again.

THE 7th of December, 1827, was a day of anxiety. On that evening Mrs. Sloman made her first appearance as Isabella, in the "Fatal Marriage." To me her success or failure was a matter of great importance; for, as the first star imported for the Philadelphia Theatre, our future exertions would be *guided* by her reception. She was an old acquaintance; her husband had been an intimate companion, in the happiest days of my strolling career. Mr. Warren was pledged, through me, to pay her twenty pounds sterling per week, for one year; it cannot, therefore, be a matter of surprise that I exerted myself to the utmost in her favor, that I entered the theatre full of fears for the result, with the one hope, so splendidly realized, that she might please the audience.

The house was only indifferently filled, but the pit was overflowing, and her success triumphant.

## MRS. SLOMAN

produced a greater sensation, and drew more money for thirteen successive nights, than any star who had hitherto graced the boards of the Chestnut Street Theatre. She was a compound of faults and beauties, in the art of acting—so blended that it was at times difficult to say whether her performance was really good, or very bad, but it seldom failed to please her audience.

When I first saw her, in Canterbury, in 1818, she was, as Miss Whitaker, a pretty and a clever girl, playing singing chambermaids, in which she was a great favorite; she then became the wife of Mr. Henry Downton, (the manager's son,) and by her kindness and attention to his comfort, during a long and tedious illness, acquired the estimation of all who knew her. Some years after his death she became the wife of Mr. John Sloman, and made her appearance as a tragic actress, with success, at Covent Garden Theatre. Her reputation, aided by the recommendation of Mr. Price, induced me to make the offer, on behalf of the Philadelphia Theatre, which her husband accepted. On the first night of her

appearance in America, very few ladies graced the boxes, but the impression made upon the audience, in the character of Isabella, was so favorable that at an early hour on the following morning the doors were besieged by an anxious crowd, waiting to secure places in the boxes, which, on her second appearance, were filled to overflowing, and so continued during her engagement. The receipts of her first performance were two hundred dollars less than any subsequent representation. The thirteen nights produced *ten thousand six hundred and thirty dollars and seventy-five cents*, or \$817 75 per night—a result most gratifying to me and satisfactory to Mr. Warren, who again thanked me, by Judge Hopkinson, for the able manner in which he was pleased to say I had discharged my commission.

Mrs. Sloman played Isabella, Mrs. Haller, Belvidera, Jane Shore, Juliet, Mrs. Oakley, Lady Townley, repeating several of the characters by request. In "Jane Shore," where Miss Emery, (who had become an established favorite) played Alicia, there was quite an animated contest for superiority—Mr. Matthew Carey, whose opinion was of some value in such matters, openly declaring his preference for Miss Emery, who was a valuable actress. This difference of opinion was of service to the treasury.

Mrs. Sloman left us, for the Federal Street Theatre, in Boston, where the same success did not attend her efforts; while in the Park Theatre, New-York, Simpson proved for once a good general, by crushing her with superior attraction, on the nights on which she did *not* appear: Mr. Horn, Mr. Pearman and Mrs. Austin, playing together in opera three nights a week, while Mrs. Sloman, unsupported, occupied the other three.

With her first success terminated her attraction. So fickle is the public mind, that on her return to Philadelphia, before the close of the season, she could not attract a single dollar. The same thing occurred to Clara Fisher, whose first engagement was only eclipsed by Mrs. Sloman's.

Mr. Sloman made his bow to an American audience, on the occasion of his wife's benefit, December 17th. His comic singing proved very attractive, giving a fresh impetus to the desire of the audience for a re-engagement of Mrs. Sloman. Mr. Sloman's acting, having the advantage of many original parts, was considered good by many critics; however, I cannot pronounce it so. His singing was excellent; and in that alone consisted the secret of his great benefits throughout the United States. It was only from this source in New-York that the engagement of Mr. and Mrs. Sloman paid Mr. Warren.



While upon the subject of New-York theatricals, the managers there have a foolish habit of announcing pieces for representation for the first time in America, which have frequently been played in Philadelphia, deceiving only themselves by this miserable trick, and provoking comparisons by no means favorable to their managerial enterprise. As thus: a Philadelphian visits New-York, inquires for a play-bill, sees a piece *thus* announced, and naturally enough says, "Why, have you not seen *that*, yet? your managers must have been asleep; it has been acted in our city six months ago."

"Peter Wilkins," was the holiday piece for the new year, on which a good deal of care had been bestowed, but it was a failure. On the 2nd of January, 1828,

MR. HACKETT

made his first appearance in Philadelphia, as Morbleu, in "Monsieur Tonson;" making no great impression upon his audience, who were more anxious to see "Peter Wilkins," and disappointed in both. Mr. Hackett created a new dramatic character, in the person of a Down East Yankee, which will place his name in a conspicuous station in the future history of the American stage; although critics will exclaim against the alteration and mutilation of Colman's play of "Who Wants a Guinea," and Englishmen will hold up their hands in horror at the idea of Solomon Gundy, the French cockney, being metamorphosed into Jonathan, a genuine yankee, yet Hackett deserves, and will obtain credit, for placing upon the stage a character which will supply the place to an American author of the Yorkshire clown of English comedy, so well handled by Morton.\*

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\* The following letter, received from Hackett, in 1833, is too good, under the circumstances, to be lost. "Set a thief to catch a thief," is a very old adage.

(COPY.)

PHILADELPHIA, 5th November, 1833.

MY DEAR WEMYSS:—

During my absence in England, *Mr. Hill* has had the *impudence*, as well as *injustice*, to perform, without my permission, my best Yankee character, *Solomon Swop*, (well known as unpublished, and of my own originating) at the Park (some dozen times) and elsewhere. I have, of course, a remedy *at law* against *him* and the *managers* who permit it, but a resort to it would be looked upon, perhaps, by the public, (who don't understand these matters,) as a kind of *ill nature* on my part, and beneath me; and therefore to

Mr. Hackett possesses talent of the highest order as an actor ; his performance of Rip Van Winkle is equal to any effort of his contemporaries, whether in comedy or tragedy, but defend me from his Sir John Falstaff, with the recollection of Warren fresh in my memory.

What could induce him to risk his reputation by attempting to act Hamlet, a character so few, even of the brightest names on record, have been successful in ? Think of Hamlet, the perfection of poetry, associated in the minds of the audience with Nimrod Wildfire, the Kentuckian—*half horse and half alligator*. The very recollection must call up a smile fatal to his hopes.

As a star, his course has been singular ; at one time playing an engagement to well filled houses, and then to empty benches—but always contriving to receive money enough to retain his position. He was the first American actor who ventured to appear as a star upon the London stage. His reception was of a very doubtful character, but he has repeated his visit with better success.

Mrs. Austin having proceeded to New-York, the nights vacated were assigned to Mr. E. Forrest, on condition that he should return and finish the engagement, on the 26th of March. He

prevent my property being thus further hacknied, after being taken down from my mouth, or otherwise surreptitiously obtained, I have notified managers generally of the fact, and shall consider their *permitting* such an infringement of the most unalienable of literary rights, (the spinning of one's own brains,) an act of open hostility to me, and proceed accordingly. Mr. Hill has characters enough of his own, without carrying on that species of *Yankeeism* ; and if I cannot protect myself from having my character made stale by such depredations, I will resort to rigorous measures against both him and the manager, wherever the infringement transpires. Of course I do not fear *your* permitting or countenancing such *dishonesty*, but I thought I would drop you a line, as you might be ignorant of the *fact of Solomon Swoop being*, in every respect, my own *exclusive property*. I have stopped him in *Boston, New-York, and here*, but understand he has been trying it in *Albany* ; and, though he will not attempt it *again there*, if I can catch him in New-York, where I am returning to-morrow, I must clap the "*Grace*" upon him, for example's sake.

Wishing you all success, and hoping to have a chance with you next sea son, I remain

Yours truly,

JAS. H. HACKETT.

N. B. I shall esteem it a *personal* mark of friendship, if you will inform me of any attempt at keeping up this *Yankee piracy* coming to your knowledge in the course of Mr. Hill's projected peregrinations in the *West, this winter*.

J. H. H.

What a farago of nonsense

appeared as Brutus, in Howard Payne's tragedy, on the 5th of January, but the houses were indifferently attended; but it must be remembered at this time Mr. Forrest had not acquired the fame which afterwards enabled him to dictate terms to managers. He was climbing the hill with rapid strides, but had not reached its summit.

On the 26th of December, 1827, the long announced tragedy of the "Usurper," written by Dr. McHenry, was produced. Ere I speak of its reception by the public, let me state that Dr. McHenry *cast* the characters himself, selecting those actors he thought best qualified to give him support. I record this, to show the feeling which existed towards him as an author, and the disposition of the management to afford him every facility in their power, which could contribute to his success.

The Doctor received an assurance, that so long as the tragedy would draw the nightly expenses incidental to the performances, (300 dollars,) it should be repeated. The newspapers were zealous in their endeavors to aid his cause, and a writer in the Saturday Post went so far as to say, "In Europe, on a piece being more than commonly successful, it was the practice of the audience to call for its repetition by name." Here the cue of action was distinctly given. The night of performance arrived. The prologue, written by James S. Barker, Esq., fell to my lot. I will first give the dramatis personæ; for since that eventful night, the infant, whose death is announced in the second scene, which incident had nearly upset the gravity of the spectators, has grown up and become a talker on his own behalf; whether the play be improved by the alteration, I leave those who witnessed its performance, and (since the Doctor's resolution "*to print it, and shame the fools,*") have had courage to read it, to decide.

#### THE USURPER.

Cobtha, (*the Usurper*) Mr. Southwell; Labra, King of Munster, Mr. Brown; Mahon, (*rightful heir to the throne*) Mr. Mercer; Partholou, Mr. S. Chapman; Arch Druid, (*confidant to Cobtha*) Mr. Wood; Connal, Mr. Heyl; Athmore, Mr. Hathwell; Hermod, Mr. Drummond; Cathal, Mr. Darley; Clansagh, Mr. Wheatley; First Chief, Mr. Parker; Second Chief, Mr. Murray; Third Chief, Mr. Delarue; First Soldier, Mr. Klett; Second Soldier, Mr. Lyons; Third Soldier, Mr. Bengall; First Bard, Mr. Hutchings; Second Bard, Mr. J. Jefferson; Priestess, Miss Emery; Elfinor, Miss Warren; Moreat, Miss Darley; Servant, Miss Hathwell.

Music composed expressly for the piece by Mr. Willis.

The Prologue written by James S. Barker, Esqr., to be spoken by Mr. Wemyss.

PROLOGUE.

From that romantic Isle, whose emerald plains  
 In smiling verdure, hide their sanguine stains;  
 The land of heroes, and by patriot's trod,  
 The land of lovers, and the bard's abode.  
 From Erin borne on poesy's magic wing,  
 The chiefs of other days we hither bring,  
 To claim within this hospitable dome,  
 A stranger's welcome, in a stranger's home.  
 The poet of the scene, who trembling woos,  
 To-night the favor of the tragic muse,  
 Though not unknown to you, his tuneful page,  
 For the first time presumes to tread the Stage;  
 And conscious of the peril, suppliant bends  
 Before a jury of indulgent friends.  
 Not his the strain, where fabling numbers flow,  
 And turgid diction speaks fictitious woe;  
 In nature's language he essays the art,  
 To reach the judgment, and to touch the heart.  
 From the historic page his theme he draws,  
 And days when Erin dared give Erin laws.  
 What time the sage's voice and soldier's call,  
 And bards' proud anthem rang through Tara's Hall;  
 While Erin's priests yet held their Druid rite,  
 And Erin's warriors dared for Erin fight.  
 Our poet's pencil paints the moral scene,  
 Teaching what ought to be, by what has been.  
 Lo! the red fratricide, whose regal vest,  
 Clasps scorpion conscience closer to his breast;  
 Or the arch hypocrite, whose holy guise,  
 Cheats, for a season only, mortal eyes.  
 Hurl'd from a throne, or from the altar driv'n;  
 Detested, scorn'd of man, condemn'd of Heav'n:  
 While in the patriot prince, and faithful maid,  
 And generous friend, the living truths portrayed,  
 That virtue, friendship, and unspotted love,  
 On earth revered, draw blessings from above.  
 Such was the genuine drama's moral School,  
 The drama scorn'd by bigot and by fool;  
 When with the energy of wisdom fraught,  
 The Addison's, and Steeles, and Johnsons taught.  
 And though to-night, we boast no golden name,  
 Like theirs, bright sparkling on the scroll of fame,  
 Let the endeavor to uphold the laws  
 Of the pure drama, and great virtue's cause,  
 Secure the patient hearing for our bard,  
 The candid judgment, and the just reward.

Well would it have been for Dr. McHenry's cause, had his tragedy contained but half the merit of this prologue. Notwith-

standing the exertions of his friends, I never witnessed a more complete failure. It is true, that as the curtain fell, many young men, fond of making a noise, and delighting in the prospect of a theatrical row, vociferously called for the author, and a repetition of the play, which I promised for the following Thursday, announcing it in the play-bills as follows:—

“The Usurper having been unanimously called for by the audience on its first representation, will be played again on Thursday next.”

For this, I received the thanks of the author, and until the termination of the next performance, I was everything that gratitude could make me; I even received a present of one of the author's poems, accompanied with, “from his assured friend, Dr. McHenry,” written by his own hand, on the title-page. The second night, producing one hundred dollars less than the amount of the expenses, released me from all promises, and turned the gratitude of Dr. McHenry to gall; and in an instant I was transformed from one of the best to one of the worst of human beings.

The play of the Usurper had been accepted for representation by Mr. Warren, previous to my return from England; the hope of success was deemed by Dr. McHenry a sufficient remuneration. He now demanded a third representation, for the benefit of the author, founding his claim upon the usages of the large theatres, in London. To this arrangement, many objections presented themselves; one of the greatest magnitude was, the night wished was pre-occupied. Mr. Matthew Carey, whose philanthropy frequently got the better of his judgment, prevailed upon Mr. Warren to let the author have the boon desired, he giving security for three hundred dollars. Having performed my duty to the author and the public, I did not feel inclined to let the responsibility of this performance rest upon me: but without any intention of wounding Dr. McHenry's feelings, I announced his benefit in the following notice:—

“In consequence of the persevering and unceasing application of Dr. McHenry and his friends, the tragedy of the Usurper will be played for the third and last time at this theatre, on Friday, the 1st of February, for the benefit of the author.”

My only object, in this announcement, was to prove to those who were in the habit of frequenting the theatre—to whom the play was really obnoxious—that it was the author's doing, not the manager's. I was therefore surprised to read in the United States Gazette of the 30th of January, 1828, the following:—

## TO THE PUBLIC.

It is well-known to the play-going portion of the inhabitants of Philadelphia, that a new tragedy of my composition, has recently been twice performed at the Chestnut Street Theatre, and that it received on both occasions the approbation of the audiences. A few days after the second representation, I was induced by the numerous enquiries that were made at my house by respectable individuals, relative to the time when a third representation, which it was supposed would be for my benefit, would take place, to apply to the managers for information. To this application, Mr. Wemyss replied in a style of ambiguity, which occasioned me to require from him a verbal explanation. This he gave in so abrupt a manner, that I resolved to hold no more communication with him. *Some of my friends*, however, conceiving that I was unjustly treated, took up the matter, and *pressed upon the managers* the propriety of allowing me a benefit. Friday evening was in consequence set apart for the purpose. In appropriating to me that evening, I considered the managers to be acting towards me not only with good faith, but with good will, and I looked forward to the promised benefit for some remuneration for my labors.

With these feelings, what was my surprise, when going on Monday night into the theatre, I found the intended performance of "The Usurper" announced in a manner and in terms, highly insulting to my friends and myself, and calculated to destroy all my prospects of profit from a benefit. "In consequence of the persevering and unceasing application of Dr. McHenry and his friends, the tragedy of the Usurper will be played for the third and last time at this theatre, on Thursday next, February 1st, for the benefit of the author."

Comment on the evident design and tendency of such an announcement is unnecessary. It might be observed, however, that the foregoing statement affords a positive contradiction of the assertion, that I had made persevering and unceasing applications for a benefit; I had, in fact, never applied but once.

Under these circumstances, I hope an allowable degree of self-respect will be admitted by those who are desirous to witness another representation of *The Usurper*, as an apology for my prohibiting that representation, which I have done, in a note addressed to Mr. Warren.

From the sympathy and support of a generous and enlightened public—the public of Philadelphia—from whom I have never failed to receive justice and kindness, if I were to seek for redress in the present instance, I know I should find it. Many magnani-

mous minds would feel pleasure in taking part with an individual so clearly ill treated, and in teaching arbitrary managers of theatres, that they ought not altogether to disregard the approbation of a community, which can never approve of injustice and oppression. But I ask no redress. My fellow-citizens, I am persuaded, will continue to manifest towards me that good will, which I have uniformly experienced from them, and which forms at this moment, my pride as well as my consolation.

(Signed)

JAMES MCHENRY.

Jan. 30th, 1828.

Here is as pretty a piece of incendiarism as ever emanated from the pen of mortal man ; the object decidedly "*a row.*"

Dr. McHenry asserts to the public that he made but one application for a benefit. Mark his own words : " not content with my answer to his application, he sought a personal interview, and after that resolved to hold no further communication with me ; but (mark this) his *friends* conceived he was unjustly treated, and from his statement it appears, *they* took up the subject, which he had resolved to abandon, and pressed upon the managers the propriety of allowing me a benefit."

*Bah—nonsense!* If he had not urged the matter, few of his friends would have cared a straw about either the Usurper, or the theatre ; and if this be not perseverance for the attainment of an object, I am at a loss to know what is.

But to dismiss the Doctor and his tragedy, on whom I have already wasted too much space.

On the evening following the 1st of February, the night originally appropriated for the author's benefit, previous to the play of "The Wonder," a placard reading thus:—

" Usurper.

Benefit

For the Author."

was placed in my hands, which was freely distributed in the front of the theatre. Now, what will an enlightened and liberal public think of the man who, after publicly relinquishing his right to a benefit, should take such means to obtain it. The late Samuel Chapinan very facetiously interlined this placard, thus :

The Public is respectfully informed that the

Usurper

*declines taking any*

Benefit,

*Dr. McHenry being ashamed of passing*

For the Author.

In which state it remained in the green room for several days, and was enjoyed, even by the Doctor's friends, as an excellent joke.

This was the first time I had incurred the displeasure of the audience, as a manager; and never, in any case, was it less deserved. I had performed more than my duty to the author; I had devoted my time, and Mr. Warren had expended his money, on a thankless speculation.

Dr. McHenry has since thought proper to alter his first bantling, as he terms the Usurper, and produced it at the Arch Street Theatre, where its reception was less equivocal; and nothing can rescue it from the oblivion to which it is now consigned, with the pleasing recollection to the author, of being twice damned; although in his preface he asserts it was received by two audiences, at the Chestnut Street Theatre, with every mark of approbation, and only withdrawn because he considered the conduct of the acting manager, (meaning me,) to be grossly insulting towards himself and his friends; although in doing so, he was aware of making a considerable sacrifice of his pecuniary interests.

*" Nil fuit tam impar sibi.*

I have proved that every exertion was used by him to reap, if possible, the pecuniary advantage, alluded to, and the most unfair means resorted to, to make the public aid his design. His attempt to create a disturbance in the theatre failed; but the first fruits of his bitter enmity were severely felt by me in my position as manager.

The old story of slighting native talent, (native talent, in this instance, at least, born in Ireland,) and treating America with disrespect, was revived; some persons carrying their malignity so far as to accuse me of having forbidden the orchestra to play the national airs, nightly called for by the audience.

To shield myself from this unmanly and insidious attack, I was compelled to address the public, at the head of the play-bills, which I did on the 3rd of February, thus:—

#### TO THE PUBLIC.

A report being in circulation, that I had forbidden the orchestra to play the National Airs, I beg leave respectfully to inform the public, that so far from forbidding them, I have frequently given orders that one or more should be played every evening; and from this date, the following arrangement will take place previous to the commencement of the play:—The band will perform the



overture of the piece, or such overture as the leader of the orchestra may see fit to substitute. Between the play and the farce, each night, the time will be exclusively appropriated to

. NATIONAL AIRS.

I trust, this arrangement will prove satisfactory to all parties, and at once disprove the *monstrous calumny*. It is my sincere wish, and Mr. Warren's interest, that every individual who contributes in the slightest degree to the support of the theatre, should leave, if possible, perfectly satisfied with the evening's amusement.

F. C. WEMYSS,  
Stage Manager.

THEATRE, Feb. 2nd, 1823.

This order, publicly given, annoyed poor Braun, the leader, who could not endure the frequent repetition of "Yankee Doodle," to the exclusion of Mozart, Weber, &c.; not entering into the national feeling, which made it the most agreeable to an American ear.

I do not accuse Dr. McHenry or his friends, of circulating these reports; but it is an unfortunate coincidence, that the accusation in the newspapers appeared simultaneously with Dr. McHenry's appeal; and since the fracas about Harry Herbert, a predilection for England and her institutions has been received as *my* creed. Love of our native country is implanted by nature in our bosoms, and I most warmly applaud it, wherever met. Much as I have suffered from wilful misrepresentation, I admire that feeling of patriotism, which will not brook even a breath of insult from the lips of a foreigner. I have always regarded the institutions of America with pride, while I never shrink from defending my native England, when unjustly assailed. My feelings towards America and England cannot be better expressed, than in slightly altering the toast of a worthy Irish baronet, in the farce of the "Sleep-Walker." Speaking of England,

"May the gentlemen of your country, and mine, never meet in altercation, but in good humor, over a bottle."

Such should be the feeling of every Englishman towards an American, and every American towards an Englishman.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Miss George—Miss Kelly—Miss Clara Fisher—Lilliputian the Third—Red Rover—Excellent Prologue—Loud Talking of a third Theatre—The Divine Celeste—Actors' Benefits—Colonel M'Cahen's First attempt at Acting—Mr. Cooper's Return from England—Forrest and Cooper in the same Play—Opera—First Appearance of Mr. and Mrs. Rowbotham in America—An Elopement—Spirit of Brush at the Third Heat—The Chestnut at it Again—Victorious—The Gnome King vs. Sleeping Beauty—Close of a most Splendid Season.

ON the 10th of January, Miss George, of whom so much had been said, made her appearance in Philadelphia, as Susanna, in the opera of the "Marriage of Figaro." She was much inferior to Mrs. Austin, as a singer; attracting but little notice, except in the petite comedy of "'Twas I, or the Truth a Lie," in which she sung "The Bonny Breastknots," much to the satisfaction of the audience. Miss Kelly played a very successful engagement, commencing on the 2nd of February, with Donna Violante in the "Wonder." On the 17th of February, quite a novelty was placed before the audience, in the shape of a new opera, by Kotesbue, in German, in which Mr. Braun and Mr. Mercer, were particularly happy. The overture was performed entirely by French horns, and enthusiastically encored.

On Wednesday, the 20th of February, 1828, Reynolds' comedy of "The Will," was performed, for the purpose of introducing

## MISS CLARA FISHER.

Although in France, "*the children's theatre*" frequently produces an extraordinary juvenile actor, precocious dramatic talent has rarely met with success in England or the United States, where people generally have something of more importance to occupy their time, than listening to children assuming the garb and manners of men and women.

Master Betty, the young Roscius, so termed; the young lady whose name I am recording; and Master Burke, whose musical talent enlisted public curiosity in his favor, are exceptions to this general rule.

Miss Clara Fisher, when only six years of age, was indeed a *rara avis*; and the judicious manner in which she was placed before the public, aided her success. In Lord Flinnip, her

assumption of the character of Richard the Third, surrounded by her pigmy warriors, was perfect ; as the performance of a Lilliputian, it was faultless ; as a child apeing a man, it would have been ridiculous. No child was better schooled, or reflected more credit on her perceptor ; her powers of imitation were carefully developed, exciting the wonder of the critics of London, who pronounced her a Kean in miniature.

But like all other cases of precocity, premature decay follows ; either the public are too exacting, or the mind of the juvenile player breaks down from over action, ere it reaches maturity ; there being no case on record, of a child acquiring popularity at so early an age, who retained it in after life. When Miss Clara Fisher first visited the United States, her youth and reputation, induced crowds to visit the theatre whenever her name was announced. Now, how changed her destiny—surpassed by many, who in her early career, never dared to think of approaching her in the favor of the public.

I can scarcely conceive a more painful situation to an actor possessing a sensitive mind, than the consciousness of having made a retrograde movement in public opinion, at the very time his utmost exertions have been used to maintain a position which all conceded him entitled to. Yet how few escape this mortification, who commence at the top round of the ladder of fame. Neglected as Clara Fisher now is, her name will descend among the few who have arrived at eminence, when those who enjoy a short-lived triumph, from her supposed humiliation, will be forgotten. By her exertions, a large family have been respectably educated, and established in life, while in private society, no one in the whole profession is more universally esteemed. This must be her consolation in retirement, for that fortune which she ought to have possessed.

Her first engagement in Philadelphia averaged upwards of seven hundred dollars per night, out of which she received nearly four thousand dollars ; but as, in the case of Mrs. Sloman, when she returned, all curiosity to see her had subsided ; nor do I remember that she ever afterwards played a profitable engagement in Philadelphia,—that is, profitable to the treasury of the theatre. Her Four Mowbrays will long be remembered as a finished specimen of comic acting.

Mr. Burroughs played a night or two ; but his houses, after the great business we had been acting to, appeared really worse than they were.

On the 21st of February, the “Red Rover” was produced.

Messrs. Carey and Lea, the spirited booksellers and publishers, having announced Cooper's new novel of the "Red Rover," as nearly ready for delivery, a thought struck me, that if a copy of the novel could be procured, in advance of the publication, and a nautical drama founded upon it, it would be productive, both of reputation and money.

I waited upon these gentlemen, who in the kindest manner, granted my request, stipulating only, that it should not be seen by any person, except those concerned in our preparations. With my prize in my possession, I returned triumphantly to the theatre. I offered Mr. S. Chapman, twenty dollars a night, for every night it should be acted, if he would compile a drama, (for which he possessed an apt talent,) such as should meet my approbation, from the "Red Rover" retaining such scenes as I pointed out, the moving panorama being intended for the great scene, as a novelty. Here was a field for manager, author, painter, and machinist; and well did each acquit themselves, not forgetting the excellent music of Mr. Braun. Never in any theatre, was a more successful piece produced; enabling us to act on the Tuesday and Thursday nights, to five hundred dollars per night, against the brilliant success of Miss Clara Fisher. The Prologue, written by Richard Penn Smith, was spoken with much eclat, by S. Chapman and myself, in our characters of Author and Manager.—Let it speak for itself.

PROLOGUE TO THE "RED ROVER."

*Spoken by Mr. Wemyss and Mr. S. Chapman; written by R. P. Smith, Esq.*

ENTER THE MANAGER, FOLLOWED BY THE CALL-BOY.

*Manager.*—Another author! what is this you say,  
 Another author, with another play—  
 Who vows with all the vehemence of rage,  
 That I *must forthwith* bring it on the stage;  
 The fellow's mad—stark mad—to brave the town,  
 And *vi et armis*, force his rubbish down;  
 But show him in—(exit boy;) they shall not make me fear  
 Tho' authors now like Banquo's race, appear  
 A moment, and then vanish.

(Enter Author.)—Sir, your most—

A virgin author, to give up the ghost.

*Author.*—You're wrong, my friend, my drama;—(offers MS.)

*Manager.*—Let me see!

*Author.*—We'll charm the town, and fill your treasury.

*Manager.*—A modest youth—the town—I understand;  
 But genius-like, you write a d—d cramp'd hand,  
 Which I cannot decypher;—Sir, no doubt  
 You can explain what this is all about.

*Author.*—The title will explain—there—there, turn over;

One leaf speaks volumes.

*Manager.*—(Reading.)—"The Red Rover."

A cunning rogue, the critics to confound,  
Here builds his fabric on another's ground;  
But let us hear what arguments you bring,  
By way of recommending this strange thing.

*Author.*—Our scenes are drawn from Cooper's graphic page,  
Sufficient passport, surely, to the stage.  
Sublime his taste—in beauty e'en profuse;  
Yet yielding little to the Drama's muse.  
For these descriptions, which with nature vie,  
The painter's brush but feebly can supply;  
Yet much depends upon the painter's art;  
And how—the plane—and saw—perform their part.  
So critics who uphold the stagyrite,  
May close their ears, and shut their eyes to-night.

*Manager.*—Zounds! how is this?

*Author.*—Be patient, you shall see,  
A scene to tickle the catastrophe;  
'One," as Bays says, "shall set the audience mad,  
And pit, and box, and gallery it, egad,  
With anything extant."

*Manager.*—(Surprised.)—You mean to say,  
With hammer, paint, and boards, you wrote *this* play.

*Author.*—Precisely so.

*Manager.*—And should it chance to hit,  
Of course you'll lay a claim to taste and wit.

*Author.*—You're right again.

*Manager.*—Modest,—but if it fails—

*Author.*—Well! damn the carpenter, the boards and nails.  
But that's impossible—impossible.

*Manager.*—Indeed!

*Author.*—My dukedom to a dernier, 'twill succeed.  
A showy drama from a native tale,  
In this fair city, ne'er was known to fail.

*Manager.*—We'll try that point.

*Author.*—Perhaps 'twill be the rage;  
The "Rover"—what! already on the stage—  
This looks like expedition, cries that *beau*,  
While sauntering in the lobby, to and fro  
A wish to please the town; egad! that's right—  
A native play—I'll take a box to-night.

*Manager.*—To please the town, has been, I here declare,  
My proudest study, and my hourly care;  
And when I prove imperfect in the part,  
The fault lies here; (touching his head,) but comes not  
near the heart.  
The wish to please, at least all must allow:  
The "*Rover*," shall be done—so make your bow.

*Exeunt together.*

Lewis, for his manner of sinking the Caroline, and his arrangement of the deck of the Dart, with the whole plan of his panorama,

deserved and received unqualified approbation, both before and behind the curtain. The effect produced on the audience by the first representation, was capital. Being taken by surprise, many declared the ship was positively in motion, the optical delusion practised being so perfectly arranged.

One incident only occurred, which might have ruined our success. At the night rehearsal for the scenery, everything had succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations; when Mr. S. Chapman, elated by the approbation bestowed on his exertions, suddenly said, "Mr. Wemyss, expend fifty dollars more, and I will astonish you; I will make a shower of rain which shall induce the audience to look for umbrellas; but I must have three gauze curtains. As I never saw but one good effect by gauze, (the dream scene of "Cherry and Fair Star,") I hesitated; when, with his characteristic humor, he said, "Don't spoil our ship at last, for a half-penny worth of tar; let me have my way; if it don't succeed, I will pay for it myself. Mr. Warren, who was within hearing, and pleased with the appearance of success, which every thing promised, called out; "Let him have it, Wemyss." The order was given, and on the following evening, the rain descended amid thunders of applause from the audience, —enveloping the boat, in which Wilder and his lady companions were rescued, in a dense fog, in which they were likely to remain. The effect not having been tried, no means was provided for removing the unfortunate gauze, and the rain, after having performed its part to admiration, had to ascend again to the skies, amid the laughter of the audience, and the mortification of the author. The stirring incident of the piece restored the good humor of the audience; but the shower of rain was dispensed with in the future representations. Southwell, by his refusal to act the part of Wilder, fixed upon me a most unpleasant duty, which prevented that attention to many minor details, which would not have occurred had I been out of the dramatis personæ. As we contrived to sink a ship, covering it with foaming billows, surely we could have removed my friend Chapman's shower of rain, without the necessity of restoring it to the clouds.

It was in the month of February or March, 1828, that Mr. McGeary, a bookseller, from the city of New-York, issued proposals to erect a new theatre in Philadelphia. The location chosen was in Arch street, near the corner of 6th street. After all the preliminary arrangements were agreed upon, Mr. McG. either *could* not or *would* not, give the security demanded by the subscribers of the stock, for the fulfilment of his promises; and the project would have been abandoned had not Mr. W. B. Wood stepped forward with

an offer to proceed, which was accepted, in the sequel, ruining him, and every other manager who was unfortunate enough to occupy it. It was built by Mr. Strickland, the architect of the Chestnut Theatre, but he did not improve upon the model of the latter house. Mr. Wood took his farewell benefit at the Chestnut Street Theatre, on the 14th of April. "Adelgitha" and "Mr. H." were the pieces selected. At the close of the performance, the audience called loudly for Mr. Wood, who addressed them in his usual happy manner. To do him justice, I never saw a man who made an extemporary address with a better grace, or possessed so happy a facility of moulding an audience to his own peculiar views.

Miss Rock, the first failing star of the season, appeared as Letitia Hardy and Jenny Transit. She was a clever actress, but her appearance was by no means prepossessing, and the manner in which she dressed, so ancient, compared with the dashing Miss Kelly, that she excited little or no interest in the audience.

Celeste—the divine La Bayadere, whose career has been one of the most fortunate in the annals of the American Drama, made her first appearance, on the 18th of March, at the Chestnut Street, in a Grand Pas Seul. Her poetry of motion was not at this time appreciated; and when she appeared as Myrtillo, in the "Broken Sword," her acting was the cause of more mirth than sympathy. Who can forget her exclamation of "*My fader's murtherer,*" and repress a smile at the announcement of the playbills—"Celeste in a speaking character." Her husband, Mr. Henry Elliott, very soon discovered the secret of success was not so much in appearing before an audience, as in preparing that audience for her reception by the puff preliminary; and by his judicious newspaper arrangements, succeeded in placing Celeste foremost in the ranks of those whom managers were anxious to engage, because their engagements were always profitable to the theatre. Her popularity remained undiminished to the last hour of her appearance on the American stage; and the announcement of her name, at any moment, will secure a well filled house.

On the 26th of March, Mr. E. Forrest was announced to act in Boston, in New-York, and in Philadelphia. Not being blest with the power of ubiquity, he remained in Boston, while we were placed in a two-fold dilemma. Having engaged Mr. Forrest to finish the number of nights due at this time, we could make no other arrangement without violation of contract, while Mr. Gilfert (for I will do Forrest the justice to think it was not his arrangement) did not condescend to inform the management of the change which had taken place in his views. To the Philadelphia Theatre it was a

loss of time which could have been profitably employed ; and disappointment was prevented by an announcement in the play-bills, that should Mr. E. Forrest arrive, as expected, he would appear, but that the "Red Rover" would be the substitute. Thus I adroitly avoided the possibility of incurring the displeasure of the audience on the sensitive point of native talent, leaving the matter to be settled by Mr. Forrest and his audience when they next met.

The benefits of the actors were very well attended this season. W. Chapman, a very good comedian, acted Crack for his brother Samuel's benefit. Miss Southwell aided her brother in the opera of Malvina, while Mr. McCahen made a second attempt for Mr. Brown's benefit ; but the Colonel makes a much better politician than an actor ; his first appearance was in Young Norval, on the 29th of January ; after which he played Murtoch Delany, in the "Irishman in London." On the 25th of April, Mr. Cooper made his first appearance in Macbeth, on his return from England, after his unsuccessful attempt on the London stage. The house was crowded to give him a welcome. One of those laughable occurrences which sometimes take place in a theatre, produced much amusement, but robbed Mr. Cooper of half of the enthusiasm of his reception. Mr. Brown, who played a minor part, appearing on the bridge from whence Cooper was expected, was mistaken for him, and received with cheers by the audience, who, when they discovered their mistake, enjoyed a hearty laugh at the expense of poor Brown's feelings, which was only interrupted by the appearance of their favorite, who received their acclamations with much satisfaction. I was in hopes that this feeling in Cooper's favor, would have caused the theatre to be filled nightly, during his engagement ; but, although aided by Mr. E. Forrest, it was a most unprofitable one to the treasury ; yet the attraction of Cooper and Forrest, in the same plays, should have been powerful enough, in the worst of times, to insure success to any manager bold enough to present it to the public, at the cost to himself of fifty per cent on the amount which he received for admission. Ruinous terms—as all managers have since learnt, to their sorrow, but which some stars still demand, and what is more extraordinary, receive.

Plantou, the dentist, attempted Richard the Third, on the 6th of May, to the amusement of those only who can derive gratification from very bad acting, and who discovered that, *Oh, go-a-head*, was not Shakspeare, a discovery Mr. Plantou made before them, as he searched the book diligently to assure himself the prompter had given him the wrong word, concluding with, "*I no see him—he is not there—go-a-head—your Shakspeare is too hard for me,*" and the



curtain fell amid roars of laughter, groans and hisses. Nor would the audience suffer the farce of "Where Shall I Dine," to proceed, until I made an apology for what they deemed a piece of impertinence, in permitting Mr. Plantou to perform. What a pity they do not retain the same notions of propriety now,—the theatres would be better worth attending.

Mr. and Mrs. Sloman appeared for my benefit, to a full and fashionable house; the more gratifying to my feelings, from the numerous mortifications I had experienced during the season in the discharge of my duties as stage manager. Like the man and his ass, in the fable, I found that to endeavor to please everybody, was the sure method to please nobody.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary exertions made by the management, and the continued novelty presented to the audience, much dissatisfaction was expressed, that English opera, which had been produced at the Park Theatre, New-York, with Messrs. Pearman and Horn, and Mrs. Austin, supporting the principal characters, had not been tried at the Chesnut Street, where they were convinced it would be supported. Mr. Warren, anxious to please all parties, entered into an engagement with the lady and those gentlemen, agreeing to provide and pay for a suitable chorus, and such additional instrumental music in the Orchestra as they might require; indeed, the arrangements called forth the praise of Mr. Berkeley, to whom the details were intrusted. All parties were sanguine in their expectations; but by this engagement Mr. Warren lost upwards of a thousand dollars, (only two nights producing the expenses, and one of these a benefit,) and I lost—*my reputation, Iago*. During these unfortunate operas, the sons of harmony were out of tune. Mr. Horn brought accusations against the integrity of the theatre, which brought blows in return for impertinence. During the melee, *he* received a black eye, and *I* had the mortification of being paraded before the Mayor of the city, on a charge of assault and battery, with threats of further violence, and bound over to keep the peace, under a penalty of one thousand dollars. This did not add to the attraction of the opera or the reputation of the theatre; but such things will happen occasionally in the best regulated families, and such occasions are better met with the old proverb of, "least said, soonest mended."

On the 13th of May, Mr. Rowbotham, one of the most useful actors attached to the theatre, made his first appearance as Dumont, in "Jane Shore." It will be scarcely credited by those who afterwards were his warm admirers, that it was with difficulty I could prevail on the newspaper critics to give him a fair chance. There

was but one feeling among the corps editorial toward him, and that of the most unfriendly nature. He afterwards became a great favorite, and died Manager of the Chestnut Street Theatre, universally regretted. Mrs. Rowbotham appeared as Lucretia in the farce of the "Rendezvous," on the 19th of May, rising by rapid degrees, in favor with her audience, until her loss was felt more severely by the play-goers, than any one of her predecessors. She was engaged by me in London, for a comparatively insignificant situation, but became one of the greatest favorites of the really talented company of the Chestnut Street Theatre. Death made sad havoc in a few years among those who crossed the Atlantic during that season. Mr. and Mrs. Rowbotham, Mr. Southwell, Mr. S. Chapman, Mr. Kerr, Miss Emery, and Mr. Willis, all paid the debt of nature within a few years after their arrival.

On the 3rd of June, Miss Warren eloped with Mr. Willis, during the performance of "Clari," leaving the theatre for the time being, minus a leader of the orchestra and a Leoda in the Episode. This foolish marriage broke the spirit of Mr. Warren, who never recovered from the shock his feelings sustained upon the occasion; although reconciled to his daughter, it preyed upon his mind and impaired his health; he was never the good-humored Sir John Falstaff more.

Mrs. Sloman and Miss Clara Fisher, were the last stars of the season, their attraction completely gone, both engagements commenced and concluded to a beggarly account of empty boxes, with the exception of Mrs. Sloman's benefit—never known to fail.

Mr. Cowell having returned from Baltimore, (where his season had been a most brilliant one) opened the Walnut Street Theatre, announcing that, with the aid of the brush of Mr. Walker, the talented scene painter of the Park Theatre, New-York, he would produce a spectacle which should eclipse everything heretofore seen in Philadelphia, for beauty of scenery and machinery.

Possessing, as I did, the aid of Lewis in the mechanical department, and of Chapman in the arrangement of melo-drama, I was determined that the well merited reputation acquired by the "Red Rover, should not be wrested from us without an effort. I accepted the challenge, and held a consultation with S. Chapman, Lewis, H. Warren, and Griffith, the stage carpenter, to find some piece which should enable us to retire from the contest of the longest season ever known in Philadelphia, not only with honor but with victory. The "Gnome King," presented itself, as furnishing the greatest scope for not only inventive faculty, but scenic effect. With Mr. Warren's approbation, I gave orders to prepare it for

representation, in the most perfect manner. It was produced on the 10th of June, completely annihilating the "Sleeping Beauty," which was well got up at the Walnut St. Theatre, thus closing the first season of my management, on the 21st of June, with flying colors. The "Gnome King" was acted eleven nights, and when the theatre closed, I entertained sanguine hopes it would be a card to open with for the following season.

The theatre was open two hundred acting nights, during which not one week had elapsed without the appearance of a "star." Notwithstanding the rapid succession with which all the talent that could be obtained was placed before the public, I produced the dramatic spectacle of "Peter Wilkins," "The Red Rover," "Thirty Years of the Life of a Gambler," and the "Gnome King," *four* heavy scenery pieces in one season, despatch hitherto unknown in an American theatre; *four* new tragedies; *two* full operas of three acts each, and *one* entirely original, of one act; *eighteen* new farces; *one* musical comedy; *one play*, (the "Usurpers,") in five acts; and *three* domestic melo-dramas; in all thirty-four new pieces, eleven revivals of pieces previously acted in Philadelphia, but almost forgotten. The receipts were great, beyond previous seasons: averaging very nearly five hundred dollars per night. The amount paid to stars, the expenditure necessary to renovate the wardrobe, which was almost entirely new, and the expenditure incurred in England and the continent, left only a small balance in the treasury, (but a good stock of reputation,) to commence the following season.

The stars of the season recorded, many of whom played two and three engagements, were Mr. Horn, Mrs. Knight, Mrs. Sloman, Mrs. Austin, Mr. Sloman, Mr. Hackett, Mr. E. Forrest, Miss George, Miss Kelly, Mr. Burroughs, Miss Clara Fisher, Miss Rock, Mr. Cooper, Mademoiselle Celeste, and Mr. Pearman—an array of talent not often offered in the same period, and rarely, if ever, so well supported by a stock company of excellent actors.

At the conclusion of this season, Mr. R. Peters, jun., expressed to me Mr. Warren's unqualified approbation of the manner in which I had conducted the business of the theatre: and, as a proof of his sincerity, proposed, if agreeable to me, as Warren was getting too old for active business, that he should take me into partnership. This was the first idea I had of becoming manager, on my own account. Flattering as the proposal was, with the prospect of two new theatres in the field for the following season, I decided to reject it; but circumstances occurred, in rapid succession, which induced me to alter that resolution.

During the visit paid annually in the summer to Washington city, by the members of the Philadelphia Theatre, Mr. Cowell suddenly declined proceeding with the alterations commenced at the Walnut Street Theatre. Had I taken what he rejected, how different would have been the result, both to Mr. Warren and myself; by acting in concert and not in opposition, we should have secured an undivided field. One expression of Mr. Warren's altered my intentions; he said, "Wemyss, don't leave me." "Warren, I will *not*; we sink or swim together." I wrote to Mr. Peters on the subject of his proposition, at Mr. Warren's desire, and from that letter may be dated the unfortunate partnership of Pratt and Wemyss, attended with one slight gleam of *sunshine*; the sequel, *desolation* and *ruin*.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

Battle! Battle! Battle!—Three Theatres, when one was deemed sufficient—A Firmament of Stars—Lay on, Macduff—Blow for Blow—Madam Fearon's First Appearance in Philadelphia—E. Forrest—French Dramas and German Musicians—Unfortunate Accident—Preparations to Close the Season—He that Fights and Runs Away, &c., &c.—Hardly Used, but not Beaten.

At the close of the Washington season, Mr. S. Chapman left us to join Mr. Wood, whose new theatre, in Arch street, was to open on the 1st of October, 1828; the only actor, and I record it with pride, whose sense of honor was not strong enough to resist the offer of increased emolument for decreased reputation, in the violation of contract, to assist a rival establishment, built with the avowed purpose of ruining (if possible) Mr. Warren, from whose enterprise they were at present in the United States.

That Mr. Chapman had no cause of complaint, the following letter from him, after Mr. Wood relinquished the management of the new theatre, and he wished to return to the service he had deserted, will prove:—

(COPY.)

PHILADELPHIA, December 12, 1823.

SIR:—I write this by the desire, and at the suggestion of Mr. Jefferson. It is his wish that I should again enlist under your

banners ; and from the gentlemanly treatment I met with from yourself and Mr. Wemyss, I must acknowledge that nothing would give me greater pleasure, provided I received a fair remuneration for my services. I understand you are about to take part of your company to Baltimore ; should that be the case, I should like much to become a member of it ; and should any hostility exist between Mr. Wemyss, or yourself, and me, most happy to consider it (as I always have) a matter of business, and forget it. You know, I believe, my willingness to serve, and my ability, and how anxious I am to forward the interest of that leader, whose officer I consider myself. Mr. Jefferson has kindly offered to deliver you this, who will perhaps state more fully my wishes on the occasion.

I am, sir,

Yours truly,

(Signed,) SAMUEL CHAPMAN.

To WILLIAM WARREN, Esq., }  
Chestnut Street Theatre. }

Mr. Chapman was of much importance to the theatre. To him I had confided the arrangement of melo-dramatic spectacle, which he executed with credit to himself and the theatre. He had, since his arrival in the United States, exhibited much discontent at what he was pleased to term his paltry salary, (one of his own proposing in London, and higher than he ever before received.) So well satisfied with his exertions was I, that I recommended Mr. Warren, before we had the slightest idea of his intended treason, to place his salary on the list for the following year at twenty-eight dollars per week, instead of twenty-two, the terms of his unexpired contract. This intention was communicated to him, and met by the information that he did not intend to remain in the theatre unless his salary was advanced to the same amount offered him by Mr. Wood.

It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that even the respect of Mr. Warren for Mr. Jefferson, whose daughter, Elizabeth, Chapman had married, could not prevail upon him to accede to any proposition from one who had so unceremoniously violated existing contracts. Chapman possessed literary acquirements of no mean order. The cessation of friendly intercourse between us was matter of regret, but being in some measure bondsman for his fidelity, it was the only course I could pursue ; and from the hour of his desertion until his death, we never exchanged a passing salutation, although I do not believe any ill-feeling existed on either side. My position as manager of the Chestnut Street Theatre rendered it impossible to receive his visits, without apparently

countenancing his dereliction from the strict path of rectitude, which should have guided his business transactions; while, as he says, he looked upon it as a matter of business, and laughed at it.

We commenced the winter campaign of 1828, in Baltimore, early in the month of September; and notwithstanding the attraction of a new and also a good stock company, the aid of Mr. and Mrs. Sloman, Miss Rock, Mr. Cooper, Mademoiselle Celeste, and the successful melo-dramas of the "Red Rover," "Gambler's Fate," and the "Gnome King," *the season was a failure*. Indeed, experience proves that the Holliday Street Theatre commences its season with bad houses, which gradually grow worse, until it closes, leaving the actors unpaid, and the manager always in difficulty. The one hundred and twenty-six free admissions, transferrable once in each season, explain the cause. No sooner is an attractive bill laid before them, for a theatrical campaign, with the price of admission fixed at one dollar to the boxes, than the newspapers teem with advertisements offering stockholders' tickets at 25 cents per night, for the season. The only great house was Sloman's benefit, which, as usual, was filled to overflowing.

*Battle—battle—battle.*—We now approach the season 1828 and 1829, in Philadelphia, where we shall find three theatres and a circus struggling for existence—where, heretofore, *one* was deemed sufficient. Mr. Wood opened the Arch Street Theatre on the 1st of October, 1828, with the comedy of the "Honey Moon," and the afterpiece of "Three and the Deuce." The French Opera was placed in the Chestnut Street Theatre to check this move, until Mr. Warren was ready to commence his season, which we did on Thursday, the 13th of November; opening with the play of the "Gamester," in which Mr. Cooper and Mrs. Sloman appeared, and "Fish Out of Water," for Mr. Sloman, as the farce. *Three stars to commence with!!!*

The stars announced by Mr. Wood as engaged to appear, were *Celeste*, and her sister Constance, Mr. Holland, Miss Kelly, Mr. Horn, Mrs. Austin, Miss Rock, and Mr. James Wallack.

From the last-named gentleman much was expected. His popularity was great, and he might be considered as the only antagonist we had to fear. He had previously written to Mr. Warren, offering his services for twelve nights for five hundred pounds sterling, which terms were not accepted. Mr. Wood agreed to give him two hundred dollars per night, which he would have been foolish to reject. I now turned my attention to Mr. E. Forrest, as the only star most likely to occupy the nights of Wallack's

engagement in Philadelphia, with profit to the Chestnut Street Theatre. To my surprise I received a proposition asking two hundred dollars per night. I laughed at this proposal, and in reply stated he must be either mad, or think me so, to *make* such a proposition; which, to have yielded an equal sum to the management, must have averaged nightly *seven hundred dollars!!* He succeeded in obtaining these terms from the manager of the Walnut Street Theatre. All these engagements will account for the speedy bankruptcy of the managers throughout the United States, and the fortunes acquired by "stars" through their downfall.

On the 6th of November, Maywood appeared at the Arch Street Theatre, as "King Lear!" and from that time became identified with the Philadelphia stage, but not as a tragedian. No—to New York we resign all the laurels he boasts in *that* way. As the representative of Scotchmen, he is a valuable actor; but it is as a manager and an active business man, that his reputation is based in this city: for the opportunity he is indebted to me, as I appointed him acting manager of the Washington and Baltimore theatres, in 1829.

On the 17th of November, Mrs. Knight opened in Adela, in the "Haunted Tower." It will scarcely be credited, that the second night of her engagement yielded only eighty dollars; while Cooper and Mrs. Sloman were not doing much better. On the 2nd of November, a novelty was presented in the person of Herr Cline, whose graceful movements on the elastic cord, (what a fashionable title for the tight rope!) astonished the good people of Philadelphia.

The commencement of our season was a bad one. Notwithstanding Mr. Warren paid Cooper fifty dollars per night, Mrs. Knight fifty dollars per night, and Mr. and Mrs. Sloman one hundred and twenty dollars per week, in addition to the current expenses of the theatre, the receipts did not average more than one hundred and fifty dollars per night, to meet an expenditure of \$350. The only consolation was to be found in the fact, that the Arch Street Theatre was not doing better, although Mr. Wood had the advantage of a prosperous opening.

My whole energy was directed to divide the town, if possible, during the engagement of Mr. Wallack, whose first appearance was announced for the 26th of November, as Hamlet. I was certain if this engagement could be broken down, the fortunes of the Arch Street Theatre would be broken with it; I therefore announced Herr Cline's benefit, with a grand ascension from the

back of the stage to the gallery, surrounded by fireworks, for the 26th of November. Aided by Mrs. Knight, and the new farce of "The Invincibles," which had made so decided a hit, the admirable manner in which the ladies went through the manual exercise, being marked by the long-continued applause of the audience, the whole available talent of the theatre being brought to bear, had the desired effect: we triumphed, and it was a triumph well worth the sacrifice made to obtain it.

But as one good turn deserves another, Mr. Wood prepared a similar reception for Clara Fisher, from whom we anticipated a few nights of good business. On the 3rd of December, the night announced for her first appearance, Mr. Wood announced *his own name* for a benefit, with the powerful aid of Mr. Wallack, as a volunteer; but neglected to act on the occasion himself, an omission so singular, as at once to open our eyes to the real intention. I therefore, after much persuasion, induced Warren to announce *his* benefit on the same night, with Clara Fisher as a volunteer.

The gauntlet of opposition was thus boldly thrown; although many were foolish enough to blame Mr. Warren for allowing his name to appear in opposition to his late partner, but now rival. *The only business answer is*, Mr. Wood announced his name to strengthen Wallack's engagement, which began to be known as a failure; and Mr. Warren met this *ruse de guerre* by a similar announcement, to strengthen the engagement of Miss Clara Fisher. In the whole course of my management, I never exercised a better piece of generalship, as the event proved.

The contest was so close, that the houses were as near *a tie* as possible; but it was the death-blow to the Arch Street Theatre, under Mr. Wood's management. After trying the reduction of the prices of admission, (of which Mr. Wood enjoys the honor, for to him and not to me, it belongs,) in the middle of Mr. Wallack's engagement, the theatre closed, never to be opened again under Mr. Wood's management, whose reign, in his new theatre, had been a short and *not* very merry one.

Mr. Wallack made an application to me, to play at the Chestnut Street Theatre, in consequence of Mr. Wood's failure to comply with the terms of his contract,—*he could not pay him*,—and on the 20th of December, 1828, he appeared as Brutus, in Howard Payne's play, at the Chestnut Street Theatre; and on the following night, as Charles Surface, and Michael, in the "Adopted Child." Thus terminated his visit to Philadelphia, most unprofitably to him.



## MADAME FEARON

made her first appearance in Philadelphia, at the Arch Street Theatre; on the 9th of December, as Floretta, in "The Cabinet." This lady was decidedly the best English singer who ever visited the United States; although one who never played a successful engagement. Her appearance was not in her favor; her figure was too much *enbonpoint* for an American eye; she was really fat, fair, and past forty; but in the science of music, I doubt whether Malibran herself excelled her. The young ladies, who are taught to beat a tune upon the piano for the amusement of papa and mamma, could not appreciate the difficulty of her "cadenza," or the study required to form a perfect singer: nay, they had the bad taste to laugh at some of the most beautiful and difficult passages, which she executed with such precision and brilliancy.

The taste for opera (and even now, it is more a fashion than a taste,) had no existence then; La Somnambula and Norma had not become familiar to the ear; Mrs Wood, Miss Sheriff, and Mrs. Seguin had not charmed all our fashionable ladies into ecstasies. The prima donna of a Neapolitan theatre was doomed to return home, mortified with her reception, with no very exalted opinion of the American taste for music.

She declared this to be the country where mediocrity of talent was paid beyond its worth, but where excellence in music, painting, or poetry, would pine and decay for want of patronage; and there is too much truth in the assertion. The fact is—neither the English or the Americans can boast, phrenologically, of the bump of music; the sound of pounds, shillings and pence, with the one, and dollars with the other, is the sweetest music their ears can listen to.

The last night of the present season at the Arch Street Theatre, was announced for Roberts' benefit, on the 22nd of December. On the 25th it closed; re-opened, with Roberts announced as manager, and finally closed on the 29th of December, for Mrs. Blake's benefit, with "Alexander the Great," and the "Turnpike Gate."

So far, so good. Mr. Warren had made great exertions, and those exertions had succeeded. He now engaged Mr. Hunt, Miss Philips, and Miss Clara Fisher, to produce the opera of "Native Land," which had failed at the Arch Street. When produced for Mrs. Austin's benefit, it made a decided hit; and the prospects of "Old Drury," as the Chestnut Street was now termed, began to assume a profitable aspect. Blake was unremitting in his exer-

tions to procure a good company for the opening of the Walnut Street Theatre, on the first of January, which the closing of the Arch Street, rendered an easier task than he had any right to expect.

Warren became frightened at the prospect of further opposition; the price demanded and obtained by the stars, he refused to comply with; this threw Monsieur and Madame Charles Rouzi Vestris, and the corps de ballet, from the Lafayette into the arms of Blake, who eagerly secured their services at any price. With the failure of Wood before his eyes, Warren wished to retire from the contest; he said, "You are young and enterprising; fight the battle, and leave me as an older general, to give you advice: two thousand dollars will relieve me from all present difficulty; now if you can advance that sum, I will let the whole concern upon reasonable terms.

In an evil hour for all parties, I induced Mr. Lewis T. Pratt to join me in the offered speculation; and on the 25th of December, 1828, the lease of the Chestnut Street Theatre was by consent of the stockholders, assigned to Pratt and Wemyss; we paid two thousand dollars, cash down, and agreed to pay the rent of the Chestnut Street Theatre, and allow Mr. Warren three thousand a year for the use of his theatrical property, including the rent of the Baltimore and Washington theatres; in addition to which, he was to receive forty dollars a week, as an actor, during the continuation of the lease; possession of the property to be given on the first of January, 1829.

Warren took his farewell benefit, as manager, December 30th, 1828: the play of "Merry Wives of Windsor," and the spectacle of "Illusion," most beautifully got up, and intended for the New Years' pageant, had no alteration in the management taken place. The last night of Mr. Warren's management, was the play of "Adelgitha," and "Illusion."

On the first of January, 1829, Pratt and Wemyss commenced their career, with an address, written by James S. Barker, the the grand spectacle of "Illusion," and a new pantomime, entitled "Philip Quarle." The Walnut Street Theatre opened for the first time, since its alteration from a circus to a theatre, under the management of Inslee and Blake, with the "Honeymoon," and the "Lottery Ticket:" their house was filled to overflowing, while ours yielded only four hundred dollars.

In the commencement of our undertaking, difficulty surrounded us at every step—Mr. Warren having declined the aid of stars, at the exorbitant prices demanded. Had we even been willing to

comply, the most attractive were engaged to the managers of the Walnut Street Theatre. We were therefore compelled to find the attraction in melo-dramatic spectacle. Mr. Warren had despatched Mr. Wepfer to Germany, at the close of last season, for the purpose of bringing over a full and efficient corps de ballet, for whom we had kept the season open from any entangling engagements, and who were hourly expected.

He arrived without a single dancer, and an addition of five musicians to our already excellent orchestra, who were only wanted in the event of his success with the dancers. However, I shall here record the names of this orchestra, because I do not believe such an efficient one was ever assembled, before or since, within the walls of an American theatre. Leader, Mr. Braun; Mr. Willis, Mr. Wepfer, Mr. Dielman, Mr. Meigner, Mr. Skenlocker.

We were compelled to keep the Baltimore and Washington Theatres open during a winter season. At Baltimore, the management was entrusted to Mr. John Sloman, who resigned it into the hands of Mr. Maywood. In Washington, as members of this company, were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Flynn, Mr. Stone, (author of "Metamora,") and his wife, Mrs. McClean, and many other actors of talent. Our hopes of success, in Washington, were built upon the crowds which would assemble at the metropolis to witness the inauguration of General Jackson, on the 4th of March, 1829, as President of the United States. Unfortunately for our hopes, Mrs. Jackson died, and mourning, not festivity, was the order of the day.

On the 6th of January, Madame Vestris and her husband made their first appearance at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, attracting within those walls the fashionable society, on which the Chestnut Street Theatre alone can depend for success. The Rubicon once passed, the difficulty vanished; attraction alone was required to induce them to repeat their visit—and yet the leaders of fashion, through Mr. Walsh, at that time their organ, cautioned the managers of the Chestnut Street Theatre against engaging French dancers, as no ladies could visit the theatre to witness such an exhibition.

On the 8th of January, Richard Penn Smith's drama, in honor of General Jackson, was produced to a house of one thousand dollars. *the first and last of the same race.* On the 12th, the "Battle of Waterloo," with the aid of seven volunteer companies, was brought out with great success, and on the same night Mr. E. Forrest made his appearance at the Walnut Street Theatre, as

Damon, for which he received two hundred dollars!!! The town, for a time, was Forrest mad, and the managers reaped a rich harvest from their mad speculation. Without wishing to detract from Mr. Forrest's merit, it was a lucky circumstance that Madam Vestris preceded him. He deserves his good fortune, and long may he live to enjoy it; I know no one who has encountered more difficulty from managers, to establish his position; and that *knowledge makes me acknowledge* he is right, now the tables are turned, to squeeze as much out of them as possible, although I have suffered in the process. The idea that Mr. Forrest could be worth \$200 per night, while Mr. Cooper, in his brightest day, never *asked* more than \$50, is a riddle, for those only who paid the money, to solve.

Our piece of the "Battle of Waterloo," was as successful as we could wish, and would have continued to crowd the theatre, but for a melancholy accident. On the 15th of January, Mr. Tryal Deves, a member of one of the volunteer companies, was shot upon the stage, during the performance; he lingered until the 16th, at 2 o'clock, but never spoke after the fatal accident. Such an occurrence within the walls of a theatre, was well calculated to strike an audience with dismay. They retired immediately, but to me the horror of the scene was increased by the fact that the unhappy man, who had thus met his death in the performance of an act of kindness to the managers, had left a wife and nine children, (the youngest not six months old,) who were entirely dependent on his exertions for their daily bread.

The only reparation in my power I offered to the widow—a benefit, free of any expense whatever; and wishing to have the house crowded, I addressed a note to the managers of the Walnut Street Theatre, requesting, if compatible with their arrangements, they would close their Theatre, and add to the attractions of the evening, by allowing the members of their company to unite with ours. Mr. Blake declined closing their doors, but kindly offered to appropriate a night at the Walnut Street Theatre, at no distant period, for the same benevolent purpose, for which Mr. E. Forrest volunteered his gratuitous aid.

The benefit took place at the Chestnut Street Theatre, when Mrs. Sandford, the daughter of Mr. Holman, volunteered her services. The play was "Every One has his Fault," and the afterpiece the "Adopted Child." Each actor resigned his night's salary; the carpenters and doorkeepers also tendered their mite, which I added to the gross receipts.

The Washington Circus also gave a benefit for the same pur-

pose, from which Mrs. Deves realized about one hundred dollars, thus proving that actors, with all their faults, are not devoid of charity to their fellow men in distress.

I now approach a blot upon this subject I would willingly obliterate. Messrs. Inslee and Blake announced their benefit; I permitted Mr. E. Forrest to return one night earlier from his engagement at Washington, for the purpose of lending his aid to the charitable purpose, when, to the astonishment of the whole city, the boxes being taken for the aid of the widow and orphans, and an overflowing house expected, the managers, (*shame upon them!*) not content with deducting their nightly expenses, announced in the bills of the day that one-half only of the gross proceeds would be given to Mrs. Deves and her children, thus turning the misfortunes of the widow and orphans into a vile source of profit to themselves. No one was more indignant than Mr. E. Forrest at such conduct, and it is only to be regretted he did not demand from Inslee and Blake \$200 for his performance, and have given it as a donation from himself to those he intended to serve.

Whether Mr. Inslee or Mr. Blake have the credit of this arrangement, as Rob Roy says, "is between their conscience and the long day," but money so obtained could not prosper.

I am perfectly aware a justification of this measure has been attempted, on the miserable plea that the widow had no claim upon them, her husband was not shot in *their* theatre. *All this is true*: but the benefit advertised at the Chestnut Street Theatre was rendered less productive by their announcement that a benefit would *also* be given for the same object at the Walnut Street Theatre—thus preventing those who would only have deserted their theatre on such an occasion from visiting the Chestnut Street Theatre at all. Certain it is their house was crowded, and that they pocketed between three and four hundred dollars designed for the children of Deves.

Mr. E. Forrest had not the most distant idea he was presenting his services to Messrs. Inslee and Blake, but travelled upwards of an hundred miles, in a severe winter, with the laudable purpose of aiding those unhappy children who were suddenly deprived of their natural protector in an awful and unexpected manner. He expressed his indignation loudly to his friends upon the subject.

From this truly lamentable occurrence may be dated the long train of misfortune which assailed the management of Pratt and Wemyss. By no exertion could we possibly raise a house sufficient to pay the expenses; our capital was dwindling away, while the play of the "Rivals," cast thus: Sir Anthony Absolute, *Warren*;

Captain Absolute, *Wemyss*; Fag, *Hathwell*; Faulkland, *Southwell*; Sir Lucius O'Trigger, *Mercer*; Acres, *Jefferson*; David, *J. Jefferson*; Mrs. Malaprop, *Mrs. Francis*; Lydia Languish, *Mrs. Rowbotham*; Julia, *Mrs. Darley*; Lucy, *Miss Hathwell*; for the benefit of a star, (*Madame Heloise*,) produced only *twenty-two dollars and fifty cents!!!* Alas! for the legitimate drama. One of the finest comedies in the British language, acted as well as it could be at any theatre in the United States of America, to such a sum!

Misfortunes never come single. Mr. E. Forrest, who attracted admiring crowds in Philadelphia, could not play to an average of one hundred and thirty dollars a night in Washington city! during the session of Congress. Mr. Wallack played to still less, and on one occasion not a single individual presented himself to inquire whether the theatre was open, when his name graced the head of the bill. The inauguration week was supported by the aid of Herr Cline, and Washington did, certainly, with the aid of Mr. and Mrs. Sloman, Miss Clara Fisher, Ronzi Vestris, Mr. E. Forrest, and Mr. Wallack, yield a profit of five hundred dollars in a season of three months. Well done! Washington. It is more than either Philadelphia or Baltimore did to—Pratt and Wemyss.

On the 28th of January, 1829, the Chestnut Street Theatre closed for the season, for my benefit, with the comedy of "Wild Oats," and the drama of the "Bottle Imp." All bills paid, and no outstanding demands against the treasury.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

Full Cry for Baltimore—More difficulties—Wagons fast in a Snow-Storm—Theatre Opened—Magnificent Plan for re-decorating Old Drury—Return to Philadelphia—In at the Death—Walnut Street Theatre closed for ever, under the Management of Blake and Inslee—Fresh Start in a very Rainy Night—Play of the "Poor Gentleman," and Farce of the "Invincibles"—The First full Opera ever acted in Philadelphia in the Italian Language—The two Theatres springing up in existence again, under fresh Management—The Beginning of the End—Close of the Management of Pratt and Wemyss.

WITH an unwilling heart, but yielding to necessity, we resolved to leave a clear field to our successful rivals, and try what Baltimore would accomplish for a winter season, aided by Wallack,

Herr Cline, Vestris, Monsieur and Madame Achille, Mr. and Mrs. Pearman, and Mrs. Hamblin, as stars. We therefore closed "*Old Drury*."

In Baltimore a new difficulty met us; the stockholders of the theatre contended that although Mr. Warren had a right to occupy it free of rent, excepting only the season tickets, he had no right to transfer that privilege to a third party, that we could not open unless we agreed to pay fifteen dollars per night, which, added to a license demanded by the corporation of the city of Baltimore, amounting to ten more, made twenty-five dollars per night for the privilege of opening a theatre in the worst theatrical town in America.

Our engagements being made, we could not stop to argue points of *right*, but agreed to the demand as a matter of expedience, and on the 30th of January, 1829, I started for Baltimore on as fine a winter morning as ever dawned. At Lancaster I met Mr. and Mrs. Rowbotham; we slept at York, and when we arose in the morning the ground was covered with snow, which continued to fall during the day—a fair specimen of the weather we were doomed to encounter during the winter.

The first news I heard on my arrival at Baltimore was, that the trustees refused to give possession of the theatre, under Warren's lease, and a report prevailing that we should not be allowed to open on Monday night. With Mr. Wallack engaged at a nightly salary of one hundred dollars, and the company assembling, it may be imagined I was in no very enviable situation. I waited upon Mr. Lucas, jun., and Mr. Cohen, who called a meeting of the trustees, and all difficulty was satisfactorily arranged.

I commenced the season on Monday, the 2d February, under every disadvantage. The snow-storm had so retarded the wagons that they did not reach Baltimore until four o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. Mercer had not arrived, and we were compelled to bustle through the play of "*Pizarro*" in the best manner we could, I playing at least four parts. An apology was due to the audience, which they received with much good nature, knowing how we had contended to open at all. It was an awful night, the snow drifting in every direction, yet the receipts amounted to \$203, which, for Baltimore, augured well. Herr Cline played the following night to \$65—his second night only yielded \$48; while Wallack only played to \$165. An effort was necessary to rouse the Baltimoreans; therefore I tried Wallack, Mrs. Hamblin, and Herr Cline, on the same night, to which I added Monsieur and Madame Achille—the receipts, \$336. This was ruinous—Wal-

lack \$100, Herr Cline \$50, Achille \$60, Mrs. Hamblin \$20, two hundred dollars for extra aid. Vestris and Rosalie, still worse—and now hold up your hands in wonder, and then blush for the spirit of your monumental city : Monsieur Vestris, Madame Vestris, Mademoiselle Rosalie, Mr. and Mrs. Pearman, *all in one night*—gross receipts, \$84!!!

“*It is impossible!*” And so would I have said, had I not seen it. Here, then, we were on the high road to ruin ; but let me do the trustees of the Holiday Street Theatre justice. Seeing and approving the efforts made, they desired the weekly rent to remain until we heard from them upon the subject. This was a seasonable relief, although a small one ; but heretofore we had met all payments.

Misery loves company ; and it was with a feeling of satisfaction, on the verge of ruin ourselves, we heard that Inslee and Blake, whom we had left in Philadelphia in the full tide of success, were unable to pay their actors ; and, to add to their pecuniary difficulties, were at personal enmity with each other.

We resolved to be in at the death, and came to the bold resolution of re-decorating the Chestnut Street Theatre, and making one desperate effort for masterdom.

Mr. Pratt hinted to me, that a new name might possibly be serviceable as stage manager, and proposed Mr. John Jefferson ; the popularity of his father’s name pointing out the propriety of the choice. I named Rowbotham, as having more experience in the direction of the stage ; and he was accordingly announced as stage manager, on the 9th of April, 1829. How he treated me for my kindness on every occasion to him, will appear hereafter ; —“Seek fire in ice ; but seek not gratitude in a white man’s bosom.” So says Lewis, in the “Castle Spectre ;” and he had a tolerably fair estimate of mankind.

The plan furnished by Lewis, our machinist, for the decoration of the Chestnut Street Theatre, was magnificent. Had the agents not interfered and prevented the removal of the canopy over the dress boxes, it would have been the most beautiful theatre in the United States. We were compelled to alter our plans, and neatness was substituted for display ; the dome alone retaining its originality of the burnished rays of a golden sun. It cost us two thousand dollars, and we had the use of it exactly ten weeks.

But leaving Mr. Pratt to superintend his carpenters at the Chestnut Street Theatre, in Philadelphia, let us return to Baltimore, where the season continued as disastrous as ever : but to



the citizens of Baltimore, for their kindness to me as an individual, I must ever be grateful. The directors of the Fancy Rag Ball, requested me to announce my benefit, and they would visit the theatre in character, filling the pit at box prices. This plan was afterwards abandoned, each member being at liberty to visit any part of the house. The receipts were five hundred and fifty dollars; the pieces were, "He lies Like Truth," and "The Bottle Imp." To my friend Boole, the auctioneer, I was indebted for this house; not the only favor I have received at his hands, for which I have nothing to offer but the assurance his kindness is gratefully remembered.

Richard Penn Smith's play of "The Prodigals," was by me re-christened "The Disowned," to avail myself of the popularity of Bulwer's novel of that name. I produced it for the first time, at the Holiday Street Theatre in Baltimore. The exertions of Mr. Southwell and Mr. Jefferson saved the piece, before the excellent acting of Mr. Rowbotham had an opportunity of rendering it triumphantly successful. It was afterwards performed in London.

During this whole season, the weather was our greatest enemy. A good box book was the sure forerunner of a snow-storm, or a deluge of rain, which continued during the evening.

Now for a marvellous story, but a true one. Mr. and Mrs. Pearman having been engaged to perform the opera of "Der Freyschutz," some difficulty occurred with Mr. Braun, the leader of the orchestra and Mr. Pearman, which ended with Mr. Braun leaving the orchestra, and taking with him nearly all the German musicians. Mr. Dielman took the leader's chair, and with five instruments, we actually played the opera of "Der Freyschutz," in the city of Baltimore, three successive nights, to houses averaging two hundred dollars—Mr. Meignen carrying us thus through a difficulty which appeared insurmountable.

The season was thus brought to a close. On the 9th of April, we re-opened the Chestnut Street Theatre, with the "Poor Gentleman" and the "Invincibles;" the rain descending in torrents during the whole of the day. The Walnut Street Theatre closed on the 14th of April, with an announcement, that Mr. Blake's benefit would be postponed until the re-opening of the theatre; which never took place under the management of Inslee and Blake.

As our former failure had been attributed to want of attraction in the shape of stars, we resolved to make a vigorous effort to restore the fortunes of Old Drury. The attraction offered, even

satisfied the stockholders, and their representative season tickets, (the bane of all theatres ; ) but this likewise failing, the cry was, " Why did you not do this before you went to Baltimore ? "

Wallack and Hamblin in the same plays ; the French Corps de Ballet ; Italian opera ; and even fancy dress Balls, were all offered in vain.

The theatre was re-decorated in handsome style ; but another opposition awaited us, and like Banquo's issue, followed by a third. Mr. Aaron Philips opened the Arch Street Theatre on the 15th, and closed it on the 25th. The Walnut Street Theatre opened immediately as a dramatic commonwealth, under S. Chapman, Green and Edmonds, on the 27th of May, the day we closed, to open no more.

On the 28th of April, we announced a grand fancy dress Ball, where everything was abundantly supplied but dancers. We could not muster two quadrilles upon the floor. This was repeated, by desire of those who witnessed the arrangements, on the 2nd of May ; but here we had dancers enough, but so few spectators, that it proved a losing concern.

Mr. James Craig having received a letter from Horn, touching the performance of an Italian opera at the Chestnut Street Theatre, an arrangement was entered into for the services of himself, Madame Fearon, Madame Brichta, Signor Rosich, Signor Augrisani, and " La Triumphe del Musica " was produced on the 5th of May, with the following cast :—Aristea, Madame Fearon ; Celestina, Madame Brichta ; Count, Caroline C. Horn ; Don Febeo, Signor Rosich ; Briscoma, Signor Augrisani.

As this was the first Italian opera acted in Philadelphia, it gave great satisfaction, and in this worse than wretched season, produced four hundred dollars nightly. Could the parties themselves have varied the piece, they would have attracted fashionable audiences to the end of the season, the receipts increasing each night. As it was, Mr. Horn received eight hundred dollars for four nights, while the management, in receiving an equal sum, did not receive sufficient to defray the expenses of extra music, and incidental charges. Thus it is, when stars appear, and draw crowded houses, they not only pocket the profits, but leave the manager *minus* ; as it seldom happens, the nights on which they do play, yield money enough to meet the necessary expenditure ; which deficiency must be supplied from the manager's share of his stars' houses.

Until this system be reformed, adieu to any well conducted theatre. If the public will be content to see one part pre-emi-

nently acted, in preference to the whole play supported by mediocre talent, they will continue to patronise the stars; but if they wish for the rational amusement of a well-acted play, they will desert the stars, no matter how brilliant, to support the manager, who will secure to them such a stock company, as used to grace the boards of the Chestnut Street Theatre, when Warren, Wood, Duff, H. Wallack, Wemyss, Jefferson, Blisset, Burke, Francis, Mrs. Entwistle, Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Darley, and Mrs. Francis, with a host of minor names, equal in merit to many that figure as stars at the present day, all appeared in one play, without exciting the least astonishment.

At that time, a play was cast properly in every department; at present, the minor parts are filled in such a manner, that all gratification derived from the talents of a superior actor, is marred by the miserable bungling, and worse grammar, of those who are deemed of too little importance, to attract the notice of even a paid critic.

The public must correct this evil for themselves. While managers can procure actors—(no, not actors—*individuals*,) for three or four dollars per week; and the public allow such gentlemen to strut their brief hour upon the stage, murdering English grammar at every sentence, there is no hope of amendment.

But, if those persons who condescend to write about the drama would unveil this system, they would do more good in one month towards the cause they profess to support, than will be accomplished in one year, by puffing a manager, or lauding a “star,” who needs not such praise, or dreads their censure.

On the 27th of May, Pratt and Wemyss closed the Chestnut Street Theatre, and terminated their management, with the “*Rencontre*,” “*Wandering Boys*,” and “*Fortune’s Frolic*.” From the first of October, 1828, until the 27th of May, 1829, the struggle for ascendancy had been maintained throughout a cross fire. Wood opened the new theatre, and was the first to retire from the contest; Warren followed; Pratt and Wemyss, succeeded him. Inslee and Blake, Aaron Philips; and the Commonwealth, formed from the broken and scattered forces of all the theatres, alone remained—the success of their summer’s season causing their dissolution.

The stockholders of the Chestnut Theatre, re-entered, and took possession of the theatre. The terms of the original lease not having been complied with, the sub-lease, of necessity, became void. The only regret I experienced, was, Mr. Warren had not

continued the management ; old recollections might have operated in his favor, and prevented the sacrifice of his theatrical property.

He felt keenly the neglect of his rich, and apparently once kind friends—his misfortunes hastening his death.

During the summer, the Washington Circus was altered into a theatre, which for a few weeks was very successful ; aided by the talents of Isherwood, Walstein, Mr. and Miss Wells ; Mrs. Maywood, Mrs. Stiekney, Somerville, and Heyl. I played Marplot there, on the 23d of July, for the benefit of Mr. Huddy, the artist, who had been unfortunately burnt out of his home. For Heyl's benefit, Warren and myself, and Mr. Rowbotham, played in "The way to get Married." It was a very pretty little theatre, and well conducted. I shall have to say a few words about it, at the close of the next season.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

Mr. Pratt in the field Alone—Mr. Philips at the Arch—Davis's French Opera Company at the Chestnut Street—The Walnut Street—Chapman, Green and Edmonds—A French Corps de Ballet at the Tivoli, in Market Street—Thus began the Flourishing Winter Seasons of 1829 and 1830—Metamora—Faustus—Theatrical Fund—Apparent necessity for such an Establishment—Coldness and Apathy of Actors in its behalf.

MR. PRATT made an application for a new lease, to the board of agents, with the understanding, that if I made no application and he obtained the theatre, the outstanding debts of the firm should be assumed by him. In making this arrangement and retiring from the management, I intended to leave the city of Philadelphia ; but fate would not permit me. I applied to every manager in New-York and Boston, without success. Theatricals were in that state, that theatres were closing and managers becoming bankrupts every day.

The winter season of 1829 and 1830, was commenced by Mr. A. J. Philips, at the Arch Street Theatre, on the 31st of August, with the play of the "West Indian," and the melo-drama of "Luke the Laborer." He introduced to the Philadelphia audience, Mr. Archer, Mr. Walton, Mr. Andrews, Mr. Charles Young, Mr. Hazard, Mr. John Fisher, Mr. Jervis ; Mrs. Young, Miss Hamilton,

Mrs. Vernon, Miss Coleman, and many other actors of merit. He really had an excellent company; and what appeared to promise success, many new faces.

The French opera company, so termed, under Mr. Davis, opened the Chestnut Street Theatre, on the 7th of September, and Mr. Pratt commenced his season, on the 20th of October, with the "Honey Moon," and "A Roland for an Oliver."

The Walnut Street Theatre also opened under the management of S. Chapman, Green and Edmonds, on the 7th of September, with the play of "She would and She would not;" and the farce of the "Turnpike Gate," Miss Clara Fisher being the star of the evening.

Messrs. Fogg and Stickney, opened an Amphitheatre; and a very inferior French corps de ballet, tried their fortune under Monsieur Babiere, at the old Tivoli, in Market street. It may be said, with truth, that Philadelphia was this season the emporium of all the regular dramatic talent in the United States; yet it was the most disastrous one ever known; the actors being literally in a state of desperation. For myself; for seven weeks I never received one cent from the treasury; and I have reason to know, others were not paid in better proportion.

English opera was the attempted attraction at the Chestnut Street Theatre, with Mr. and Mrs. Pearman. It was produced with every proper attention to rehearsals; but met with little success.

This season was marked by the production of Stone's prize tragedy of "Metamora," by Mr. Philips, at the Arch Street Theatre, on the 22nd of January, 1830. The anxiety to see Mr. E. Forrest in the original character thus prepared for him, crowded the theatre on each night of the performance, adding to his reputation as an actor, as well as to his private fortune, as a man. It is a very indifferent play, devoid of interest; but the character of Metamora is beautifully conceived, and will continue to attract, so long as Mr. E. Forrest is his representative; it was written for him, and will, in all probability die with him. Few actors would have the hardihood to risk their reputation in a character, so decidedly known as the best performance of the first tragedian of the American stage, provoking comparison to their disadvantage.

"Faustus," too, formed quite a topic of conversation. Philips had spared no expense or exertion to produce this drama in a style worthy of a metropolitan theatre. Coyle's scenery was delightful; but the tact of Mr. S. Chapman, turned the puffing of his antagonist to his own advantage. Possessing the aid of Lewis, he

forestalled public opinion, by producing this piece at the Walnut Street Theatre, on Saturday, December 12th, 1829, in such a manner as to satisfy the public, and ruin the prospects of the Arch Street Theatre, where every thing that scenery, music, costume, or machinery could do, was *perfect*. But it was not played until the 16th of December, when, for the cause here stated, it did not repay the manager for his labor. This was a fair business rivalry, for which S. Chapman deserved great credit. He reaped by promptitude, the reward which belonged to Phillips. While these two theatres were thus employed in the endeavor to neutralize their attraction, the Chestnut continued to drag on from week to week, without a chance of success.

Mr. James Murdock made his first appearance at the Arch Street Theatre on the 13th of Oct., 1829, as Frederick, in "Lover's Vows," a performance of much promise, and his judicious choice of DeCamp for his first manager, enabled him to reach, in a few years, a respectable position in his profession. He is decidedly the best juvenile actor on the American stage.

#### THEATRICAL FUND.

Actors are proverbial for their improvidence in all money arrangements: honest in principle, where they receive their income, but living up to the full amount of it. Should a season overtake them, when the manager is unable to pay their weekly salary, a few months' ill involve them in debt, from which they experience more than ordinary difficulty to extricate themselves; their vocation renders them also liable to accidents, and when ill health assails them, they are indeed helpless mortals. With the knowledge of these facts, is it not strange that every effort to establish a fund for the relief of distressed and decayed actors in the United States, should prove abortive. It was attempted in Boston, where Matthews left all the proceeds of premium sales for tickets, on the nights of his performance, to be devoted to such an institution.

In New-York, large sums have been contributed, of the disposal of which no person can or will give an account. In Philadelphia, we thought we had hit upon the right plan, by appointing a majority of the trustees from the walks of private life, but our funds were suffered to remain idle for seven years in the Philadelphia Bank, and when finally invested in the loan of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, no interest was added to the principal, while the depreciation of the stock renders it doubtful whether the original investment will ever be paid.

The prospects of the fund, commenced in Philadelphia on the 6th of December, 1829, were most flattering. The depression of the interests of the drama made a collective movement of vital importance; a committee of five from each theatre met for the purpose of forming a "General Theatrical Fund." From the Chestnut Street: Jefferson, Wemyss, Kilner, Maywood, and Rowbotham. From the Arch Street: Archer, Walton, Andrews, Roberts, and Foot. From the Walnut Street: S. Chapman, John Jefferson, Clarke, Green, W. Chapman. After preliminary arrangements, on the 20th of December, 1829, a set of rules and regulations for the government of the association, were formed, and signed by the following gentlemen:—W. B. Wood, E. Forrest, F. C. Wemyss, Joseph Jefferson, J. Green, S. Chapman, John Jefferson, Thomas Kilner, R. C. Maywood, G. Andrews, Thos. Archer, W. B. Chapman, J. H. Clarke, H. H. Rowbotham, J. F. Foot, T. J. Walton.

An election was held for officers, which resulted in the choice of James N. Barker, Edwin Forrest, Quintin Campbell, as Trustees; John Henry Clarke, as President; William B. Wood, as Secretary; R. C. Maywood, J. F. Foot, F. C. Wemyss, Thomas Archer, Samuel H. Chapman, Standing Committee.

The Fund Association being thus organized, the following circular was addressed to every theatre in the United States, with a printed copy of the Rules and Regulations:

SIR, OR MADAM,

Your attention is earnestly requested to the enclosed Rules and Regulations of the General Theatrical Fund.

The list of members will convince you of the readiness and sincerity with which its objects have been entered into; the expedience and necessity of such a society, I trust, will induce your hearty concurrence and co-operation; and I am authorized to add, that many liberal donations already have been bestowed.

By order,

(Signed) JOHN FORRESTER FOOT.

Secretary, T. F.

Mr. E. Forrest, with a promptitude which did honor both to his head and heart, tendered his gratuitous services for one night, at every city or town in which he might be engaged, in aid of the receipts, added to which, he gave a donation of fifty dollars; Miss Clara Fisher and Mrs. Sloman gave each a similar sum.

Messrs. E. L. Carey, Pierce Butler, W. E. Bridges, W. E. Israel, C. Alexander, J. Savage, F. A. Hüber, P. Wetherall, C.

Wetherall, G. D. Shaeff, of the city of Philadelphia, each gave a donation, several of them expressing their intention to repeat the same annually, until the Fund should be firmly established. The first benefit took place on Tuesday, March 26th, at the Arch Street Theatre, on which occasion the Chestnut and Walnut were closed, and the actors of the three theatres employed in the performance. E. Forrest played Macbeth; the farce was the "Lancers;" and the first address on behalf of our infant association, was delivered by Mr. Archer, the stage manager of the Arch Street Theatre. The receipts were six hundred and five dollars; thus, in less than three months, paying all expenses incurred, we had a balance in bank of seven hundred and sixty-five dollars, the most kindly feelings for our success in the community, during the worst theatrical season ever known in Philadelphia, when actors were suffering distress from the non-payment of salaries, and managers relieving themselves from the anticipated horrors of a prison, by the benefit of the insolvent laws.

All our labor was thrown away by the apathy of those most interested. The money obtained was permitted to remain idle in bank, the opportunity lost of receiving donations from the stars who visited us from Europe; the actors, one by one, declining to pay their dues, and the chance of realising fifty thousand dollars, which would hourly have increased, forming a Fund to which every deserving actor could have looked with confidence for support in old age, placing him beyond the reach of misfortune, was lost!

Many years will elapse before so favorable an opportunity will again present itself: should it occur, I hope the actors will profit by experience, and establish a General Fund, which shall be as lasting as the profession, and to which each may point with pride, and say, "*This is my work.*"

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## CHAPTER XX.

No Song no Supper—Jefferson leaves the Theatre, and never afterwards Acts in Philadelphia—Plenty of Hard Work—No Money—I give up at last in Despair, and come out with an Advertisement, "Starved Out"—Man of Business behind a Counter—Calvin Edson, the Living Skeleton, turned Actor—Horrible Destitution of the Philadelphia Actors during this Season.

DESOLATION and misery was now the order of the day. Lucky was the actor who could realise a few dollars from his benefit: as



to salary, it was insanity to look for such a thing. To change your situation was by no means to better your position. But when it is known that the actors of the Chestnut Street Theatre, performed the opera of "No Song no Supper," without a note of instrumental music, the orchestra having struck, because they were not paid, some idea may be formed of the state of the theatres. The audience permitted the vocal music to proceed, and even honored one or two pieces with an "encore."

Booth, who was engaged, was attacked with one of those fits of periodical insanity, to which he is subject, and was chained down to his bed, thus injuring instead of aiding our cause.

Jefferson, whose benefit was announced with the new play of "A School for Grown Children," could scarcely muster enough to pay the expenses, and resolved to leave the theatre. The manager having demanded and received the full amount of his nightly charge on such occasions, offered him but half his income at the treasury, on Saturday. This was a blow the favorite comedian could not brook. The success of Sloman, an actor so greatly his inferior, had irritated him both with his manager and the audience; but what must have been the apathy of the public towards dramatic representation, when such a man, whose reputation shed lustre on the theatre to which he was attached, was permitted to leave the city of Philadelphia with scarcely an inquiry as to his whereabouts, two-thirds of the audience ignorant of his departure. The last time he acted in Philadelphia was for my benefit, kindly studying the part of Sir Bashful Constant, in "The Way to Keep Him," which he played admirably.

#### MR. JOSEPH JEFFERSON

Was an actor formed in nature's merriest mood, a genuine son of Momus; there was a vein of rich humor running throughout all he did, which forced you to laugh despite of yourself. He discarded grimace as unworthy of him, although no actor possessed a greater command over the muscles of his own face, or the faces of his audience, compelling you to laugh or cry at his pleasure. His excellent personation of old men acquired for him, before he had reached the meridian of life, the title of *Old Jefferson*.

The astonishment of strangers at seeing a good looking young man pointed out in the street as Jefferson, whom they had seen the night previous, at the theatre, tottering apparently on the verge of existence, was the greatest compliment which could be paid to the talent of the actor.

His versatility was astonishing; light comedy, old men, pantomime, low comedy, and occasionally juvenile tragedy. Educated in the very best school for acquiring knowledge in his profession, his father being an actor of no mean repute in Drury Lane Theatre, during the reign of Garrick, Jefferson was an adept in all the "trickery" of the stage, which, when it suited his purpose, he could turn to excellent account. He was the reigning favorite of the Philadelphia Theatre for a longer period than any other actor ever attached to the city, and left it with a reputation all might envy.

In his social relations, he was the model of what a gentleman should be, a kind husband, an affectionate father, a warm friend, and a truly honest man. He died at Harrisburg, where he had been playing, at his son's theatre, but no stone marks the spot where moulder the remains of one of the brightest ornaments of his profession.

"Alas! poor Yorick!"\*

During no period of my theatrical life, did I work harder or receive less money than during the season under Mr. Pratt's management, of 1829 and 1830; it was no uncommon occurrence to

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\* Since writing the above, some kind friend (whom I have every reason to believe was Chief Justice Gibson, as he mentioned such an intention to me when travelling together from Pittsburgh,) has erected the following—eleven years after his death.

Beneath this marble are deposited the ashes of  
 JOSEPH JEFFERSON:  
 An Actor,  
 Whose unrivalled powers  
 took in the whole extent of Comic Character,  
 from *Pathos* to heart-shaking *Mirth*.  
 His coloring  
 was that of Nature,  
 warm, fresh,  
 and enriched with the finest conceptions of  
 Genius.  
 He was a Member  
 of the  
 Chestnut Street Theatre of Philadelphia,  
 in its most high and palmy days,  
 and a compeer of Cooper, Wood, Warren, Francis,  
 and a host of worthies, who, like himself,  
 are remembered with admiration and praise.  
 He died at this place in 1832.

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Alas! Poor Yorick, I knew him, Horatio:  
 A fellow of infinite jest, and most excellent fancy.

appear in two new characters on the same evening, and on more than one occasion, "three." So long as there appeared the slightest chance of resuscitation to the fallen fortunes of the Chestnut Street Theatre, the actors labored diligently, but when after all their toil, *no money* could be obtained for weeks in succession, one by one dropt from their allegiance; for myself, I abandoned the theatre in despair, my benefit alone preserving me and my family from actual starvation. In this situation of affairs, I turned my thoughts to my old vocation of selling lottery tickets, and on the 22d of March, 1830, much to the annoyance of many of my professional brethren, I issued the following advertisement—

### Starved Out!

The unprecedented depression of Theatricals in the city of Philadelphia, having deprived the managers of the different theatres, of the means of paying their actors, or fulfilling their contracts, the profession no longer affords the means of procuring the humble fare of bread and cheese for the support of a family. Under these circumstances, am I compelled to seek for other means of subsistence, and to exclaim reluctantly,

Othello's occupation's gone!

F. C. Wemyss, grateful for past favors, again solicits the patronage of his friends and the public, having opened a lottery office in the Arcade, No. 34, East Avenue, and 35 West Avenue, where, by strict attention, he hopes to merit support. Having been three years out of business, he can only at present refer to prizes sold in days of "*Auld lang Syne*:" and many whose fortunes have been amply increased by their purchases from him, can bear testimony that Wemyss' office was *fortune's own abode*. He has sent a most pressing invitation to her, and doubts not she will return to her old quarters.

[Here followed a scheme of the Union Canal Lottery.]

The heading of this advertisement gave particular offence to the managers. To their remonstrances I could only answer, *Is it not true?* and then laughingly using the language of Shakspeare, say, "I am not bound to please thee with my (answers) advertisements."

I now made known my terms for acting, to be five dollars per night, payable in advance, for any parts I had previously acted, and ten dollars, if required to study a new character. Although I could receive money from the treasury, as a regularly engaged actor, yet this arrangement yielded me an average of from fifteen

to twenty dollars per week, and was a most seasonable supply to aid my new business. It was thus I became a member (for occasional aid only,) of the seceders, who opened the Washington Theatre, in York Road; and those who witnessed the performance of the comedies of "John Bull," and "The Rivals," left the theatre delighted with the representation. Mr. Duff, Mr. Wemyss, Mr. Foote, Mr. Clarke, W. Webb, Mr. Logan, Mrs. Wheatley, Mrs. Stickney, Mr. and Mrs. C. Durang, were members of the company. It was here that Mr. David Ingersoll, a young man of much promise, and well known in New-York as an excellent actor, made his first public effort: dissipation finished his career at an early age, which common prudence would have made a brilliant one. What a pity it is, that while so many actors have imitated Mr. E. Forrest on the stage, so few have imitated his admirable example of sobriety and economy, in private life. Mr. A. Adams, his only successful rival, would have possessed a fortune equal to the great tragedian, had his conduct off the stage been marked by the same correct demeanor.

Alas! that a man should put an enemy  
Within his mouth, to steal away his brains.—SHAKSPEARE.

One of those outrages upon public decency, too common in the minor theatres of London, but which had hitherto never been attempted in America, was perpetrated at the Walnut Street Theatre, in the production of a piece, under the title of the "Mail Robbers," while Porter and Wilson were upon trial for their lives, for the commission of the crime of robbing the United States mail; both being found guilty, and sentenced to be executed. Can anything be more revolting, than making such a subject the theme of dramatic representation, while the victims were awaiting the penalty due to their crimes, among the community whose laws they had outraged. Surely, this is a case in which the authorities of the city should have interfered, to prohibit such an exhibition; that they did *not* do so, is a lasting disgrace. The crime, however, did not go unpunished.

Mr. S. Chapman, the manager, having, with his artist, visited Turner's Lane, where the robbery was committed, to give an exact scenic view of the spot, contracted a violent cold, which terminated his existence on the 16th of May, 1830. By a singular fatality, his last appearance upon the stage was in the character intended to represent Porter, who was afterwards hanged. Poor Chapman! he was a man of varied talent, of much literary knowledge, and an universal favorite: with all his faults, the stage "could have better spared a better man." Had he lived, he would have

produced an entire revolution in the minor drama of America ; with his death, ceased the prosperity of the theatre ; he is buried in Ronaldson's cemetery, where a neat monument records his memory, erected by friends he had gained during a sojourn of two years and eight months in the city of Philadelphia.

The death of Mr. Chapman proved the service that a well regulated theatrical fund must be to actors in distress. No sooner was it known, than a special meeting was summoned, and the following letter was addressed to his widow :—

(COPY.)

PHILADELPHIA, May 18, 1830.

MY DEAR MADAME,—

In deep condolence for your late bereavement, the members of the General Theatrical Fund respectfully tender their assistance, professionally, in aid of a benefit, should you feel disposed to avail yourself of their exertions. With best wishes for your prosperity, we remain

Your obedient servants,

(Signed,)

J. H. CLARKE,  
FRAS. C. WEMYSS.

J. T. FOOTE, Secretary.

On the 26th of May, this benefit took place at the Walnut Street Theatre. The pieces selected, the "School for Scandal," and "High Life Below Stairs;" every member of the Fund affording their gratuitous services, thus placing five hundred dollars at the disposal of the widow.

Before the close of this calamitous season, actors were to be seen walking the streets of Philadelphia, with their toes protruding from their shoes, their elbows from their coats ; and their hats, which had once been black,—oh ! name them not—

" ——— I had a hat,  
Yet it was not all a hat :  
The rim was gone."

(Vide) *Parody on Lord Byron's "Darkness."*

Eagerly seizing the occasional chance of obtaining a dollar, for acting, as the substitute for one whose indisposition (to act without being paid—ha ! ha ! ha !) prevented their appearance ; forcing the manager into an apology, which the audience knew to be untrue, and sneered at accordingly.

The last attempt in this scale of degradation, was the reduction of the price of admission to the boxes, to fifty cents, and the production of Calvin Edson, the living skeleton, as an actor. In the burletta of "Rochester," on 24th of June, 1830, he appeared as Jeremiah Thin; but even this failed to relieve the manager from any portion of the difficulty he labored under: bad became worse, until the doors of the Chestnut Street Theatre closed for the season, under Mr. Pratt's management, with a bill of performance announced, which could not take place, because actors, musicians and carpenters, were worn out by hope delayed and broken promises, of—money to-morrow—which to-morrow never came.

If matters fared thus badly with the performers of Old Drury, they were not much better at the other houses. Mr. Philips, after a disastrous season, attempted to open again; but closed for want of an audience, on the fourth night. The Walnut Street Theatre, whose chance of success ended with the death of Samuel Chapman, lingered open to the last, closing with a load of debt which forced the managers to shelter themselves under the benefit of the insolvent laws.

If the season of 1828 and 1829, saw the retirement of Wood, Warren, Blake, (Ainslee,) Inslee, and Wemyss, 1829 and 1830, terminated the career of S. T. Pratt, A. J. Philips, Green, Edmonds, and poor Sam Chapman; for their successors, I refer you to the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

Campaign of 1830 and 1831—Non-payment of Salaries—Charles Kean—Master Burke—The Star System—Rush-lights—Mademoiselle D'Jick, the *great* actor—Tyke, in the "School of Reform."

THE campaign of 1830-'31, was opened on Saturday, the 28th of August, by the Chapman family, at the Walnut Street Theatre, with the "Heir at Law," and "Love Laughs at Locksmiths." The company was really one of talent, and merited a better fate than non-payment of salaries.

But *novelty, new faces, strange faces*, has ever been the cry in Philadelphia when amusement is proposed, which desire is no sooner complied with, than a wish succeeds for the faces of their old favorites, whose absence is lamented when too late, and comparisons instituted by no means favorable to the new comers. It appears almost incredible, after the misery of the spring and summer season of 1830, that any capable actor should have been found hardy enough to venture upon management; yet all three of the theatres were occupied, and ready for a fair start in this road to ruin.

The present season was marked by the appearance of the smallest and the largest star that ever graced the same theatre—Master Burke, the Lilliputian musician and actor, and Mademoiselle D’Jick, the elephant of Siam, who both appeared at the Arch Street Theatre, which opened on the 30th of August, under the management of Archer, Maywood and Walton, with the “Bride of Lam-mormoor,” and “Turn Out;” Hyatt and Kilner being added to the names familiar to the citizens of Philadelphia.

Davis, of the French opera, opened the Chestnut Street Theatre for a short season.

Messrs. Lamb and Coyle made me an overture to enter into partnership with them in the Chestnut Street Theatre, or to take the stage management. I recommended Mr. W. B. Wood for that situation, as I believed his name associated with the theatre was the most likely to command the support of the fashionable circles in aid of the drama; but the revival of that taste, which appeared extinct, for theatrical representations, was reserved for the appearance of Miss Fanny Kemble, at a later period, of whom hereafter. I declined their offer, but accepted an engagement in the theatre, which opened on Monday, the 18th of October, with the “Heir at Law,” the “Lottery Ticket,” and the “Young Widow;” an address, written by W. C. Bridges, was spoken by me, of which I regret I did not preserve a copy. John Mills Brown and Mrs. C. Young were the only strangers of any reputation who possessed the charm of novelty, although the season commenced very prosperously.

The first announcement which excited attention, was the name of *Mr. Charles Kean*, (son of the great tragedian,) at the Arch Street Theatre, on the 23rd of September, to perform the part of Richard the Third. The house was well filled, and I took my seat in the boxes, with a feeling of regret that Mr. C. Kean had not selected the Chestnut Street Theatre to make his first appearance. Old recollections, and the warm friendship I entertained for his

father, rendered me anxious for his success. I left the theatre with a feeling of disappointment, and a conviction that the mantle of the father had not descended upon the shoulders of the son. The performance was weak throughout, painfully reminding the auditor of his father's excellence, only to recall his own want of physical power to act such a part as Richard the Third; it was a failure which no subsequent effort could eradicate. And had Mr. C. Kean's pretensions to be ranked among the first actors of the British stage, rested upon his *first* visit to the United States, his claim could not have been recognised; to his *name* alone was toleration conceded, added to which, he possessed a rival in the person of Mr. E. Forrest, a young man of his own age, rapidly rising in popularity with his countrymen, and between whom and himself comparisons were instituted on all occasions. It was, therefore, a fortunate circumstance for his reputation, that he paid the United States a second visit when his position as an actor was more definitively fixed, but he will never prove an attractive star. In the Atlantic cities he played Richard, Sir Giles Overreach, Shylock, Othello, Hamlet, and Reuben Glenroy. On the 14th of December,

#### MASTER BURKE,

the Irish Roscius, appeared for the first time in Philadelphia, at the Arch Street Theatre, in the character of Young Norval, in "Douglas," leading the overture of Guy Mannering, and playing Dr. O'Foole, in the "Irish Tutor." The house presented any thing but a flattering appearance, the Philadelphians having no peculiar relish for precocity; but his success was great, and the remainder of his engagement must have amply compensated for any little mortification he may have experienced on his first reception. The sweet tones of his violin, and the graceful manner in which he handled his bow, created a sensation in the musical world. He left the city with his pocket well filled with dollars, and a reputation which rendered it difficult to procure a seat in the boxes, when he returned. Against his acting I must be allowed to enter a protest—it was so inferior to that of Clara Fisher at a much earlier age, it excited no astonishment, and was tiresome to the audience, but to his musical abilities I render a willing homage. He was a *prodigy*, deserving the success which crowned his efforts.

A new tragedy, from the pen of David Paul Brown, Esq., a distinguished member of the Philadelphia bar, was produced at



the Chestnut Street Theatre, on the 14th of December, 1830, entitled "Serforius." Booth played the hero in a manner which would have commanded success for any piece; the beautiful poetry of this play, flowing from his lips, must have gratified the fastidious taste of any author—how, then, must it have delighted the audience. The play wanted *action*—there was too much declamation. It was received by a fashionable audience with every mark of success, and repeated several times, being withdrawn only by the termination of Mr. Booth's engagement—another of the blessings of the star system entailed upon managers, who are thus prevented from reaping the harvest of their exertions, even from a successful play, the engagement of the *star* elsewhere precluding the possibility of prolonging an engagement.

Richard Penn Smith also produced a new piece, for Christmas Night, founded on Cooper's novel of the Water Witch, in which I had to play Tom Tiller. Mr. Young, for whom the part was originally compiled, returning it to the managers at the eleventh hour, as too long, he being utterly unable to commit the words to memory. My faculty, in that respect, being notorious throughout the profession, it was useless to say I *could* not do it, and I was unwilling to say I *would* not; but after laboring successfully at my task, I could not conceal my mortification to find I was the only person in the piece conversant with the language of the author. Instead of receiving help from those who had less to learn, I was obliged to prompt others, and bear the whole burthen of a three act melo-drama on my own shoulders. It was a fortunate circumstance that the holiday folks who composed our audience were too noisy to observe our delinquency, or the piece would have met a different fate. It passed off with *eclat*, and then passed on to the managers' shelves.

On the 8th of January, Charles Kean commenced an engagement at the Chestnut Street Theatre, but the error he had committed in not choosing it as his first ground, was not to be repaired. His houses were worse than he attracted at the Arch Street Theatre. Throughout this season, the stars were continually running from one house to the other; so that, as Jack Falstaff has it, "*you knew not where to have them.*"

Mr. E. Forrest, after playing at the Arch Street Theatre, also came for a few nights to the Chesnut Street Theatre; so also Madam Fearon, Hackett, Finn, Mrs. Austin, and others.

On the 10th of January, 1831, I revived, for my benefit, the good old comedy of the "Suspicious Husband," and a new piece entitled "Free and Easy," heading my play-bill thus:

No Stars,	
But a host of approved	Rush-lights.
Wood,	Wemyss,
Roberts,	J. M. Brown,
Young,	Green,
Mrs. Darley,	Mrs. Wood,
Mrs. Young,	Mrs. Willis,
Miss Kerr,	Mrs. F. Durang.

Rushlights! Most of them better stars than those who grace the play-bills nightly, with their names in large letters, in *these* degenerate times. The play was judiciously chosen, well acted, and presented to a fashionable audience, but the manager pocketed the proceeds, kindly allowing me to call upon my friends to make up the deficiency, by taking a second benefit. This was the first time I ever knew the proceeds of an actor's benefit to remain unpaid; it had always been considered a trust, sacred in the hands of the manager. Misfortune may render a man unable to meet his payments of weekly salary, but to refuse to pay over the proceeds of an actor's benefit, is a crime, a breach of trust of the blackest kind, seldom practised by the most unprincipled manager.

A new tragedy, written by R. P. Smith, entitled "Caius Marius," was produced by Mr. E. Forrest, at the Arch Street Theatre, on the 12th of January, 1831. It was not fairly treated by the actors, many of whom were imperfect in the words of the author, and consequently coldly received by the audience. The same play was placed in my hands in 1828, when Southwell was cast for the hero. Luckily for the author, it was not produced. Mr. Forrest paid much better for original plays than the managers, who being able to purchase the best plays of English dramatists for a few dollars, felt little disposition to risk hundreds on native productions, which, unaided by the talent of an acknowledged star, seldom outlive the first night of representation.

On the 17th of February, a curious struggle took place for the possession of her royal elephantine highness, Mademoiselle D'Jick. Lamb, of the Chestnut Street, having lost the opportunity of securing the services of Master Burke, by entrusting his business to a third party, in New-York, resolved to be the first upon the ground for the larger attraction, and travelling express, secured *the greatest of all stars*; but neglecting, in his hurry and exultation, to sign his agreement with Mr. Gallot, Mr. Maywood, who proceeded more slowly, but too surely, succeeded in obtaining the prize. To settle the dispute between the claimants, Lamb and Coyle applied for an injunction,

to prevent the appearance of the elephant at the Arch Street Theatre, until Mr. Gallot fulfilled a prior engagement with them, which they asserted had been entered into. The application was heard before Judge Hopkinson ; after affording an opportunity to the lawyers for the display of much forensic eloquence, the injunction was refused, much to the satisfaction of the impatient audience assembled at the Arch Street Theatre, and the no small mortification of the applicants.

A very good caricature was issued by Aiken, of the two managers en route to New-York, which afforded more amusement to the public than the performance of the elephant, who, in a theatrical phrase, did not draw, and consequently, according to Dr. Burke's opinion, could not be a *good actor*, although nobody can deny she was a great one.

On the 5th of April, I appeared at the Walnut Street Theatre, in the character of Tyke, in the "School of Reform," which I had promised to act, to oblige a very worthy friend of mine, (whose name I do not feel authorised to mention,) to whom I once stated I thought I could play the part.

Before the curtain rose, I would willingly have paid fifty dollars to have escaped the effect of my folly, in making a rash promise. Fancy a light comedian, held in high estimation by the audience of the Chestnut Street Theatre, attempting to perform the most difficult part in the range of domestic tragedy, requiring a broad Yorkshire dialect to afford even a chance of success. By one of those freaks, which frequently make or mar an actor, I was successful, beyond my most sanguine expectations.

The difficulty of the task ensured my triumph: the audience expected, and came prepared, to witness a failure ; but when the curtain fell on the second act, the applause was so hearty that I felt I was sure of success. When I appeared again, I was greeted by three distinct rounds of applause, and was offered, at the close of the performance, one hundred dollars to repeat the character on the following Saturday night.

So much was said out of the theatre about this performance, that when I was in treaty with Maywood and company, Rowbotham made a positive stipulation, that I should open in Tyke, which I agreed to do, on condition that he gave me a Saturday night at the Walnut Street Theatre for my benefit, and should not ask me to repeat the part.

My second attempt was by no means so successful as my first ; six weeks had elapsed, during which time all my theatrical friends had been urging me to turn my attention to what are termed the "Heav-

Countrymen," of which Tyke is the best specimen. The audience expected too much, and were disappointed. In the first instance they were agreeably surprised, and in the second, proportionately disappointed, although they warmly applauded the effort. Three times in the course of my theatrical career, I have received the marked approbation of the audience, for acting parts totally dissimilar to my usual cast of characters, and from which I expected to reap anything else than reputation. *Dr. Cantwell*, in the "Hypocrite," *Tyke*, in the "School of Reform," and *Old Nelson*, in "Jonathan Bradford," will ever be remembered by me, as characters which proved to the audience I was capable of affording them amusement in a more varied line of the drama, if I chose to turn my attention to them.

The seventh of May, 1831, is deserving of record, as being the day which gave birth to the firm of Maywood & Co., the only management assuming anything like stability since the days of Warren and Wood; they opened the Walnut Street Theatre with the "Foundling of the Forest," and the "Sleep Walker," remaining open until the 31st day of July, at which time they obtained possession of the Chestnut Street Theatre also.

The season 1831 and 1832, saw only two competitors in the field, Maywood & Co., and the new firm of Jones, Duffy, and Forrest, who obtained possession of the Arch Street Theatre, on the retirement of Archer, Maywood and Walton; Lamb and Coyle were succeeded at the Chestnut Street by Pratt, Maywood and Rowbotham; thus, at the close of the season, every management terminated its career—at the Arch Street, Archer, Maywood and Walton; at the Chestnut Street, Lamb and Coyle; and at the Walnut Street, the Chapman Family.

## CHAPTER XXII.

New Management—John R. Scott—Mr. Hilson—Four new American Tragedies—Hackett's "Lion of the West"—Stars announced—Forrest and the Gladiator—Warren's last appearance as an Actor.

The season of 1831-32, was opened by Maywood & Co., on Saturday, the 27th day of August, at the Walnut Street Theatre, with the melo-drama of the "Heart of Mid-Lothian," and the farce of "Raising the Wind," in which I personated Jeremy Diddler.

On the Monday following, Messrs. Jones, Duffy, and Forrest, opened the Arch Street Theatre, with Sheridan's comedy of "The Rivals," and "Black-Eyed Susan," for the purpose of introducing

MR. JOHN R. SCOTT,

as William. In the circle of my theatrical acquaintances, I do not know a more generous, or better disposed gentleman. In representing nautical character, he has no superior on the American stage, his early associations affording him frequent opportunities of seeing the true character of the sailor, in every position in which he might be placed, of which knowledge, he availed himself in presenting their peculiarities to the audience.

Had Mr. Scott entered the profession when the stage was in a more flourishing condition, he would have been an actor of no mean value, and one of whom any theatre might have been justly proud; but as a star, his reputation must be ephemeral; he does *not* possess sufficient calibre to attract an audience, but in conjunction with E. Forrest, Booth, or any other equally celebrated name, he is an able auxiliary. It is unfortunate for him, that in the commencement of his career, he was thrust before the public, with his name nightly displayed in large letters; the object of his ambition was too easily obtained, to be properly valued; his reputation rested more upon the support he afforded to Forrest, than any real merit of his own as a tragedian. Although he never offends, he never astonishes his audience. Forrest used him as an admirable foil, one whom he knew could never prove

a rival, and who was content to remain in the secondary position he had voluntarily assumed: apparently contented with what he had been fortunate enough to achieve with so little trouble, as to render the careful study of men and manners (the first requisite to form a great actor,) a matter of indifference. He is a favorite with the audience, but cannot rank with the first actors of the stage.

On the 29th of August, I had the pleasure of seeing, for the first time, Mr. Thomas Hilson, who played Paul Pry, at the Walnut Street Theatre. He was for many years the favorite comedian of the Park Theatre. It is sufficient praise to say, he was worthy of his reputation, and deserves to be remembered with Jefferson, Warren, Kilner, Finn, and other cotemporary actors, looked upon as the choice gems of the American stage.

A great effort was made to restore the drama to its former popularity in Philadelphia. During the present season, no less than four new tragedies were produced from the pens of American authors—"The Gladiator," by Dr. Bird, (supported by E. Forrest,) "Conrad of Naples," by Judge Conrad; "De Lard," by Mrs. Lee Hentz; and "Waldeman," by an unknown, at least an unpublished, name, (supported by Charles Kean;) the "Hunchback," by Sheridan Knowles, and "Hernani," by Kenney; an array of literary talent, not often brought into play during one season; nor must I forget the comedy of the "Lion of the West," produced by Hackett. Notwithstanding all this, the process of resuscitation progressed but slowly; the theatres were out of fashion, and in that one despotic word, abides the secret of all the managers' losses.

On the 17th of October, the Chestnut Street Theatre once more opened its doors for the season, announcing as stars engaged, Mr. Sinclair, Miss Hughes, Master Burke, Mr. C. Kean, Mr. Anderson, Madame Bartalozzi, Mr. Finn, Mr. Hackett, Mrs. Barrymore, Miss Clara Fisher, and Mr. Booth.

They say the first blow is half the battle: but should that blow fail, what becomes of the aggressor? The first star presented to the public was

#### MR. SINCLAIR,

who was announced to play Francis Osbaldistone, in "Rob Roy," on the 17th of October. As a singer, he was once the pride of the London stage; the successful rival of Braham, whose triumph in English music, in conjunction with Miss Stephens (the Countess of Essex,) in "Guy Mannering" and "Rob Roy," form the sub-

ject of many a pleasing reminiscence in the musical world. Thirty nights was announced as the utmost limit to which his present visit to the United States could possibly extend, (at least so said the play-bills, which, like the newspapers, *never lie.*) The prices of admission were raised to the old standard, and public expectation wrought up to the highest pitch. This unnatural excitement proved the grave of his reputation: he fell a victim to his own fame. The wreck of his former self, he was called upon to realize the most extravagant expectations, and failed most lamentably, sealing the fate of the Chestnut Street season, whose prospects appeared so brilliant. His voice had fled; in vain the managers endeavored, through the columns of the newspapers, to persuade the public he sung as well as ever he did—the man was there, 'tis true, but the voice, which could keep a crowded theatre in breathless silence to hear, "*Pray, Goody, please to moderate,*" was gone; his climacteric was passed, and he was rapidly descending to that position, where managers become fertile in framing excuses to avoid entering into engagements which they know must fail. It is a source of regret to the admirers of Mr. Sinclair—"and their name is *legion*"—that he did not retire when he could have done so with éclat. His visit to the United States was injudicious; he must have been aware that his powers were impaired, if not entirely lost, and that no recollection of what he had been could be brought forward to shield him before the audience of the New World, where he presented himself as a candidate for public approbation, relying upon the force of his reputation for a favorable reception, furnishing another proof of the tenacity with which public performers cling to that applause they have been accustomed to receive, until sounds of an opposite nature awake them to the unpleasant truth, that their attraction is gone, fled like a dream, never to return.

I have heard Mr. Sinclair sing, when admiring crowds could scarce obtain admission within the spacious walls of Convent Garden Theatre; when his name was sufficient to fill a concert room to overflowing, and his ballads the theme of praise on every tongue; but I should never have recognized the gentleman who appeared this evening as Francis Osbaldiston, as the John Sinclair, claimed as the Scottish Minstrel, and the King of Song.

The failure of this, their first star, and the greatest name they could offer, had a most sinister effect on the future prospects of the managers during the season.

Messrs. Jones, Duffy, and Forrest were active and enterprising opponents, watching to take advantage of every false move their

adversaries might make. Mr. E. Forrest played "Metamora" on the same evening at the Arch Street Theatre, which terminated so fatally for the treasury of the Chestnut Street, and on the following Monday they produced Dr. Bird's tragedy of the "Gladiator" (24th of October.) The reception it met was enthusiastic, and notwithstanding the opinion of the London critics to the contrary, its success was well deserved. As a first attempt at dramatic composition, it reflected honor on its author. Accustomed as an actor is to striking scenes, I was taken by surprise, at the effect produced at the closing of the second act, the rising of the Gladiators in the arena, and the disposition of the characters as the act drop fell, I do not believe was ever surpassed in any theatre in the world.

But the author committed a blunder in composition: unless he was prepared with something more vigorous, he should have ended his plot here, instead of commencing it. The very excellence of the situation and action just depicted, prepared you for something more startling yet to follow, while the third act, which immediately follows, is the worst act of the whole play, as if the author had exhausted himself in the commencement of his task; and instead of rising gradually to the point of excellence he here acquired, he sinks below mediocrity, and, with the exception of the description of Phasarius and the death of Spartacus, he never again rises above it.

It would be superfluous to say one word on the subject of Mr. E. Forrest's performance of Spartacus: it was the perfection of mèlo-dramatic tragedy, to the excellence of which every frequenter of our theatres bears willing testimony. J. R. Scott merited the thanks of the author for his performance of Pharsarius, and the managers for the scenery and dresses. The play was produced in a style worthy of the reputation of the actor, by whose liberality it was presented to the public. It was repeated almost every night during Mr. E. Forrest's engagement, and retains its popularity undiminished to the present day (1843.)

On the 14th of September, I had a misunderstanding with Maywood & Co., which led to my retirement from the Chestnut Street Theatre; the cause, an attempt to forfeit me one dollar, by the management, for having prevented (by the loss of a night's sleep,) the necessity of their changing the pieces announced for performance. Without the usual notice in the Green-Room, but on the mere supposition that I had played the part, Mr. Rowbotham, the stage-manager, sent my name to the press for Mandeville, in the "Young Widow," not only a long but a difficult part; the first in



timation I had of it was the printed bill, at half past ten o'clock, on the evening preceding. I told Rowbotham, at once, I would not do it. My unfortunate (*many might think it fortunate*) faculty of committing a given number of words to memory in the shortest space of time, was too well known to the managers, who, after many kind phrases, and the "blarney" which usually proves successful with an actor, when a manager is anxious to coax him into a disagreeable thing, I agreed to attempt it; on condition that a rehearsal was called at one o'clock. The performance of the evening, in which I sustained a principal part, was not concluded until half-past twelve o'clock, when, with the prompt-book in my possession, I left the theatre, not to seek repose, but to read incessantly for three hours. By four o'clock, I had completed my task, and retired to bed, when in the morning I was summoned to attend a ten o'clock rehearsal. Notwithstanding this was a violation of the terms on which I consented to study the character, it was my intention to have been there—accident alone prevented it. "*I fell asleep*, and did not awake until after eleven o'clock. Finding it impossible to be at the theatre in time to rehearse a piece, which does not occupy an hour in acting, I devoted the forenoon to reading the part attentively, and to my great satisfaction, found I was perfect. I told Rowbotham the reason of my absence, who laughed, and thanked me at the end of the performance, with the remark, that he did not know how the devil I got the words into my head. Having fulfilled my promise, I could scarcely expect punishment, where I was fairly entitled to remuneration for extra services; therefore, on Saturday, I was not only surprised, but indignant, to find a dollar retained from my salary, with the notice on a small piece of paper, explaining the cause, which read thus:—"Mr. Wemyss, one dollar, keeping the prompt book of the 'Young Widow,' from rehearsal." I refused to submit to this act of injustice; the managers seemed to treat it as a good joke; but I had no inclination to be joked out of my money. I made a formal demand for the restitution of the dollar, which being refused, I told them that I would commence a suit for its recovery, if it cost me twenty times the amount. I received a reply from Mr. Maywood, stating that the rules and regulations of the theatre were imperative, and binding upon all; that they would be enforced in every case, without reference to persons; that the money could not be returned; that I was at liberty to adopt any course I might think proper. I therefore, forthwith, issued a summons against Maywood, Rowbotham and Pratt, for the *enormous sum of one dollar*, unlawfully by them detained. Before the day fixed for

the hearing before the magistrate, they cooled a little. Fearing to risk an exposure which must have proved most discreditable to them, they sent me the money, with the costs, to the magistrate's office, and contented themselves with addressing me a letter, stating my services would not be required in the theatre at the expiration of the present week. Nothing would have pleased me better than such an arrangement at the commencement of the quarrel, for I never could forgive the meanness of the act; but now, my character as an actor, and a man, required I should submit to no measure which could appear to place the managers in the right, and myself in the wrong, in a cause so oppressive and tyrannical. I refused to accept this discharge, as it was termed; but breach of contract, as it actually was; my engagement being for ten months, and not for one week—we tried this question also, which was decided in my favor, by arbitration. I returned to the theatre, on the 27th of October, after an absence of four weeks, during which, they had to pay me my stipulated income, for doing nothing; until their inability to pay their salaries, left me at liberty to turn the tables, and discharge them from being my masters, instead of their discharging me as their servant. The hostility thus engendered, continued in active operation for years. Considering Mr. Pratt had been my partner; Mr. Maywood, the acting manager of the Baltimore and Washington Theatres, on my account; and Mr. Rowbotham was the stage manager of my creating, in the Chestnut Street Theatre, I was, even if in the wrong, from old associations, entitled to some little courtesy. But when, by express stipulation of engagement, I was exempted from attending more than one rehearsal of a new piece, and not bound to attend an old one at all, except at my own pleasure and convenience, I am at a loss to account for this transaction. It is true, Mr. Rowbotham said he had selected me as an example, that he might say to others—"Why, we forfeited Wemyss. How then can you expect to escape?" Good logic, this; but applied to a bad subject, when he proposed to make me a victim to frighten others into the performance of their duty.

Early in November, I received from Warren the following letter, dated Baltimore:—

DEAR WEMYSS:—

What are you about—are you a Walnut Street play-actor, or a Chestnut Street play-actor, or no play-actor at all? Do write, and let me hear the news. Do you think there is a possibility of

my acting at either of the theatres in your city, during the present season ?

Yours, very truly,  
(Signed,) WILLIAM WARREN.

I showed this letter to Mr. Maywood, and the result was an offer of an engagement at the Chestnut Street Theatre, the last he ever fulfilled, commencing with Falstaff, on the 19th of November, 1831, and terminating on the 25th of the same month, when, for his benefit, he appeared as Sir Robert Bramble, in the "Poor Gentleman." I played Frederick, and in the last scenes of the play it was evident that the old gentleman's memory was failing. In the beginning of the fifth act, he suddenly laid his hand upon my shoulder, and said, "Frank, lead me off the stage, for I do not know what I am talking about." He finished the part, committing blunder upon blunder, until it became evident to the audience, who kindly cheered the last moments of his public career with their long continued approbation. He never acted again—and thus closed the theatrical life of William Warren, one of the greatest favorites, both as a man and an actor, the Philadelphia stage ever possessed. As a manager, he long and ably directed the theatre in its brightest days ; universally respected, his misfortunes in the latter part of his life, met with universal commiseration, but little assistance. He died in Baltimore, on Friday, October 19, 1832, aged 66 years, regretted by those friends who best knew his worth, and remembered by all, as the only representative of Shakspeare's inimitable Sir John Falstaff. The last time his name was announced, was at the Arch Street Theatre, on the 8th of December, when he intended to take leave of the audience in an address, in the character of Falstaff. He was too ill to appear, and I regret to state the amount of the house for his last benefit, was a disgrace to the frequenters of the theatre—leaving him, in sickness, to regret he had suffered his name to be announced, and that his friends, in the hour of his utmost need, had entirely deserted him.

*copy of a letter from Mr. Maywood to Mr. Warren  
at the House, 11th Street, Baltimore  
November 1831 - Mr. Maywood's letter*

*Ms. S.*

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Pelby, and Mrs. Lee Hentz's Tragedy of "De Laird"—Mr. Charles Kean as Waldeman—The Opera of "Cinderella"—Miss Clifton—"Conrad of Naples" Ruin Extraordinary—Miss Hughes—Old Blanchard—Miss Vincent—Talent of the American Actresses—Yankee Hill.

ON Monday, the 7th of November, Mrs. Lee Hentz's tragedy of "De Laird," was produced at the Arch Street Theatre; Mr. Pelby, in imitation of the example of E. Forrest, offered a premium for the best tragedy in five acts, which should be written in a given time, by an American author. Among other competitors, was Mrs. Lee Hentz, who bore of the prize, which rumor says, I know not how truly, *she never received*. But the reputation she gained by this composition soon placed her in the foremost rank of the female writers for the literary magazines.

It was unfortunate for her reputation as a dramatist, that the hero, so well conceived, should have fallen into such weak hands. Mr. Pelby had neither physical power, or innate talent, sufficient to grasp with such a task. In the hands of Mr. Booth, there would have been an opportunity for displaying those startling effects, which strike and surprise an audience. The idea of a human being pursued by a phantom, which is present to him on all occasions, was one which, if carried out by the actor, in the spirit in which it was conceived by the author, must have produced a successful result. On the present occasion, to the beauty of the poetry alone, was the authoress indebted for a patient hearing; it lived only a night or two, decreasing in attraction, and was then withdrawn from the catalogue of acting plays. It deserved a better fate, and I should like to see it remodelled by the author, and placed upon the stage in more competent hands.

On the 26th of November, another tragedy, by an American author, met a similar fate; although not from a similar cause, at the Chestnut Street Theatre, under the title of "Waldeman," in which Mr. C. Kean sustained the hero.

On the 28th, a novelty was presented, in the opera of "Cinderella," which having met with decided success at the Park Theatre, New-York, with the aid of Mrs. Austin and Mr. Jones, was now placed before the Philadelphia audience, by Maywood and Co., who lay claim, not only to have created thereby a taste

for music, but for establishing English opera, as a portion of the amusement hereafter to be offered during a portion of each season, (forgetting that Mr. Warren set the example in "Der Freychutz," several years previous.) To the care of Mr. H. H. Berkeley, and J. T. Norton, to whom was assigned the task of preparation in the musical department, much of its success is to be attributed; but in scenery and dress, it was wofully deficient. The same parsimony which marked the whole course of the management of Maywood and Co., in this particular, was apparent in every scene. Indeed, it was not until the production of "Norma," many years afterward, that an attempt was made to place an opera, perfect in all its arrangements, before the American public, and Philadelphia justly claims the honor of having done so successfully. Whether to Mr. Pratt, or to the Messrs. Fry, under whose superintendance the arrangements were made, belongs the credit, Mr. and Mrs. Wood alone can determine—to whom *I* believe the whole merit belongs.

The success of "Cinderella," could not retrieve the lost ground by the failure of Sinclair, and the theatre closed; the company removing to the Walnut Street Theatre, on the 10th of December, where an arrangement had been made by the managers, with Mr. Hamblin, to unite the New-York Bowery company, and produce "Mother Goose," the "Water Witch," and pieces of a similar nature, under the direction of Mr. Barrymore, whose reputation in London was almost equal to Farley, surnamed the king of the melo-drama, while Barrymore was known by the familiar title of "La Prince." He was one of the most able directors of a minor theatre, who ever assumed the helm; but woe to the manager, who suffered him to produce a piece without enquiring into the expenditure. Accustomed to a London theatre, where the effect produced is considered, more than the expense required to produce it, he would forget, that instead of a population of a million and a half, he was called upon to cater for a hundred and fifty thousand only. His "Napoleon," "Mother Goose," "Massaniello," "Zantha," and "Thalaba," will scarcely be equalled by any successor, however talented.

#### MISS CLIFTON

appeared as Lady Macbeth, on the 10th of December. She failed to excite the slightest attention, possessing no requisite for an actress but personal appearance, and deserving only of notice, as the first lady belonging to the American stage, who was born in the

United States, and put forth pretensions to be considered a star. Her first benefit in Philadelphia, took place at the Chestnut Street Theatre, and (with the exception of Madam Heloise) was the worst house ever seen upon such an occasion, within the walls. The performance was "Bertram," and the "Lottery Ticket;" Hamblin playing Bertram to her Imogene. It is an ungracious task, to speak of any lady in other terms than those of praise, therefore I must be excused from entering into any further discussion, upon Miss Clifton's merit as an actress. She played Astarté, in London, in Lord Byron's "Manfred;" and latterly, supports Mr. Forrest during his star engagements; but owes her position entirely to the system of newspaper puffing, so fatal to the real interests of the drama.

On the 17th of January, 1832, R. T. Conrad produced a five act tragedy of some merit, for Mr. Murdoch's benefit, under the title of "Conrad of Naples," at the Arch Street Theatre. Murdoch as the hero, acquired a goodly share of reputation, and certainly acted this part better than J. R. Scott, who afterwards attempted it.

I must not forget to mention a row which took place on the 17th of December, at the Walnut Street Theatre, in consequence of Mr. Hamblin breaking down in the character of Richard the Third, his old enemy, the asthma, preventing him from proceeding beyond the third act. An apology was made to the audience, who quietly sat out the new piece of "The Evil Eye;" but when the curtain rose upon the farce of "Raising the Wind," in which I had to perform Jeremy Diddler, the audience gave strong proof of their determination to see the last two acts of "Richard the Third." From the violent disapprobation, I ventured to expostulate with Mr. Rowbotham upon the folly of attempting to proceed; but he asked me if I was afraid—I said "No; but the ladies are." "Go on!" said he. "Up with the curtain," said I. But no sooner had we commenced the second act, and the determination of the management to proceed in spite of opposition became manifest to the audience, then some gentleman blackguard, (aside) threw a large piece of plaster, extracted from the roof of the pit passage, with some force upon the stage. It fell at the feet of Mrs. Charles Green, who was acting Peggy, and whose face miraculously escaped the contact. Her husband, who was on the stage, representing the character of Old Plainway, in an instant seized the offending missile, and hurled it back upon the audience with the emphatic phrase, that the man that threw it, was a blackguard and a coward. A general row ensued, in which

stoves were overturned, hot coals distributed, and the melee ended by leaving actors and audience in the dark, the lights being rapidly extinguished. How many black eyes, and how many useless threats were uttered, I stop not to detail. That Mr. Green was wrong in throwing a handful of rubbish among the audience, is not the question. He was undoubtedly right, in protecting his wife from insult; and his noble expression, that he cared for no danger; he only wished to be placed before the scoundrel who threw the plaster, or any one who would justify him; and as far as strength remained, he would protect a woman against the whole assembled crowd, one after the other, gained him a host of friends, and saved the manager much future annoyance from his ill-judged perseverance.

Miss Hughes appeared at the Chestnut Street Theatre, as a vocalist: her success was not equal to her merit. Blanchard, one of the glories of the British stage, in its best days, also appeared on the 23rd of January, at the Chestnut Street Theatre, which was now occasionally opened; one company doing double duty, playing at both theatres on the same night; very amusing to the actors, not unprofitable to the managers, but decidedly deprecated by the audience, who could not discover why an actor, passing from the corner of Ninth and Walnut Street, to Sixth and Chestnut Street, should be worth double the price of admission, in a farce, which they had paid to see him in a full play, in the early part of the evening.

Blanchard opened as Don Lewis, in "Love makes a Man." To say that it was an excellent piece of acting, would only be to reiterate what every body, conversant with the stage, has already said; but it wanted actors of the same school, now, I am sorry to say, fast fading from existence, in the counterparts. The play is obsolete to the present generation, and Mr. Blanchard's failure to attract, was owing to no want of merit on his part; but a want of judgment to appreciate such acting by the audience, who prefer "Napoleon," "Zanthe," or any dramatic representation, where the eye can be gratified, to smart dialogue and repartee, which form the essence of comedy. By the old authors, therefore, Monsieur Gouffe, with his imitation of the Monkey tribe, would fill the theatre, while an effort "to raise the genius, and to mend the heart," would fail.

The 18th of February, 1832, should be marked in the dramatic-calendar with "a white stone," having introduced a young lady of superior talent, in the person of

## MISS VINCENT,

who made her first appearance on any stage, at the Arch Street Theatre, in the character of Clari, taking not only the audience, but the actors by surprise, who, while congratulating her upon her merited success, felt that the profession had acquired a gem of talent of the highest order. To Mr. Hamblin the public were indebted for the introduction of this young lady, whose short but brilliant career, form an epoch in the history of the American stage. From the night of her debut, she rose in favor with the audience, who felt justly proud of their countrywoman; until the citizens of New-York and Boston, confirming the opinion of the critics of Philadelphia, placed her, by unanimous consent, at the head of the arduous profession she had chosen. Had her life been spared, she would have created in London as great a sensation in the dramatic world as did Miss Fanny Kemble in the United States, or Madame Rachel in France. Her person was small; her features not remarkable for beauty, yet bore the stamp of intellect, which, when lighted up by the enthusiasm of her assumed character, captivated the hearts of the audience. She died before her reputation had reached its zenith, lamented by all who knew her, occupying without a rival the proud station of the first actress in America.

It is singular, that while female talent, (previous to the appearance of Miss Fanny Kemble,) was at the lowest ebb upon the London stage, the native actresses of the United States should have presented a galaxy of talent, in the persons of Miss Vincent, Miss Ann Waring, Mrs. Richardson, (Miss E. Jefferson,) Mrs. Willis, (late Miss Warren,) all the Placide family, Miss Pelby, (Mrs. Anderson,) Mrs. Kent, Miss Mary Duff, Miss Riddle, Mrs. Flynn, and others. Had the managers of the London theatres been aware of its existence, many would have been transplanted to the great metropolis, as attractions of rare value. I have been surprised that Mr. Price, while furnishing the American stage with European talent, did not attempt the task for which he was so well qualified, of introducing some of these young ladies to a London audience. The speculation would have been a profitable one, for talent of the highest order in England always will command success.

The season of 1831 and 1832, was also marked by another addition of value, in Mr.



## G. H. HILL,

better known as Yankee Hill, who, from a very humble position in the Arch Street Theatre, in which he was frequently insulted by the derision and disapprobation of the audience, suddenly became a *star*, and what is more extraordinary, a good one too. Discharged in disgrace from his situation, for refusing to assist as a courtier, in the coronation scene of the "Exile," glad to escape from an audience who ridiculed him, desperate in his circumstances, and reckless of consequences, he applied to Mr. Simpson, of the Park Theatre, New-York, for permission to attempt a Yankee character. His success at once enabled him to enter the lists, as a star, to share the praise already bestowed upon Hackett in this new species of dramatic character. Making the best of his time during Hackett's absence in England, he proved a formidable rival to that gentleman, on his return, beating him on his own ground, in the very characters of his own creating.

There is a quiet, natural manner in his acting the "Down East Yankee," which takes possession of the risible faculties of his audience, giving them full employment during the time he continues on the stage. He is the best representative of what may be styled American comedy. His success in London was a just compliment to his talent. The stage is indebted to him for the possession of several good acting pieces, written to display his peculiarities. He proved for many seasons one of the most attractive stars, until forgetting what he had been, in what he was, he aimed at an unenviable notoriety out of his profession, which has materially injured his prospects of future success. Had Mr. Hill been a man of education, he would have supported himself with credit in the position he had suddenly reached. Having boldly breasted a storm, which threatened to annihilate his claims as an actor, and triumphed over it, an overweening vanity has proved more detrimental to his fame, than all the artifices of his enemies could ever have accomplished.

What an agreeable thing it is for a manager to be compelled, against his will, to retain an actor, and what a pleasant life the actor leads during the period! Every day I experienced some annoyance, of which I could make no formal complaint, but which I knew was done with an intention to promote misunderstanding. Mrs. Knight being engaged at the Chestnut Street Theatre, wished to open in Kate O'Brien; knowing I was a member of the company, and remembering the manner in which this piece was received

on its first representation, naturally wished me to act Charles Paragon. I had caught a severe cold, which, affecting my throat, compelled me to remain\* in the house, when I received a letter from Mr. Maywood, requesting I would make an effort to come out upon the present occasion. I replied that I would do so, on condition I was not requested to act any other part on that evening, as I did not feel sufficiently recovered to resume my duty in the theatre. With this understanding, I suffered my name to be announced. Mr. Booth having arrived unexpectedly, "Hamlet" was announced for the play, in which I had usually acted Ostric. Much to my mortification, I found my name in the play-bill, but was assured by Mr. Rowbotham, the stage-manager, it was a mistake, and that Mr. Mercer would act the part. I was not even called upon to rehearse it, and certainly should not have consented to stand upon the stage, an inactive spectator, for half an hour, with a bare neck and an ulcerated sore throat. But so good an opportunity to mortify me was not to be lost. At the end of the third act of the tragedy, Mr. Maywood came to me to know whether I intended to play Ostric; I replied decidedly not; when Mr. Rowbotham appealed to the audience to be suffered to omit the second scene of the fifth act, in consequence of my indisposition. I was not even aware that such a request had been made, until when discovered as Charles Paragon, I was astonished to hear a few sharp hisses—perfectly unconscious they were directed towards me, until after the scene was finished, when I was informed of what had taken place. I wasted no words, but sent a card to the newspapers the following morning, in explanation, stating the fault was with the management not the actor; that the whole part was not forty lines, and that any actor could have easily committed them to memory during the fourth act of the play; that Maywood & Co. were in possession of the knowledge that I would not do it, early in the morning; that I regretted the interruption which had taken place, but that I was certainly *not* the offending party, having left a sick chamber to aid the management, which had endeavored to represent me in a most offensive position before the audience; that the Chestnut Street Theatre must be indeed reduced in respectability, when such a request, as to omit a scene with such an actor as Mr. Booth, was resorted to, to gratify a petty spirit of revenge upon an actor. This, however, was the last scene of the contest. I agreed to cancel my engagement, receiving my benefit on the 10th of February, on which occasion I revived Goldsmith's comedy of the "Good-Natured Man," and left the Chestnut Street Theatre, after ten years service.

On the 14th of March, I entered into an engagement with Duffy, Jones and Forrest, for a few nights at the Arch Street Theatre, opening in Roderigo, in "Othello," and Delaval, in "Matrimony," in which Miss Mary Duff was the Clara. It was during this short engagement as *a star in the city of Philadelphia—g-o-o-d g-r-a-c-i-o-u-s!*—that I had the pleasure of acting Count Valentia, in the "Child of Nature," for the benefit of Miss Vincent, who represented Aramantis with all that simplicity which had already won the hearts of the audience.

Early in the month of April, I paid a flying visit to Albany for twelve nights, where I made my bow as Charles Paragon, in "Perfection," Mrs. Knight being the Kate O'Brien. Mr. E. Forrest, Mrs. Pelby and Miss Pelby, were also there, playing on the same nights, so that if the citizens of Albany did not visit the theatre, it was not for want of attraction.

As the English tragedian Kean, was driven from the American stage, for refusing to act Richard the Third in Boston to a *handful* of spectators, I was surprised that the American tragedian, E. Forrest, ventured to dismiss an audience, whose paucity in numbers he did not choose should interfere with his desire to witness a little *fun* at the circus, where the "Greek," a well-known billiard-marker in the city, was advertised to play Richard the Third. The theatre being closed, the manager, Mr. Forrest, and myself repaired to the circus, without a comment from the disappointed few, who laughed at it as a good practical joke on a rainy night.

"That such a difference there should be,  
Between tweedle dum and tweedle dee."

The fortnight I spent in Albany was delightful recreation, parties of pleasure being formed to Troy, the Shaker Settlement, and other places of interest in the immediate neighborhood, every day after rehearsal; and although I did not return to Philadelphia much richer, I was gratified with the hospitality displayed towards me by the Albanians, and look back with pleasure on my short visit to their city.

On my return, I became regularly attached to the Arch Street company. The season closed on the 18th of June, when, for the first time for several years, the actors were regularly paid, all demands honorably settled, and Messrs. Duffy, Jones and Forrest in high credit both within and without the walls of the theatre. It was at the Arch Street Theatre that Sheridan Knowles' play of the "Hunchback" was first acted in the United States, J. R. Scott

being the Master Walter, and Miss Riddle the Julia ; the play was as well, if not better acted, as a whole, than I remember to have seen it since, although "*the Julia*" had not yet given to it the stamp of fashion, which crowded every theatre in the United States when Miss Fanny Kemble was announced to act the part.

It was in 1832 that the Anderson Row took place at the Park Theatre, New-York, when the worthy citizens made the unwonted call for Mr. Price, that they might hiss him. What the exact nature of Mr. Anderson's offence was, has never been ascertained by the profession ; so many rumors have been afloat, that I should be afraid to assign the cause. It is sufficient to record the fact, that he was not permitted to act in the United States—rather a heavy sentence for a private quarrel. But his behavior was not calculated to conciliate, but rather to irritate his opponents. He paid the penalty of his folly and rashness. The audience lost the opportunity of hearing a clever singer, and he returned to London, to rail against America and its democratic institutions, on all occasions, for the remainder of his life, and then to be forgotten.

It was in the summer of 1832, that

MR. THOMAS RICE,

better known as Jim Crow, made his appearance at the Walnut Street Theatre.

"Did you ne'er hear of a jolly black diamond?"—TOM AND JERRY.

This gentleman, whose representation of the character of a negro raised him to affluence, made his first appearance in Philadelphia in the summer of 1832, at the Walnut Street Theatre. The roars of laughter with which his extravaganza of Jim Crow (the original of which was a negro of Pittsburgh, known as Jim Cuff,) was received, his excellent acting as well as singing, soon induced offers from managers, which filled *his* pockets and *their* treasury. He was for a time the "*lion*" of the minor theatres. With an innate tact for business, he improved the opportunity his popularity afforded, by collecting all the really beautiful airs which the negro sings while performing his daily labor, and writing himself the "*libretto*," to introduce a novel species of entertainment, with the imposing title of Ethiopian opera. His "*Bone Squash*" was an amusing affair, the music truly delightful, and ably executed. The "*Virginy Cupids*," although vulgar even

to grossness, met a good reception. With this capital, Mr. Rice crossed the Atlantic, and turned the heads of the chimney sweeps and apprentice boys of London, who wheeled about and turned about and jumped Jim Crow, from morning until night, to the annoyance of their masters, but the great delight of the cockneys. That his financial affairs have been improved by the trip, there is little doubt, but his popularity in his native country has been lost, by his endeavor to engraft the English dandy with the American negro.

In London, where a black man is scarcely seen, it might be remarkably "*funny*," but the broad caricature of the American negro was the attraction of Jim Crow at home, who, when converted into an English gentleman, was a most insipid creature. As an actor, Mr. Rice's reputation depends upon his black face; and how he contrives to keep it white, might be matter of grave debate, begrimed as it has been for the last ten years, at least three hours in each of the twenty-four.

In private society, Jim Crow is a "*first-rate*" companion: full of anecdote, possessed of vocal abilities, and agreeable in conversation, he makes a valuable member of any social club.

I have paid him many hundred dollars, during my management, and am proud to say, in business he is both just and liberal, never attempting to squeeze the last dollar from a manager with whom he may have contracted an engagement which proved a losing speculation. His practice on such occasions having generally been voluntarily to resign a portion of his right, by good humoredly observing, in his negro slang:—"Lookye here, my master, this has been a bad job—I don't think you ought to suffer to this tune; live and let live is a good motto—hand over —, and I will give you a receipt in full, and wish you better luck another time." The few dollars remitted, unasked, in this manner, have been repayed, with interest, by engagements when he was not actually wanted, but always cheerfully received by those managers who knew how to appreciate an act of kindness cleverly proffered, and when accepted never forgotten.

He played in "Whirligig Hall," for the managers' benefit, on the 28th of July, closing the season of the Walnut Street Theatre with eclat, the last of distinction, to managers and actors, for many years. The fall of 1832 witnessed the general revival of the drama throughout the United States, by the arrival of Mr. Charles Kemble and his daughter, and a succession of stars, of more than common brilliance, from England.

As a specimen of the distress which actors endured during these

three years, I give a copy of a letter written by one of the oldest, as well as respectable members of the profession. The name I withhold, in respect to his feelings.

(Directed,) To Mr. WEMYSS, present.

SIR :—I am in a state of mental agony, debating whether I shall *play the Roman*, or *nobly live and see my family starve*. Do, for Heaven's sake, render me a *small* pecuniary assistance, *any* you think proper—we are destitute. By so doing you will greatly oblige your old friend,

I need scarcely add the letter produced the desired effect, and the gentleman, when I last saw him, was as hearty and good humored as if he had never known an hour's distress.

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#### CHAPTER XXIV.

Commencement of the Season of 1832-33—Rivalry between the Arch and Walnut Street Theatres—Mr. and Miss Kemble—Dr. Bird's Tragedy of "Oroloosa"—Disagreeable Accident—Mr. Kemble's Acting in different Characters—Death of Mr. Warren—Treatment of his Family by the Managers of the Chestnut Street Theatre—Statement of Facts—Building of a Theatre in Pittsburgh—Offer of its Management—Tragedies by Dr. Ware and Jonas B. Philips—Fanny Kemble and her Journal.

I now approach the period of a revival, when actors were no longer to be seen lounging about without employment, but when really clever actors were eagerly sought for. Jones, Duffy and Forrest had contrived to pay their performers, with regularity; Maywood & Co., by placing their actors on two-thirds of their actual engagements, also received receipts in full, and both parties commenced the season of 1832-33 with every prospect of success. At the Chestnut Street they announced Mr. Charles Kemble, and Miss Kemble, Mr. Sinclair, the Ravel family, James Wallack, Miss Vincent, Madam Fearon, Mrs. Austin, as the stars; while at the Arch Street, it was known Mr. E. Forrest was the chief attraction, Mr. and Mrs. Hilson, J. R. Scott, Mr. Hill, Mr. C. Kean, Mr. Cooper, presented a formidable array in opposition.

The campaign was commenced by the Arch Street managers, on Wednesday, the 5th of September, 1832, with the comedy of the "Poor Gentleman," and the farce of "How to Die for Love." The company consisted of Mr. W. Forrest, Duffy, Jones, Murdoch, Wemyss, J. R. Scott, D. Reed, H. Knight, T. Placide, Horton, John Green, Thayer, James, Thompson, and Howard; Mrs. Stickney, Miss Riddle, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. H. Knight, Amelia Fisher, Mrs. J. Greene. On Saturday, the 8th, the Chestnut Street opened with Barrymore's military spectacle of "Napoleon," and the farce of the "Lottery Ticket," in which Roberts—the true successor of Jefferson, and the only one deserving of that title, until the arrival of W. E. Burton—played Wormwood. Thus the race was fairly commenced, each striving for ascendancy; the location of the Chestnut Street Theatre giving it the preference with strangers, because the Arch Street was difficult to be found, unless you left your home for the purpose of going there.

The first grand struggle took place on the 10th of October, when Mr. Charles Kemble made his first appearance in Philadelphia, in the character of Hamlet, at the Chestnut Street Theatre, and Mr. E. Forrest produced Dr. Bird's tragedy of "Oraloosa," at the Arch Street. With attraction so equally balanced, the town was fairly divided. Every body was anxious to see Mr. Kemble, whose reputation as an actor stood higher than that of any performer of the present day, while Dr. Bird's great success in the "Gladiator," excited a no less degree of curiosity to witness his second attempt as a dramatic poet. The result of this exertion on the part of the management of both theatres, was full houses for a succession of nights, during the respective engagements of the Kembles and Mr. E. Forrest.

Dr. Bird's tragedy of "Oraloosa" did not increase his reputation. From the author of the "Gladiator" something better was anticipated; while the present play fell below the previous production of the doctor's muse. Neither plot, incident, or dialogue would bear comparison with his former self, while the same glaring error, of producing a climax at the end of the third act, by the death of Pizarro, in the banquet hall, beyond which he could not rise, was again committed. The audience were evidently disappointed, and Mr. E. Forrest judiciously struck it from the roll of his acting characters, after the first season, conscious it was unworthy the fame of the author, and would never produce anything but mortification to the actor.

To me the 10th of October, and the tragedy of "Oraloosa," form no pleasing remembrance, although they can never be forgot-

ten—having caused me, in mimic fight, (too real for fancy,) the loss of two front teeth, which Mr. E. Forrest, in the furor of acting, displaced from their original stronghold in my mouth, by a thrust from his sword at the head of Don Christoval, occasioning some of the wags of the green-room an opportunity of making a bad pun, by declaring that Forrest wished to teach me the proper pronunciation of the name of the play, by forcing me to say to him, "*Oh-they-are-loose-sir!*" I confess, I could see little merit in this, but it served to make a laugh at the time, and perhaps diverted an angry feeling from an awkward accident.

On the 12th of October, Miss Fanny Kemble appeared as Bianca, in "Fazio." Strange as it may appear, connected as I have been with the American stage for twenty years, I never met Mr. Charles Kemble, or his daughter, in the United States, either as actor or manager.

I never had the pleasure of seeing Miss Fanny Kemble on the stage but once, for a few minutes, in the second act of the "Hunchback," when, in anticipation of a treat of no ordinary nature, I was summoned by the call-boy of the Arch Street Theatre, to which I belonged, by the pleasing intelligence that an unexpected change of performance required my presence there immediately. I left the theatre in a very ill-humor, consequently an unable to offer an opinion upon the acting of the young lady. I therefore take it for granted she was a prodigy. That she revived the prostrate fortunes of the drama in the United States, admits not of a doubt; her popularity, and the name of Kemble, made the theatres once more a fashionable place of amusement.

I had long known Mr. Charles Kemble as the best representative of high comedy belonging to the British stage. He was acting at the Glasgow Theatre, in 1814, when I made my first appearance as an actor. I received from him, at that period, much good advice, which, like all advice offered upon the same subject, was disregarded. But no one who was ever devoted to his profession, can hear the name of Kemble, without pointing to it with a feeling of pride, to prove that the profession of an actor is not incompatible with the bearing and manners of a gentleman. The society of "the Kembles" has been courted by all classes, and their fame is interwoven with the history of the stage for upwards of half a century.

As an actor, Mr. Kemble enjoys a popularity that may well be envied. If I were asked to designate the most finished piece of comedy acting I ever witnessed, I should say the Lovemore of Mr. C. Kemble, in "The Way to Keep Him." There was such an



exquisite ease about it, which divested the mind of the idea of acting, and presented the reality—you forgot Mr. C. Kemble, and saw only before you the heartless man of fashion he represented. Here he was without a rival, but like all—(managers, shall I say, or)—actors, vanity induced him to attempt Macbeth, Hamlet, and Richard the Third, recalling the excellence of his brother, (John Kemble,) in those parts; producing a feeling of disappointment, that one so perfect in his own walk of the drama should render himself almost ridiculous, by attempting the hero of tragedy, beyond his grasp. In Romeo, Heeneya, or Lord Hastings, he is equally at home as in comedy; but beyond that, in tragedy, he should never attempt to soar, and whenever he does, failure is sure to follow.

When he arrived in the United States, he perhaps did wisely to act as a foil to his daughter's excellence, but, with his Benedict, Mercutio, and Young Mirabel fresh in my recollection, I experienced a feeling of regret that he should have placed himself before the audience in such a situation as to detract from the high position he justly holds as a finished comedian. The delight with which his performance of Mercutio, on the 3d of November, was hailed, and the change of opinion it immediately produced in the minds of his audience, as to his ability as an actor, must have proved to him that the Philadelphians knew how to appreciate what was really excellent. It was the theme of conversation throughout the city: "Did you see Kemble last night?—you lost a'treat! I never saw Mercutio acted before!—hope he will repeat it." This was enthusiasm, compared with the faint praise reluctantly yielded to his Sir Thomas Clifford, and the downright abuse bestowed upon his Hamlet.

On the 19th of October, we received the intelligence of the death of poor Warren. Duffy, Jones, and Forrest, always foremost in deeds of charity, at once offered the theatre for a benefit to the widow and family, which took place on the 27th, Booth playing Old Norval, to the Young Norval of William Warren, who made his first appearance upon any stage on the occasion. The conduct of the managers of the Chestnut Street Theatre was of a widely different character towards the widow of the one who had directed the theatre in their possession, in its brightest days. Having in my possession a pamphlet, published at the time, I shall transcribe the whole as an act of duty, to the memory of one whom I called friend during life, and the recollection of whose kindness can never be effaced. That the insolence of those in power, re-

ceived no rebuke from the audience, is another proof of the ephemeral existence of an actor's popularity. Scarcely cold—and already forgotten,—farewell to thee, Warren.

#### TO THE PUBLIC—STATEMENT OF FACTS.

Having been advised by many of my late father's friends to withdraw my mother's name from before the public, on the occasion of a benefit announced by the managers of the Chestnut Street Theatre, it becomes an imperious duty to show that public, before whom my lamented father was for upwards of thirty years an approved actor, the reasons which forced me to adopt my present course.

As soon as my father's death became known in Philadelphia, the managers of the Arch Street Theatre, in compliance with a wish expressed through Mr. Booth, in the kindest manner appropriated an evening for the benefit of my mother; and in order to secure the aid of Mr. Booth, Saturday the 27th of October, was fixed upon. The result is well known. I arrived from Baltimore on the Thursday previous, and on the following evening, Mr. Rowbotham of the Chestnut Street Theatre, informed me that the managers intended to give a benefit at their house. This was thankfully accepted on my part, as it was voluntarily offered upon theirs. The success of Mr. Kemble and his daughter, suggested the idea of an application to the former gentleman, for his aid upon the occasion. Mr. Maywood the acting manager, approved of it, and advised me to do so. My surprise was, therefore great, on the receipt of Mr. K's answer, which follows, to find that the managers had thrown an insurmountable obstacle in the way of my wishes; notwithstanding, it has since appeared that Mr. Kemble played two nights after the expiration of his engagement on Thursday, the first of November.

#### COPY OF A LETTER ADDRESSED TO MR. KEMBLE.

OCTOBER 29TH, 1832.

SIR:—It is with reluctance that I trespass upon your attention, personally unknown to you as I am; but my motive will, I trust, prove a better excuse than any other I could offer.

My father, the late William Warren, with whom I believe you were once acquainted, after a series of misfortunes resulting in a total ruin, became through the failure of his health, incapable of assisting his family by his professional exertions. His distresses

accelerated the work of time, and after a long and painful illness, he expired a few days since at Baltimore, leaving his family dependant upon the resources of those members of it, who in consequence of their youth and peculiar situation during the sickness of their father, are now in some degree unfitted for the task of suitably providing for them.

The managers of the Arch Street Theatre, with the greatest kindness, devoted an evening—Saturday last—to their benefit; and the managers of the Chestnut Street Theatre have made a similar offer; but unless backed by some strong attraction, I fear that it will not be essentially serviceable, and therefore, I have ventured to ask, if it be not incompatible with your engagements, that you, sir, will lend your powerful aid on the occasion.

You will materially oblige me by leaving a line containing your decision, at the box office of the Chestnut Street Theatre.

I am, Sir,

Your's most respectfully,

(Signed) WILLIAM WARREN.

COPY OF MR. KEMBLE'S ANSWER.

MANSION HOUSE, OCT. 30th, 1832.

SIR:—I am favored with your letter, and regret that circumstances should have made such an application necessary. On speaking with the manager of the Chestnut Street Theatre upon the subject, he informs me that it is his intention to appropriate a night for the benefit of your family; but that it cannot take place this week on account of previous arrangements. My engagement in New-York, will take me from Philadelphia in a few days, so that it will not be in my power to comply with your request. Hoping that the public will be more mindful of the pleasure which they have derived from the talents of your late father, than your letter seems to anticipate, and fill the house to overflowing, on the night devoted to his family,

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

(Signed) C. KEMBLE.

COPY OF MR. WARREN'S LETTER TO MAYWOOD & Co.

THURSDAY, NOV. 1st, 1832.

GENTLEMEN:—As previous arrangements have prevented your devoting a night for my mother's benefit this week, I wish to know definitively, what night next week will be convenient to you, and the terms on which it is your intention I should take the house.

The earliest night that your arrangements will permit you to dispose of, will be the most agreeable to me. Your answer early enough to afford an opportunity of advertising the result in the papers of to-morrow afternoon, will oblige,

Your's respectfully,

(Signed) WILLIAM WARREN.

This letter remains unanswered.

On Saturday, about noon, I waited upon Mr. Rowbotham, who verbally informed me the benefit would take place on Tuesday or Thursday, but which, he could not say. I then enquired the terms, to which he gave me no satisfactory answer; but merely replied, "This is for *your* benefit, not *ours*, and you shan't lose anything by it." I saw Mr. R. again at the theatre in the evening, and he there told me that Tuesday was the night determined on. I asked what pieces, and he enquired whether I intended to play myself. I told him no; and he then said something about "The Good Natured Man." I told him I could not advise about the pieces, but to play any five act comedy which embraced the strength of the company. This was the last interview I had upon the subject. Although I wished my card to have appeared in the newspapers of the city on Friday afternoon, their delay rendered it impossible to insert one before Monday, which would have been useless altogether. Thus, I was totally ignorant of the entertainment selected, until the play-bill appeared:—"Simpson & Co!"—"A Hornpipe!"—"The Peasant Boy!!!" As the terms of the night were still unknown, it became obvious to all my friends, that the benefit was intended merely to produce the nightly charges to the managers, through the use of my mother's name.

A gentleman was deputed to wait upon Mr. Maywood, under these circumstances, and urge a postponement, to which Mr. Maywood replied, such an arrangement was impracticable; and Mr. Pratt added as an objection, that there would not be twenty dollars in the house.

Following the advice of my friends, I declined the benefit altogether. Mr. Maywood's opinion being—"That the pieces were as good as any thing that could be done." Mr. Rowbotham's—"That I was badly advised." Mr. Pratt's—"That I had no claim; that it was a matter of charity altogether."

(Signed) WILLIAM WARREN.

November 7th.

N. B.—I made no application to the managers of the Chestnut

Street Theatre ; it was their own offer, and was *accepted*—not *claimed*—by me.

Comment is unnecessary ; but it is surprising that a feeling of public indignation at such wanton insult did not overwhelm the managers. They wisely attempted no explanation.

I copy the following compliment from the National Gazette :—

TO MR. WARREN.

Full many an actor have I seen,  
Who ranted till his face was black,  
But none, methinks, e'er trod the scene,  
I liked so well as thee—Old Jack.

Let Thomas Cooper walk the stage,  
Or Edmund Kean again come back,  
To fret, and strut, and fume and rage ;  
Thou'rt worth a thousand such—Old Jack.

Thy jokes are new, tho' often told,  
Thy merry wit is never slack,  
Thy sterling worth, like wine that's old,  
Is better every year—Old Jack.

Then let us see thee once again  
At Gadshill—swiftly fly the track,  
And tell how many thou hast slain,  
To keep thy credit up—Old Jack.

I wish to view thy waggish air,  
To see thee drink thy fav'rite sack :  
And, mug in hand, devoutly swear  
Thou had'st not drunk to-day, Jack.

I wish to see thee slay the dead,  
And grayely take him on thy back,  
And swear that human valor's fled,  
Or only lives in thee—Old Jack.

P. E. T.

A young musician named Allen, produced quite a sensation at the Arch Street Theatre ; playing on the violin a la Paganini, on one string. As a boy, he was quite clever, much applauded, but did not draw money ; youthful prodigies rarely succeed. He was, however, deserving of success.

The Kembles having made quite a sensation in the fashionable circles of society, were not long absent from the city. They returned again on the 5th of December, after an absence of little more

than four weeks. Charles Kean was engaged at the Arch Street Theatre as a counter attraction, and answered the purpose of the managers, if not his own.

It was during the month of January, I received a letter from my friend, George A. Cooke, of Pittsburgh, requesting me to furnish him a plan for the building of a theatre, proposed to be erected in that city of smoke and industry: the management of which, he wished me, when finished, to undertake, if I had nothing better in view. I was too glad to accept the proposition, and applied to Mr. Haviland, the architect, for assistance. From the plans furnished by him was erected what may justly be termed the model theatre of the United States—elegance and comfort being combined, both for the auditor and actor. Of this I shall have to speak more at large.

The course of true love never did run smooth; and no actor ever attained the highest honors granted to his profession, that envy and malice did not attempt to wither "the bays" that encircle his brow.

After a career of success, which might truly be termed the Kemble mania, the divine Fanny was accused of having spoken disrespectfully of the Americans in their own capitol, the city of Washington. Among other charges, the serious one of having said, the Americans did not know how to sit a horse correctly, and to maintain that the left, and not the right, should be the path the law ought to direct as the rule of the road. For this terrible crime of entertaining an opinion of her own, and daring to express it, she was to be doomed and called upon to give an account at the bar of public opinion assembled within the walls of the Walnut Street Theatre, where placards were distributed with the intention of proving, in this land of freedom, that a lady's tongue, from time immemorial her weapon of offence as well as defence, must be bridled, and not be permitted to wag in ridicule of any thing American.

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