

# FIFTY YEARS OF AN ACTOR'S LIFE

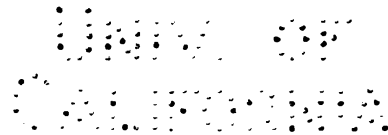
BY

JOHN COLEMAN

AUTHOR OF

"CHARLES READE AS I KNEW HIM," "CURLY: AN ACTOR'S STORY," ETC.

WITH SIXTEEN PLATES  
CONTAINING 26 PORTRAITS



*IN TWO VOLS*

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VOL. I.

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## FIFTY YEARS OF AN ACTOR'S LIFE

## CHAPTER I

## CHILDHOOD

**Childish Fantasies—A Pictorial Gallery** ("Penny Plain and Tuppence Coloured") lands me into Trouble—My Tutor thrashes me, and Father thrashes my Tutor—Mother mediates, and Father and I are packed off on our Travels—Ashby and the Last of the de la Zouches—The Ruined Castle and the Old Church—Stocks and Thumbscrews—At the Play—*Ivanhoe* in *Propria Persona*—On the Queen's Highway—Historic Halting-Places—Chatsworth and Haddon Hall—The Last of the Derwentwaters—Buxton, Matlock, and Peveril of the Peak—Valery Hall and the Haunted Library—A First and Unforgotten Glimpse of Shakespeare—Caverswall Castle and the Convent—The Old Manchester Theatre and *The Bleeding Nun of Lindenburg*—Alton Towers and Renowned Talbot—A Hive of Bees settle on my Head—Chaos.

**H**OW the life of the play-house grew into my life, or rather, how my life grew into that of the play-house, I don't know; but it seems to have been there as long as I can remember.

My first impressions were derived from the old theatre of my native town of Derby, in the heart of the Midlands. To my infantile mind this dingy old building was a veritable fairy palace, and when the faded green curtain arose, a magic mirror revealed glimpses of a world of enchantment.

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Too young to read the text, or even comprehend clearly the story of the play, its living pictures remained impressed on my memory in a series of dazzling dissolving views, which no after-splendours have ever equalled or even approached.

First of all, I recall a vision of a baronial hall—knights, nobles, yeomen of the guard, and a swart, disnatured, raven-haired monster in regal robes and with a naked withered arm; a youthful hero in purple and gold, condemned to die on Tower Green (I wondered where Tower Green was); two beautiful beings—one fair as morning, the other dark as night—both mad, I think. One was in sable weeds, black as her lustrous locks; the other “clad in white samite, mystic, wonderful,” down which “her sunny tresses streamed like a golden fleece.” One of these enchantresses vanished, calling upon some headless phantom to waft her to everlasting tortures; the other died on the green baize, amidst the rolling of muffled drums and slow music: whereupon I howled dismally, and could not be convinced by my mother that it was all make-believe.

Next came a woodland glade with a youthful Apollo, with spear and bugle-horn, bedight like “bold Robin Hood, that forester good,” in Lincoln green. This gentleman's—or lady's—nose is somewhat pronounced, and so are his, or her, legs; indeed, they are of rare but somewhat ebullient symmetry. There is a pretty little shepherdess, accompanied by a clown in motley and bells, with a fool's bauble. Then there is a song, something about a “cuckoo,” which is Greek to me, but music all the same. By-and-by the young

gentleman changes to a young lady, who offers to kiss everybody in the building. I take her at her word, and ask her to kiss me. Vainly struggling to reach her, I have my ears boxed instead, and am threatened to be taken home if I don't behave myself.

This was a memorable occasion, because there was an after-piece in which there was a conservatory (or was it a hothouse?) that was struck by lightning! I think the heroine was struck, too, either by the lightning or by a bold, bad man, with a weird face and great rolling eyes, who was always threatening that "force should effect what love denied!" Anyhow, the charming creature became a ghost in white, and then, to my infinite delight, turned out not to be a ghost after all!

The next *tableau vivant* I witnessed was, however, the most awe-inspiring in my youthful picture-gallery. There was a cottage, a village maiden—stay, there were two! Both were young and lovely. It was very dark. "Nosey" in the orchestra (why did they call him "Nosey"?—there was nothing abnormal about his nose) was diddle-iddling and torturing his fiddle as if it were out of tune. There was a "tap-tap" at the door—an awful silence—the latch moved up and down. Heroine number one took her father's gun (I knew it was her father's because she said so), and began to load it. I admired her courage, but trembled for the consequences: suppose it should go off and burst! She demanded to know who was at the door; there was no reply—she brought the gun to the charge and fired. My heart was in my mouth, but I held on, as the scene closed. There was another scene with some

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funny people: I didn't know and didn't care what they were about—I only wanted to get back to the cottage and the heroine.

Here we are again—she and I. She is alone this time, and I am oblivious of the presence of any one else. Stage darker than before! Fiddles, diddle-iddling more than ever! Another “tap-tap” at the door. A hoarse voice without, imploring, “Open, open! for the love of Gawd!” Heroine opens door. A spectral figure staggers in, gaunt, famished, black-bearded, long-haired, with great glittering eyes. He is a smuggler. I'm convinced of it by his petticoat trousers, jack-boots, striped shirt, huge belt, and hanging cap. He tears open his shirt—displays his manly bosom “weltering in his gore!”

By-and-by, when I am sent to school, one of my schoolfellows has a large volume of Skelt's *Stars of the Stage* (“Penny Plain and Tuppence Coloured”). From this veracious authority I learn that the Hunchback with the withered arm is Crookback Dick, who, it is alleged, murdered the Princes in the Tower, and was himself slain at Bosworth Field by Harry Tudor; that the beautiful being who dies to slow music is Jane Shore, the silversmith's wife and *chère amie* of Edward IV.; that the young gentleman in Lincoln green is Shakespeare's peerless Rosalind; and that the play with the cucumber frame, and the pale-faced villain, and the ghost is *Thérèse; or, the Orphan of Geneva*, while the gory smuggler is Grampus in *The Wreck Ashore*.

There are other celebrities of the period: Vestris in *Don Giovanni*, and Pandora (or is it Apollo?) in



*Olympic Revels*, or devils—I forget which. Then there are James Wallack as the Brigand, T. P. Cooke as William who married Susan, Yates as Count Carmine, O. Smith as Three-fingered Jack, Paul Bedford as Blueskin, Mrs. Keeley as Jack Sheppard, and N. T. Hicks as the Wizard of the Wave. All these good people are brilliantly adorned with gold and silver and jewels, made out of some unknown splendid material which I find in years to come is called foil-paper. I borrow this picture-book and keep it in my desk, lifting up the lid at every available moment to take a surreptitious peep at my heroes and heroines, wondering whether the time will ever arrive when I may see the originals of these splendours in the flesh.

This precious book gets me into trouble. My master, Mr. Birkin (who, like Michael Cassio, is “a great arithmetician,” and, indeed, editor of *Walkingham’s Arithmetic*), sets me a sum. I can’t do it. He finds me neglecting my lessons, head under desk poring over my pictures for inspiration, and gives me a thrashing. I go home and display my scars: my indignant father goes down to Full Street and thrashes my master, and I make my exit from school amidst what threatens to be a blaze of legal fireworks. Next day a summons for assault and battery arrives; then mother appears as mediator. My father had contracted with Mr. Chandos Leigh, of Valery Hall, and with Lord Shrewsbury to arrange their respective picture-galleries and to touch up certain old masters; hence my mother suggested an immediate fulfilment of these contracts.

“Go at once, dear, to Valery,” she said. “Take

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the boy with you, and leave me to deal with Mr. Birkin!"

"It's an angel ye are, darlin'," replied my father—"better than any angel that ever was—fledged! You've no wings to fly away with, thank the Lord! for if you did, what'd become of us He only knows."

For once in his life my father was right. If ever there was an angel on earth, mother was one of the celestial company. As for him, whatever doubt may have existed as to the paternity of the original Micawber, there could be no shadow of a doubt as to my father's relationship to that illustrious and delightful person, inasmuch as he was his veritable counterpart, incarnate in the blood, bones, and brains of a veritable Paddy from Cork who had not kissed the blarney-stone for nothing, and whose fluency of speech was little short of miraculous: always sanguine, always ebullient, always expecting something to turn up which never did turn up. By profession he was an artist, a carver and gilder; by instinct a poet, a patriot, a politician, and a born orator. As to our ancestry, he maintained that we were direct descendants of a race of barbaric kings who in some prehistoric age had reigned at Tara—in proof whereof, in the family Bible (a "Breeches" one) there is, or was, an ancestral tree as long as my arm, going back to the Flood, and Heaven knows how much further than that! Then there were armorial bearings with griffins and naked "salvage" men and a high-falutin Celtic inscription signifying, "My sword is my safeguard, and God is my guide!"

Another scion of the family, Edward, the "King's

Remembrancer" (whatever that may mean), lies in the cloisters at Westminster under a plain slab which bears a nobler motto, "Be just and fear not."

Although in receipt of a fairly liberal income, my father was always in debt and difficulties—one day "all over" money, the next without a shilling. It was in vain that my mother strove to keep him straight: strive as she might, whatever she did to-day he undid to-morrow. But he was so bright, so clever, so sanguine, and so ingratiating that, despite his many shortcomings, the poor soul doted on her handsome but erratic husband.

She herself hailed from Dublin. Her father, a friend of Robert Emmet and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, had accompanied Wolfe Tone to France to interview the First Consul and General Hoche about the projected but abortive invasion of '98. He had also been "out" in that troublous time, was taken and cast for death, and would have been most certainly hanged, drawn, and quartered for a contumacious rebel, had not grandmother, shortly before mother's birth, prevailed upon the wife of the lord-lieutenant of the period to intercede for the condemned "Croppy," whose life was preserved, but whose estate was escheated to the Crown. Under these circumstances it will be obvious that, although born in England, I was bred a rebel, steeped to the lips in Irish and Roman Catholic proclivities.

I repeat, my father was right when he affirmed "mother was an angel." There were times, indeed, when she looked the very image of one. She had taught herself (or possibly he had taught her) the art of gilding, in which she had become an adept. Oil or water-colour

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was all one to her. My mother had acquired a strange habit of touching her head with the tip of a camel's-hair brush, the result being that her bonnie brown hair became tinted with flakes of gold, which glittered in the sunshine like an aureole, lighting up with angelic beauty her sweet face and her lovely eyes of Irish grey.

There were, or rather had been, eight of us children. I say "had been" because my elder brother, James, died shortly before I was born—died, too, under somewhat remarkable circumstances. A rumour had gained currency that Daniel O'Connell had been killed in a duel. Revered as the Messiah of the Irish people, his loss was deemed a national and irreparable calamity. Father was a red-hot O'Connellite, and when the deplorable news reached the Midlands, he passionately exclaimed, "Would God had taken my only child rather than Ireland should lose the Liberator!" Strangely enough, that very afternoon the child sprang from his nurse's arms, fell into a well in the garden, and was drowned there and then! The shock to my mother was so terrible that it was with difficulty that she survived my birth. Nor was the shock confined to her alone. Though passionately fond of the water, I never approach the sea without a shudder, which for the moment unmans me. "Dangers, however, retreat when boldly they are confronted," and hence I have always succeeded in conquering mine by leaping into the water head-foremost.

Two of my younger brothers, Michael and Norbert, died in infancy; hence only five of us were left—two

sisters, two brothers, and myself. The girls were sent away to a boarding-school in Cumberland, while the boys remained at home at a dame's school.

The result of the conversation about the Birkin incident was, that carpet bags and portmanteaus were packed that night, and next morning, at nine o'clock, Martin was at the door with the horse and trap, and after a tender good-bye to my mother, off we started on our travels. (I remark here parenthetically that my mother mediated so successfully with the irate Birkin that we heard no more of the action for assault and battery.)

My father broke the journey (he was always breaking journeys—that is, when he was not engaged in breaking mother's heart) at the then fashionable resort Ashby-de-la-Zouch. His business there, or rather his pleasure (for, in his way, he was a very "Rupert of debate"), was to take part in a polemical discussion with a renegade priest, one Murtoch O'Sullivan, who went about (so father declared) "casting damnation on the tombs of his ancestors." It is said that the bold Murtoch "caught snakes" on this occasion; but of this I have no personal knowledge, for I was better engaged.

Young as I was, I had read *Ivanhoe*; so while my father was demolishing the apostate, I was endeavouring to find the "lists" where the disinherited knight vanquished the Templar; and although I was not successful in my quest (for, in fact, none of the natives appeared to know anything about the subject), I found the ruined castle where Adelaide, the last of the de la

Zouches, had, not long before, left her name inscribed all over what remained of the fortress. Outside the old church I saw the stocks, the pillory, the thumbscrews, and other landmarks of the good old times; inside there were various tombs, with knights in armour, and noble dames in coifs and ruffs stretched beside them, with lions and greyhounds *couchant* at their feet, and—oh, greatest joy of all!—on my return to the hotel I saw a playbill of the Theatre Royal, with *Ivanhoe* to be acted that night.

My father had fraternised with a crowd of priests, and they were celebrating the smashing of Murtoch, the apostate, by making a night of it; so I had little difficulty in persuading him to take me to the theatre, and leave me there, whilst he returned to his port and punch. (It was always port and punch in those days!)

Though the other parts of the house were fairly filled, I constituted almost the entire box audience. I was in the seventh heaven that night. I laughed with Wamba, son of Witless, and Friar Tuck; worshipped Rebecca, adored Rowena; feared Ulrica; hated Sir Brian de Bois Guilbert; loathed Front de Bœuf; pitied Isaac; admired *Ivanhoe*, principally for his head of hair—a wonderful head of hair it was, in great masses of soft, silky, fluffy black curls. Then his armour, which was of silver, quite eclipsed the Templars, who floated about in white sheets and bedgowns, with red crosses and combat swords by their sides and tin pots on their heads.

Whether Robin Hood or Richard Cœur de Lion appeared in the piece, I don't remember; Ulrica certainly did, because she set fire to Torquilstone Castle.

Although there was no tournament (I mean, there were no horses or lances), still, there was plenty of fighting and of red fire; and when my father (having had more punch than usual) came to take me to the hotel, I could have seen the play all over again.

I don't know how we came to travel in that direction, but we passed through Ashbourne, where I was left for some hours at an hotel by myself. Here I found a copy of Barry Cornwall's *Life of Kean*, and devoured the record of the wonderful little man's trials and struggles, his meteoric triumph, and his melancholy death.

As we drove away I was full of the subject. It was a congenial one to my father, for he knew Kean. In Ireland he had seen him act all his great parts. He described his Shylock, and impressed me so vividly with the idea that the wolfish Jew really intended to "cut the pound of flesh from the merchant's heart" that I was about to jump out of the trap in alarm, and should certainly have done so, had I not been reassured by the news that Portia came to the rescue and forbade the cruel Jew to "take one single drop of blood!"

I am under the impression now, that all this time we were going in a direction exactly opposite to our ultimate destination. Anyhow, we were two or three days on the road, staying at Chatsworth one night, at Haddon Hall the next, and at the Earl of Newburgh's seat the night after. Here the housekeeper frightened me out of my seven senses by showing me the decollated head of the last Earl of Derwentwater, and the bloody cloth in which it was wrapped, when the hapless young

Jacobite was done to death by the "Hanoverian rats" (so father described them) on Tower Hill. From Newburgh we proceeded to Buxton, Matlock, the Peak, and to the Potteries, where I was taken all through the works, which both interested and delighted me. The happiest outing must have an end, and at length we reached Valery Hall—a gloomy and funereal place. There was not a child in the house except myself, so to keep me out of mischief the stern parent set me to study Pope's *Essay on Man*, which I soon learned by heart. His pet craze, however, was mythology, and he was always hammering into my childish head the wondrous stories of the old gods.

Nowadays my father would have been dubbed agnostic; then he was stigmatised as heterodox. "Stick to the owld Gods!" he admonished me: "the new ones—bad luck to them—take care of themselves; but the owld ones—bless their dear hearts—they are things of beauty. And what is it Kates says? You don't know him (never mind! time enough for that!), but he says, 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever!' And so it is for ever and for ever! Away you go now, and mind you learn a page of Lemprière before dinner."

I fear I didn't make as much progress with Lemprière as he desired; but I did learn the art of speaking with propriety, which I acquired by reading (subject to his stern correction) the leading articles in *The Times* that he daily anatomised and anathematised! Despite these occupations, I had still much idle time on my hands, and, being debarred, through my loneliness, the childish amusements of my age, I found my way to the library,



where delightful companionship awaited me in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *The Barons of Felsheim* (a novel I have never since encountered), which contained the adventures of the hero of Theodore Hook's once famous drama of *Tekeli* ("And Hook conceals his hero in a cask!"—Byron *passim*), *The Sentimental Journey*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Roderick Random*, *The Arabian Nights*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and—oh, rapture!—*Tom Jones*!

The library was a large old-fashioned gloomy apartment with great oriel windows inlaid with patines of stained glass at the corners of each division. The windows opened inwards, giving egress to the terrace, which overhung the pleasaunce and the mere beyond. The walls were panelled with oak. The shelves were also of oak; on the oaken abutments were bronzed busts of Roman emperors and, I believe, Greek philosophers, for the most part hideous creatures—bull-necked, goose-necked, beetle-browed, hook-nosed, snub-nosed, vulpine-jawed—a murderous-looking crew of ruffians, whether soldiers or *savants*. They frightened me at first, but at last I got used to them. No one ever came here except myself, unless it were Hannah, the housemaid, to look after the fire; and her visits became of rare occurrence when she found that I could look after it myself.

One day, rummaging about, I unearthed a treasure—a copy of Boydell's huge *Shakespeare*, full of weird and wonderful illustrations! Then commenced an era in my life.

Day after day I used to steal away after our early dinner (lunch, they call it now), leaving the squire and father at the squire's old port, while I made my

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way to the library. From that time forth I was never alone.

On one particular afternoon which I had devoted to *Macbeth*, the mist came crawling up to the window from the mere without. Night fell earlier than usual, and "the gloaming was melting into the mirk." Carried away by the cunning of the scene, I crept closer and closer to the red glow of the great pine-logs, by the light of which I reached the murder scene. Then my hair began to rise, my heart to beat. I heard Macbeth shrieking :

"Sleep no more!" to all the house,  
Macbeth doth murder sleep!

I saw Lady Macbeth plucking the daggers from his bloody hands, saw the white hairs of Duncan dabbled with blood. The emperors and philosophers on the abutments had all come to life and were leaping down on me.

Tongue-tied with horror, I fled towards the door to escape, when, lo ! from the great oriel, through the mist, the weird sisters emerged, pointing their skinny fingers at me in derision. Then, I was told, my shrieks and cries alarmed the house : I saw and heard no more, till the next day, when I awoke and found my father and the doctor by my bedside.

Being henceforth debarred the library, Valery became more desparately dull than ever, and I was only too glad when the time came to leave.

We took Caverswall Castle by the way, and paid a flying visit to a convent either connected with the castle or immediately adjacent—I don't remember which. I

joined the nuns at their devotions, and was impressed by their ghostly figures flitting noiselessly to and fro in conventual garb, their sweet voices making music to the accompaniment of the grand organ, the "dim religious light" which streamed through the windows of many-coloured glass, with their quaint pictures, "The Man of Sorrows and His Virgin Mother," of saints and martyrs, of kings and queens, mail-clad warriors and other mighty men of old.

The next stage of our journey was to Manchester, where we stayed for the night at the Palatine, and went to the famous old theatre (afterwards destroyed by fire), where we saw *The Bleeding Nun of Lindenburg*, with real robbers, a tremendous broadsword combat, a real ghost, and a transparency over a ruined castle, requesting some one or other to "Protect the child of the murdered Agnes!" The valiant valet who vanquished the principal robber was Basil Baker, and the robber was announced as Samuel Philips. Long years after, describing this juvenile experience to the famous lessee of Sadler's Wells, the veteran exclaimed, "Printer's error, dear boy! 'Twas not Sam Philips, but Sam Phelps, who caught your youthful fancy, for I—yes, I—was the chief robber on that memorable occasion!"

To return, however, to our journey: next day we passed through Dovedale and stopped at the cottage of Tom Moore, the poet, where my father called to pay his respects. Both he and my mother were continually singing the Irish melodies, and I knew them by heart; hence, when introduced to the author (a little fat man with grey

curly hair, bright sparkling eyes, and a celestial nose), I dropped upon my knees in involuntary admiration. He and "Bessy"—a bright, vivacious little lady—were evidently pleased to see father, and invited us to an early dinner, after which my lady adjourned for a *siesta*, while the bard and my father declared on to "'98," Robert Emmet, Wolfe Tone, Lord Edward and Pamela, Lord Norbury, Major Sirr, Sheridan, George IV., "Silly Billy," Fanny Kemble, Kean, and Lord and Lady Byron's domestic differences. I left them chatting, and went into the library, where I found a copy of *Oliver Twist*, and I eagerly devoured it.

When it grew dark I was called in to tea. By this time the gentlemen were extremely jolly, and the bard easily suffered himself to be persuaded to the piano, where he gave us two or three of his most popular songs.

It was in vain that I put in a plea for "The Minstrel Boy" or "Let Erin remember the Days of Old."

"No, no, young shaver," responded the poet; "you're a born rebel already. Listen to this, and keep it green in your heart," and he mellifluously glided into "Believe me when all those Endearing Young Charms," which he addressed directly to Mrs. Moore with a pathos and a tenderness which stirred me to tears.

I don't think sovereigns were too plentiful at the cottage, but he gave me one, and a shilling to boot, and Mrs. Moore gave me a kiss when we drove away.

'Twas evening when the Towers of Alton rose before us in the fading light of the setting sun, and I was all eagerness to behold the lineal descendant of the doughty

warrior whose acquaintance I had already made in *Henry VI*. For days after our arrival, I looked out for the earl, whom I pictured a living replica of the renowned Talbot, whose very name was wont to frighten the French folk into fits, and was cruelly disappointed when I found his lordship a very modern, middle-aged, medium-sized, tradesman-like person in a vilely cut blue surtout. He appeared to be no more impressed by me than I was by him, and in point of fact did not deign to notice my existence.

I suppose I must have been an imaginative young idiot just then, for I have a vivid recollection of losing myself one evening in the gardens (for which Alton was famous); and, while trying to make my way out in the semi-darkness, found myself confronted with a huge stone lion, which appeared instinct with life and about to leap down from his pedestal to devour me! At the sight I shouted "blue murder," took to my heels, and bolted as fast as I could. The contradictions in my character attest my Celtic origin. Ferociously savage in the face of fact, I was more timid than the "baby of a girl" when my imagination was excited, especially by anything which trenched upon or even suggested the preternatural.

My stay at the Towers was cut short by an untoward accident which well-nigh terminated my career altogether; the marvel is that I escaped alive. One Sunday, after Mass, William, one of my father's men, was giving me a run in a wheelbarrow, when he came full tilt against a tree in which there was a hive of bees or a nest of wasps—he didn't stay to inquire which, and

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I never knew, for they all, except a few who devoted their attention to him, alighted on my head. There was one sting of a myriad poisoned darts, and then—chaos!

Weeks of fever and delirium elapsed before I awoke and found myself at home with my poor shorn head resting on my mother's bosom.

## CHAPTER II

### CHURCH AND STAGE

A Dear Old Priest and a Primitive Service—The Renaissance—Two Youthful Acolytes—A Musical Family—The Three Graces—Duchess, Flirt, and *Prima Donna*—Handsome Jack—Our Choral Service carries the Town by Storm—A Divided Duty—One Foot in the Church, the Other on the Stage—A Priest bequeathes me a German Flute and the Prompt-Book of “Rob Roy MacGregor!”—In the “Flies”—The Exuberant Mrs. Waylett and “Kate Kearney”—La Belle Laura (the Beautiful Mrs. Honey)—Her “Beautiful Rhine” and my Beautiful Bouquet—Mrs. Keeley in *Jack Sheppard*, and Paul Bedford in *Blueskin*—The Most Eccentric of Eccentric Impresarios—His Sayings and Doings—A Peep Behind the Scenes—Maria Foote (Countess of Harrington)—The Players of the Period—Harley and his Noble Friends,—J. S. Balls, James Anderson, Addison, Hoskins, Towers, Boddie, Woolgar, Mrs. Nunn, Bob Romer, Robson Daniels, Mercer Simpson, Frazer, Adeline Cooper, and “Others of that ilk!”—My First Appearance on the Stage—The Dumb Boy in *The Inchcape Bell*—An Unexpected Auditor—An Unrehearsed Effect and an Ignominious Fiasco—Maternal Intercession—I am banished to Quorndon School.

THE dull old king (“Silly Billy”) had moved over to his dull ancestors, and when the auspicious reign of Victoria commenced, the Catholic Emancipation Bill had borne golden fruit. In my own very short span of life, to be Roman Catholic—above all, to be Irish—was to be tabooed in the Midlands; but better times were coming, and the Renaissance dawned slowly, but surely. Our priest, Father Challoner, was the *beau idéal* of an English

gentleman, beloved by his flock, admired even by his religious opponents, it was even said that the Protestant bishop of the diocese made it a point to invite our dear old friend to dinner and a game of chess. The clergy of the Established Church, while turning up their noses at the Wesleyans and Baptists, were wont to say of Father Challoner, "He is certainly a Papist, but he is not a tub-thumper!"

We were, however, only just emerging from the dark ages, and our arrangements in Chapel Street were of a very primitive character. Up to the time of my return from Alton, the service of the ritual had been very perfunctory. The only member of the congregation qualified to serve Mass at the altar was Mr. Bregazzi, an elderly Italian artist. The dear old gentleman was both earnest and devout, but appeared awfully out of place. His Kerseymere breeches and gaiters contrasted most incongruously with the sumptuous vestments in which Father Challoner was wont to disport himself.

During my illness the good priest frequently called to see how his "little heretic" (for so he facetiously called me, in reference to certain juvenile audacities of doubt and unbelief which I had aired, to his amusement) was getting on. When he found I was growing better, he proposed to teach me the Latin responses, so that I might be able to serve Mass with my schoolfellow, Felix Bregazzi, son of the Bregazzi aforesaid. As an inducement, Mr. Challoner offered to provide a cassock, an alb, and a biretta for me to wear. This proposal rather took my fancy. Nor was this all. For some time past the Bregazzi family, mother, and other musical members of



the congregation had been preparing a choral service with which they hoped to take the town by storm. The Bregazzi womankind, popularly known as the Three Graces, were the handsomest girls in the place. There was a fourth—a beauty too—but she didn't count, being already chained and secured by a fortunate portrait painter. "The Duchess," as we called Georgina, the elder of the Three Graces, was the most gorgeous creature I have ever beheld, before or since; "Colley" was a winsome young flirt, beautiful as a butterfly; and the dignified Magdalen was a veritable *prima donna*; while handsome Jack, the eldest son, was as handsome as he was high, and a splendid baritone.

As soon as I was able to get about, I was thrown a great deal amongst these pleasant people. Like the precocious young prig I was, of course I fell desperately in love with the "Duchess," who was nearly old enough to be my mother. She was a great friend of my people, and consequently petted and spoiled me almost as much as my mother herself.

There were as many rehearsals as of a stage play. When our preparations were complete, the news spread like wildfire, and at our first service of song our little chapel was crowded to overflowing. Felix and I looked smart in our albs and cassocks, and got through the responses without breaking down; but the musical service carried everything before it. It consisted of a Mass by Mozart in the morning, and at night, during the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (another innovation!), Jack and Magdalen sang the *Laudate* of Zingarelli magnificently.

When our neighbours of the Established Church found they could have a concert of the very best sacred music for nothing, they came and crowded our own congregation out. This was Father Challoner's psychological moment, and he proselytised right and left—in fact, it might be said that musical service laid the foundation of the new and stately edifice erected a few years later exactly opposite the Protestant parish church of St. Alkmund's.

Amidst this blaze of triumph, an event occurred which caused me to lead a dual life—one foot in the Church, the other on the stage. Another priest (a friend of my father's) from the adjacent town of Loughborough, came upon a visit which had to be kept dark, inasmuch as there was some trouble that I never quite understood, save that there was something feminine about it! This gentleman had dramatic and musical proclivities, and played prettily on the German flute. He took rather a fancy to me, and at the end of his visit, gave me his German flute and a play-book (the Prompt-book, as I afterwards discovered) of *Rob Roy*. The German flute I let severely alone, but the Prompt-book I incontinently devoured, till I think I knew every line of *Rob Roy* by heart.

Small wonder, then, that when shortly afterwards the Birmingham Company were announced to appear in that popular play, I was all impatience to behold the bold outlaw. Alas! my mother's health was now breaking, father was out of town, and I was not permitted to go to the theatre alone; worse still, supplies ran short, and I had no pocket-money. What was to be done? See

*Rob Roy* I must. In this emergency I discovered that one of my father's men assisted the stage carpenter, "Shake Farthings," with the scenery, and by their connivance I was smuggled into the scene loft, from whence I obtained my first glimpse of life behind the scenes.

Upon closer inspection the scenery appeared rather frayed ; but when I was permitted once or twice to bear a hand in arranging a sky border or turning a winch which sent the palace flying up or the forest tumbling down, I was not a little pleased ; and when I saw the players themselves in their bravery—Diana in her scarlet riding-habit, Sir Frederick in his disguise, Francis in his square-cut coat, ringlet wig, and jack-boots, the Bailie, and the rest—my delight was unbounded.

I was certainly a little disappointed when Rob made his appearance clad in an unromantic drab overcoat and gaiters ; but when the gallant Catheran cast aside this base disguise, and came forth at the clachan of Aberfoil in all the splendid picturesqueness of bonnet and eagle plume, tartan kilt and hose, philibeg, sporran, and full-flowing plaid, he "was all my fancy painted him," bow-legs and all ; for I should say my hero had a pair of legs like a parallelogram. Such is the force of first impressions that from that day to this I can never realise Rob Roy without bow-legs.

This gentleman, by the way, was a certain Mr. Robson Daniels, who, my friend Phelps afterwards assured me, was an excellent actor, only debarred by lack of opportunity from becoming a great man. The majestic Helen was the beautiful Mrs. Nunn from the London theatres ; the Bailie, Mr. Mercer Simpson, manager of

the Birmingham Theatre; Andrew Fairservice and Mattie were Bob Romer of facetious memory and his wife, a charming singer and sprightly soubrette; while Francis and Diana, the principal vocalists, were Mr. Frazer and Miss Adeline Cooper, from the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.

Having once found my way to the "flies," I was there every night, father's absence and mother's illness affording me unusual and unexpected opportunities. From this coign of vantage I saw Mrs. Waylett—a superb though somewhat exuberant creature—in the comédie of *Perfection*, and heard her sing "Kate Kearney"; here, too, I saw the beautiful and ebullient Mrs. Honey as Albina Mandeville in Reynolds' comedy *The Will* and in *The Spirit of the Rhine*, in which I heard her sing, I know not how often, her famous ballad, "My Beautiful Rhine."

Flowers were scarce just then. Hearing her complain that she wanted some flowers for *The Spirit of the Rhine*, I rifled our garden next day, and brought a splendid bouquet to the theatre. To my unsophisticated mind this gorgeous creature was a veritable divinity; hence I got myself up for the occasion. Bedecked in light blue pelisse, white ducks, pumps, huge-frilled shirt collar, and a cap like an accordion, I approached the dressing-room with fear and trembling. When I tapped gently at the door, a voice of gold said, "Come in!" My heart came to my mouth, but in I went.

Candour compels me to say that her costume was incomplete, but—her beauty was adorable, and all I could do was to stand and gasp at this resplendent apparition.

“Well, what is it, my little man?” inquired my goddess.

“Please, ma’am, I heard you say last night that you wanted some flowers, and I have ventured to bring you these from our garden.”

“How good of you! and how beautiful!—not you, you little goose, but the flowers! Bless the child! how he is blushing! Well, and how am I to pay you, sir?”

By this time I had taken heart of grace, and replied boldly, “With a kiss, if you please.”

“A dozen, you darling!” With that she gathered me up in her beautiful arms, and descended upon me in the most maternal fashion. Then, patting my chubby cheeks, she insisted upon my being installed in the stage box for the rest of the evening. No prince upon his throne was ever so pleased or so proud as I was that night. Alas! it was her last appearance in Derby, and I never saw the charming creature again.

Amongst other wandering stars came Mrs. Keeley with *Jack Sheppard*, Paul Bedford as *Blueskin*, Yates as *Abraham Mendez*, and Wright and Higgin with *A Loan of a Lover*, and *Deeds of Dreadful Note*. I was forbidden to go to *Jack Sheppard* (it was highly improper, so my mother said); but I did go, and was near coming to grief afterwards through humming *Nix my Dolly*, which every boy of the period knew by heart.

My father came home shortly after, so there was an end for the present of my stolen visits to Elysium.

I was soon, however, made glad by the arrival of Manley’s famous company of comedians, and to my

infinite delight the great man himself dined at our house, accompanied by Mr. Boddie, the low comedian. Before dinner the autocrat of the Midlands was dictatorial and awe-inspiring—afterwards not only genial, but delightful.

All kinds of eccentric stories were told about this remarkable man, and as he belonged to a race now as extinct as the Dodo, some of them, gleaned long years after I gazed on him with awe and wonder in my childhood, are worth preserving. His circuit of theatres comprised Nottingham, Derby, Chesterfield, Halifax, and Stamford. His antecedents prior to his advent in the Midlands were involved in mystery, but his accent revealed his origin : without doubt he came from the Emerald Isle.

Imagine a tall, stately man of seventy, with quick, piercing eyes, high cheekbones, aquiline nose, iron-grey hair, and distinctly Hibernian cast of features. He always carried a brown hazel-stick in his hand, wore a low-crowned hat, a long coat of dead green, almost the shade of an autumn leaf when the colour is fading out of it. A red bandana silk handkerchief, with a stock inside it, was tied round his neck. His nether limbs (in excellent preservation) were clad in drab breeches to match the vest, and tied with drab ribbons at the knee. Grey worsted stockings, with high-tied shoes, completed this eccentric costume. In his time he had been an admirable actor. Latterly he only acted one or two parts—Shylock and Sir Pertinax Macsycophant, in which father said he still remained unrivalled. Even these he rarely or ever played ; hence I never had

the good fortune to see him act. When my father rallied him on this subject, he replied, "'Sblood, sir! when I keep a pack of hounds to bark, why should I be *obleeged* to bark myself?" Sometimes, however, he was obliged to act whether he would or no. For instance, Edmund Kean (who, surely, when at his worst, must have been one of the most trying persons imaginable) had one of his erratic fits upon him when he arrived in Stamford seventy years ago. It seems that during a former engagement he had had a dispute with Manley, and was now determined to "take it out of the bog-trotting old savage," for so he dubbed the Irish manager.

The first thing Kean did upon his arrival on Sunday was to invite all the "boys" to dinner at the hotel; the next, to drink them all dead drunk under the table. When they "turned up" next day for the rehearsal with aching heads, there came a message from Kean that he was very ill and unable to act Shylock that night. There was nothing for it but for Manley to take the part himself. "Here, Bob, jewel!" said he (he always called his wife "Bob"), "send the dhrum round, and tell the crier that in consequence of the indisposition of that blackguard Kane, Mither Manley will appear to-night in his great part of Shylock."

The drum, which to this day takes the place of the crier's bell in Stamford, was sent round, and the lieges were duly apprised of the state of affairs.

The theatre was crowded in all parts long before the time of commencement, and Manley carried the audience by storm. This was by no means pleasant to the great

little man when the youngsters joined him at supper and renewed the orgy of the previous night. Remember, O gentle reader, this sort of thing was not restricted to the actors of the period: your father did it, and mine; everybody did it, from the king upon his throne ("Brandy, Harris! brandy!") and the queen, *not* upon the throne; from the nobles of the Court and many ladies, noble and otherwise, down to the coster and his wife, who, I fear, do not altogether retain a monopoly of this ennobling custom to-day.

Next morning came another message from Kean that he was quite unable to act Othello that night. Once more Manley had to leap into the breach; once more the house was crowded from floor to ceiling; once more the old man left his years behind him and carried everything before him! It is said that night's experience sobered Mr. Edmund Kean for the rest of his tour.

One of my earliest friends, the late Mr. Higgie, manager for Maddox at the Princess's, for the elder Augustus Harris at Covent Garden, for Miss Vincent at the Victoria, and for me at Liverpool, had an inexhaustible fund of reminiscences about Manley, from which I select a couple of the most piquant.

Higgie was of a rather retiring disposition.

"'Sblood, sir!" said Manley, "it's too modest ye are! Follow my example. I always made this the rule of my life—if I only had a pound of butter to sell, I was always in the middle of the market!—Ever been to Matlock, Higgie?"

"No, sir."

"Then go the first time ye get a chance. The



Nayapolitans say, 'See Naples and die,' but I say, 'See Matlock and live.' Then I'll go bail you'll remember for the rest of your days the beautiful spot that the Great Artificer of the Universe made for a chimney ornament to put on the mantleshef of his own back parlour!"

Upon one occasion an inexperienced young lady, having to open in Portia to the Shylock of the irate impresario, collapsed in the agonies of stage fright in the trial scene, and broke down utterly in the famous "Mercy speech." When the curtain fell, Manley, who up to this moment had "looked daggers, though he had used none," threw open the door at the side of the stage which communicated with the box lobby, where Mrs. Manley was in the receipt of custom, and roared out, "Bob! Bob! 'Sblood, madam, look alive and come round here, and see a phenomenon!"

"Good heavens, Mr. Manley!" exclaimed "Bob," as she came running round in a fright, "what is the matter? Is the place afire?"

"No, but it ought to have been, only I suppose the avenging lightnings are just now doing duty at the Antipodes. Look at that young lady, madam, who has come down here for the leading business!"

"Well, isn't she apt?"

"Oh, very! Deficient in nothing but words, phrases, and grammar. 'Sblood! that unfortunate young person, after murtherin' that angelic craychur Portia and assassinatin' me, broke down in the spaych on mercy! Yes, madam, she absolutely stultified the Divine lines which our Master the Bard wrote at the dictation

of our Heavenly Father while His Blessed Son held the inkstand!"

The poetry of this grotesque blasphemy renders it so unique that I have ventured to rescue it from oblivion.

Things having changed for the better, pocket-money was plentiful, and I saw the opening play from the front of the circle. It was *The Stranger*. Mr. Woolgar (the father of the charming Miss Woolgar, hereafter another object of my boyish idolatry) was the Stranger, and Mrs. Nunn aforesaid was Mrs. Haller. I hadn't the faintest idea what this play was about, save that possibly the gloomy little gentleman in the frogged coat, black pants, and Hessian boots might have taken something which had disagreed with him at dinner, and that the superb creature in dove-coloured corded silk, who could easily have taken him up in her arms and spanked him, had run away because they had quarrelled about the children; but I sympathised deeply with them both, wept copiously, and was proportionately delighted when, after the fashion of those primitive times, they rushed into each other's arms and were supposed to "live happy ever after."

But the after-piece of *The Vampire*!—Oh, goroo! When I recall that gruesome Scottish horror feeding upon the blood of young maidens and throwing himself headlong through the solid stage, and vanishing into the regions below amidst flames of red fire, I protest I shudder at it now.

Next came a forgotten genius, Mr. J. S. Balls, from Drury Lane. It was said that the mantle of Elliston had descended upon this gentleman's shoulders, and I can

well believe it. The renowned Robert William had quitted this sublunary sphere before my time, and according to Charles Lamb had become the "joyousest of disembodied spirits"; but, whatever he may have been, I cannot imagine anything more delightfully brilliant and animated than Ball's Gossamer, in *Laugh when You Can*, and the Three Singles, in *Three or the Deuce is Which*.

After his departure came my first Shakespearian play, *Henry IV*. Can I ever forget the night when I first made the acquaintance of the stern King, the madcap Prince, wild Pains, the Douglas, Hotspur, Fat Jack and his tatterdemalion crew? The King was Mr. Fitzroy, known afterwards as one of the best actors of old men of his time. Hotspur was Mr. Hoskins, for one disastrous season partner with his father-in-law, Mr. Harry Wallack, at Covent Garden, and for many years afterwards a conspicuous member of Phelps' company at Sadler's Wells. This excellent and accomplished actor was, I believe, the first preceptor of Henry Irving. For two decades Mr. Hoskins held a most distinguished position in Australia, where he died recently, full of years and honour.

The Prince, Mr. Perkins, was to my mind the hero of the night. Singularly elegant and handsome, easy and self-possessed in the early part of the play, when he "cast his nighted colour off" and donned his fighting gear, he was the mirror of chivalry. But Boddie, the Falstaff, was the most real personage in the play. Oh, how I loved the fat rogue! how I laughed and laughed again till I cried!

A few days afterwards I saw the Prince and his father at the Chester cricket match, and could scarce realise that they were mere everyday folk like ourselves. The Prince especially, with his pale face and dark hair, his tall symmetrical figure, his blue frock-coat, white ducks, lavender kids, and shining fashionable beaver, was a veritable Prince of the blood royal to me.

Mr. Manley frequently placed the stage box at our disposal, which occasionally brought me into contact with some of the celebrities, amongst others with Harley, the famous comedian. The performance for his benefit was "bespoke" by Lord Harrington, husband of Harley's old comrade, the once famous Miss Foote. The play was *The Road to Ruin*, and the farce *The Illustrious Stranger*. The beneficiare was Goldfinch and Benjamin Bowbell; but to my poor thinking the *star* didn't appear comparable with some of the regular comedians of the company, notably the Young Dornton of Hoskins, the Old Dornton of Mr. Addison (for many years afterwards well known in London), and the inimitable Silkey of Boddie.

By-the-bye, I remember on this occasion Addison sang "The Fine Old English Gentleman" in costume between the pieces, a custom which I afterwards learnt had been rendered popular by William Farren, and by Murray of Edinburgh, in the comedy of *The Squire*.

The house was crowded, except for the centre box, which was set apart for Lord and Lady Harrington. Being crowded out, I was graciously permitted to ensconce myself in a corner behind the scenes. Lord Harrington didn't see much of the play, for he kept

bobbing in and out of Harley's dressing-room, to which a lordly flunkey had brought a case of wine. His lordship was "Hail, fellow, well met!" with everybody, and, willy-nilly, every one had to come into Harley's room to drink the health of the beneficiare and his noble friend.

The countess came round to shake hands with her old comrade. Then there was more health-drinking, until the farce was about to begin. As Mr. Manley was about to escort her ladyship back to her box, she dropped her fan. Quick as lightning I picked it up and presented it with my best bow; she replied graciously as she passed into the lobby, while I remained disconsolate.

Manley whispered something (I don't know what); but my lady smiled graciously, and, beckoning me to her, gave me a seat beside her.

Funny as the farce was, I was afraid to laugh in that august presence; but the countess laughed heartily till the curtain fell; then she said, "The last time I was here, I played Maria Darlington and the Little Jockey! Ah," she continued with a sigh, "I was much happier then than I am now! But when I played Virginia with Macready at Covent Garden, why, then I—— Carriage waiting, did you say, Mr. Manley? Good-night, little man. Mind you come to see the pictures at Elvaston. Bye-bye!"

When she went forth she seemed to take the light and life with her—and what a dingy, dirty old place it became all at once! Of course, I went to see the pictures; but I never saw her again, except at a distance. I saw

my lord, though, but he was not in an after-dinner mood, and relegated me to his valet—a much more imposing personage than his master. It was popularly believed that Lord Harrington had mistaken his vocation. He had a burning desire to be a fashionable tailor, but, alas! adverse fate had doomed him to be a peer of the realm. Evidently this enterprising nobleman was before his time. Had he only been living nowadays, what a Boom he would have had in Bond Street! As it was, in those benighted times he had to content himself with designing the family liveries for his flunkeys.

My next play was *Macbeth*, with Hoskins and Mrs. Nunn as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, and Mr. Towers (afterwards manager of the Surrey and Victoria, and subsequently my stage manager) as Macduff; but the most vivid impression of all was created by a manly young woman with a horse's face and remarkably stalwart nether limbs, who played Malcolm. Try as I may, I have never succeeded quite in disabusing my mind of the impression that Malcolm ought to be played by a manly young woman with a horse's face and stalwart continuations.

Strange to say, I wasn't so much impressed with the acting of the play as I was with the reading upon the memorable occasion when I first became acquainted with it in the library at Valery.

Soon afterwards came James Anderson, who, as Huon in Sheridan Knowles' play of *Love*, captured my youthful fancy and held it for long years after. At that time he appeared a veritable Apollo, the quintessence of ardour, sensibility, and manly beauty. With Anderson's

engagement the season terminated, the players proceeded to Halifax, and the town relapsed into its normal gloom and inertia.

My father accompanied Anderson to London, and was absent on business or pleasure several weeks. My mother—poor dear!—continued to grow weaker and weaker. At first her health entirely engrossed my thoughts; but when she rallied a little, I discovered that an amateur performance was about to take place at the theatre. The play selected for the occasion was a sensational drama called *The Inchcape Bell*, by the famous Fitzball, in which a certain Dumb Boy is a conspicuous feature. I was invited, under a solemn promise of secrecy, to enact the Dumb Boy. Now, though he had nothing to say, this young gentleman had a great deal to do, only, unfortunately, I didn't know how to do it. The prompter, who was an old clown, undertook to coach me for a consideration, and at it I went, pantomiming morning, noon, and night—that is, as far as I could do so without exciting suspicion.

Mother's health did not permit her to go to the theatre now; but father was expected daily, and my anxious desire was that the performance should be over before his return.

At length the night arrived, big with the fate of *The Inchcape Bell*—and the Dumb Boy. Of course, the theatre was crowded. One's friends always come to see one make a fool of oneself—'tis one of those pious duties which friendship conscientiously fulfils! I, however, had kept my secret to myself, and veiled my identity under the name of Master Le Blanc.

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In one scene I had to bring on a couple of buckets, supposed to be full of water, and, staggering under the weight thereof, had to put them down and appeal (always in pantomime) to the bold buccaneer who was captain of the sloop. The clown insisted that the buckets should be empty, but, being always of a realistic turn, I arrived at the conclusion that to stagger under empty buckets would be ruination to my splendid pantomime. I therefore bribed the property man to fill them with water, under the weight of which I staggered on.

Carefully depositing the buckets on deck, I proceeded to make my pantomimic appeal for mercy to Hans Hattock (that was, I think, the name of the commander of *The Vulture of the Deep*).

At this critical moment a well-known voice exclaimed, "Wait till I get you home, young gentleman, and I'll engage I'll bring you to the use of your speech!"

Looking up, to my horror I beheld the stern parent in the box exactly opposite!

At the sight I bolted, upsetting the buckets, deluging the stage with water, and vanishing amidst roars of derision, which seemed to pursue me to the very door of my home; for thither I ran as fast as my legs would carry me, until I found myself in my mother's presence. To her I confided the story of my histrionic escapade, beseeching her to intercede for me. The dear soul soothed, caressed, forgave me, and sent me to bed.

This ignominious fiasco, for lack of more important matters, became the town's talk. My mother exacted a promise from my father never to mention the subject to



me. Other people mentioned it, though : vulgar boys about my own age, for instance, who had witnessed my discomfiture, were wont to make impertinent inquiries as to " Who kicked the buckets ? " In most instances I sought refuge in dignified silence, but there were one or two occasions which flesh and blood could not stand, and which resulted in various pantomimic performances of a more or less pugnacious character.

One of these encounters reached the ears of Father Challoner, who called in the following afternoon to discuss the subject with mother over a cup of tea. The result was that, there being no Roman Catholic seminary in the district, it was decided to despatch me to Quorndon School, to remove me from further indignities.

## CHAPTER III

### *SCHOOL DAYS*

Forget-me-Not—I leave Home and am introduced to the Chatelaine of Kedlaston—A Parting Paternal Admonition—I am left Lamenting—“Carrots” and the Ink-pot—Before the Judgment Seat—“The Fifth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew”—Passing the Fiery Ordeal—“Thus Bad begins, but Worse remains Behind”—A Battle Royal—Fair Fight and no Favour—Escaping by the Skin of One’s Teeth—“Paddy’s Beer” is Popular—“Whiskers” wants to “Clapper-claw” me—I object and rebel—Decree of Banishment—Father to the Rescue—Much Virtue in a Brace of Birds and a Box of Cigars—Golden Sundays and Happy Times at Kedlaston—Daddy Wilcox is taken Ill—I am promoted, and filled full with Good Things—A Boy’s Banquet—A Bolt and a Buttock—A Rent in the Rear—Horsed and flayed alive—A Christmas Play—A Precocious Prince of Denmark—I pay my Debt and cry Quits with “Whiskers”—The Breaking Up—Home for the Holidays.

WHEN the time came for my departure, I was disconsolate at the idea of leaving my mother, but she was even more bright and cheerful than usual. When Martin came to announce that the trap was at the door, she said to my father, “Now mind, John, you call on the countess and get her consent for the child to go to Mass every Sunday—or what’ll become of his soul alive?”

“Thru for ye, jewel—and what’ll Father Challoner say if we allow the young rap to drift into haythendom?”

“Will I wait dinner for ye, dear?”

“No, darlin’; the countess—long life to her!—is the sowl of hospitality, and is good for lunch. That manes an early dinner—and I can’t ate two dinners in one day. Get the trunk up, Martin.”

As he turned away to the horse and trap at the door, my mother (who was very fond of flowers) culled a spray of forget-me-nots from the *jardinière* in the hall, pinned them in my buttonhole, kissed me, and bade me good-bye.

“Cheer up!” she said; “six months are soon over, and Nellie and Annie will both be at home to welcome you at Christmas. Now mind you behave yourself, and let mummie be proud of her boy!”

The day was so fine and the pace so exhilarating, I had no time for the doldrums, and scarcely an hour had elapsed before we found ourselves pulling up in front of Kedleston Hall. The Chatelaine, the Dowager Countess of Scarsdale (the Roman Catholic widow of a Protestant nobleman, and, unless I mistake, the grandmother of the present Viceroy of India), was a stately and charming old French lady, who not only graciously accorded me permission to attend Mass every Sunday in her private chapel, but still more graciously—as my father had anticipated—invited us to a sumptuous lunch. He had the Irishman’s gift of ingratiating, and succeeded in beguiling the old lady of an idle hour or two, and interesting her in his young hopeful; and when we took our leave she promised to look after me every Sunday.

The mare had apparently been fed as well as her

master, for she took the bit in her mouth and rattled away to Quorndon without stopping once. When the school hove in sight, my father growled, "By Jove! H'm! Let in for Mother Thorpe's afternoon tea, worse luck! I suppose I must struggle with a dose of catlap—just, too, when the slightest drop of the crayther would set me all right and correct. That beastly cowld claret—— Hullo! here we are! Jump, sir, jump!"

The next minute I was in the presence of my future lord and master and his better half. Yes, there she was, and there was my father sipping the beverage which the moment before he had stigmatised as catlap, and which he now extolled as nectar. Having made himself as agreeable as possible to the lady, he stepped aside upon important business with her husband. Both he and my father were much more lively when they returned than when they went out. Then Mrs. Thorpe introduced us to Charette, the housekeeper, who took me to the dormitory, showed me my bed, and called Joseph, the handy-man, to carry my trunk up. Having tipped both Charette and Joseph, my father had another confidential interview with Mr. Thorpe, while I said good-bye to Martin.

At last came the parting. Placing a sovereign and a shilling in my hand (guineas had gone out, but tips were still in fashion, and a sovereign and a shilling were supposed to be the proper thing), father said, "Now, attend to me, young gentleman. I've not taught you the use of your fists for nothing, and if ever I hear that you're afther submitting to an insult to your

race or your religion, by my honour, I'll horsewhip you within an inch of your life! You understand?"

"Yes, sir, perfectly!" I replied, pocketing my guinea.

"Very well—that's all right. Good-bye! Now, then, gee up! Off we go!" And off he went at a gallop.

The boys were in the playground, all full of life and gaiety. Every one had a chum—every one but me! At last the bell rang for tea, and away they scampered, while I remained alone. Presently the housekeeper came to look after me; but my heart was so full that I had no thought of hunger. Charette was a good motherly creature, and tried to cheer me up; but in vain. "Never mind," said she, "by-and-by you'll be hungry, and you shall have a bite, on the quiet, in my room. The master says you're not to begin work until to-morrow, so go and take a turn round. There's splendid goodies and tops and marbles at Mother Birchenuff's," and away she went, while I took a solitary ramble in the village. The only object of interest was the churchyard, where I—— Psha!

At bedtime the boys were all larking with each other, but not a soul opened his mouth to me, so I slipped between the sheets without even a good-night, and, thinking of mother and home, quietly cried myself to sleep.

In the morning, after prayers, I turned out into the playground. Playground, did I say? 'Twas Purgatory! Every one fought shy of me. Whispered mutterings of "Irishey" and "Papist" were in the air. Evidently it had leaked out that I was Irish and Roman Catholic! To be that in those days was to be a pariah at our school!

Another bell. "All in to begin!" Away they scampered, and I followed.

On my arrival I was conducted to the lowest seat on the lowest form amidst a general titter. Immediately opposite sat a great hobbledehoy of a fellow whose presence amongst so many little chaps astonished me. Evidently intended for a man, there had been a hitch somewhere in the process, and he had turned out an idiot. A low forehead was surmounted by a head of flaming red tow. He had a ferocious squint, a pug nose, a huge mouth full of yellow teeth, the neck of a bullock, enormous shoulders, and tremendous fists. Making a hideous grimace, he confidentially whispered, loud enough for his chums to hear, "Hurroo, Pat! they've found out your friend, the big beggarman, Dan O'Connell, and he is going to be hanged by the neck at the Old Bailey next week!" Despite the obvious fact that my insulter was at least six years older than I was, and twice my size, the blood began to rise to my rebellious knuckles, in response to the paternal admonition and, perchance, the suggestion of the paternal horsewhip!

Just then Joseph came round with a pewter pot full of ink to replenish the inkstands—his daily custom, as I found hereafter. He had just filled mine, when Mr. Thorpe called him away for something or other, and off he went, leaving the replenishing pewter before me. At that moment the sight of mother's posy in my buttonhole appeared to tickle the fancy of my facetious friend opposite.

"Forget-me-nots!" he chuckled. "Oh, crikey! Twig the cub's forget-me-nots!" With that, deliberately

leaning forward, he plucked the flowers out of my buttonhole and flung them into Joseph's ink-pot.

Next moment the contents of the pot were in his face, instantaneously transfiguring him into a nigger minstrel, and evoking a yell of derision which set order and decorum alike at defiance.

Furious with rage, he tried to get at me, and the whole place was in an uproar. Mr. Thorpe was, however, equal to the occasion.

"Silence there! Step this way, Master Coleman," he thundered in stentorian tones.

"Now, sir, be good enough to explain this outrage."

"That lout insulted me, sir, and I let him have it," I replied.

"Let him have it, sir?"

"Yes, I did, and, what's more, I'll let him have it again if he gives me the chance, the blubber-headed fool!"

"Fool, sir, fool! How dare you call one of my young gentlemen a fool? Know you not that it is written, 'He that sayeth to his brother, "Thou fool!" shall be in danger of hell fire'? Take this holy book!" (and he thrust a New Testament into my hand). "Go forth into the playground yonder, and learn the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew before dinner. Off you go, sir!"

It didn't occur to me then, as it does now, the barbarous absurdity of setting a comparative child a task like this—a task which would have been literally impossible had I not been already familiar with the text. Anyhow, the chapter didn't trouble me, for the fact

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was, Father Challoner had frequently set me tasks in Holy Writ for the good of my soul, so that, young as I was, I had nearly mastered the Gospel of St. Matthew.

It was barely half-past nine, so I had two hours and a half in which to refresh my memory and air my principal—indeed, my only—accomplishment—that of reciting with propriety. So away I hammered at St. Matthew, and by half-past eleven had hammered him into my head. At twelve I was called in by the junior usher. On my way to the judgment seat I caught sight of my friend the enemy. He had donned a clean shirt and washed and scrubbed his face, but evidently couldn't get the ink out of his eyes, his ears, or his red head; hence he looked like a Jack in the Green, and was even more hideous than ever. As I passed, he glared and growled, "Wait till I get you outside, Mister Hurroo Pat!"

Smiling benignantly, I moved on to the tribunal, where the despot of Quorndon sat in Rhadamantine state. A buzz ran through the room. Silence was enjoined by the usher, and there was silence so profound that I could have heard a pin drop. I hadn't developed nerves then: in fact, I never knew what they meant till I became an actor, and then—oh! Enough, that I passed my ordeal without dropping a word or even a syllable.

Mr. Thorpe appeared astonished. "That'll do, sir," said he severely. "You've got the words by rote: mind you take the meaning to heart and try henceforward to be a Christian boy. Away you go to the playground, and, remember, no more wild Irishry here!"

When I left the room not the slightest expression



of sympathy was evinced, and I began to ask myself, "What next?"

At that moment a roar of voices announced that school was loosed, and down raced a gang of young savages (all boys are savages!), howling, "Hurroo, Pat!" Foremost of the horde came Carrots. Throwing off his jacket and turning up his shirt-sleeves, he growled, "Now then, you ink-slinging whelp, look out! I'm going to break every bone in your skin."

With that he let fly at me without further warning. Quick as lightning I dodged under his arm, while he landed a furious blow with his left on—the stone wall behind, knocking his thumb out of joint! In a mangle of agony and rage he roared, "I'll kill the young sweep! I will, by ——"

My blood was up now, and I retorted, "Well, I shall take a lot of killing. Only let me have fair play, that's all."

Thus appealed to, the English instinct prevailed, and a shout arose, "Fair play for Paddy! A ring—a ring!"

As I threw off my jacket, I said: "Am I to be alone in this crowd? Is there no one to stand by me?"

"Yes, I will!" said one.

"And I," said another, and a couple of seconds were also speedily provided for Carrots. It was quite evident that, had he not met with that accident to his thumb, I shouldn't have stood the ghost of a chance with him, and, even as it was, had we once got to close quarters, he'd have squeezed the breath out of my body.

He opened fire with a rush, his arms revolving like a windmill. In the very first round I discovered that, with all his strength, he knew as much about the "noble art" as a hedgehog ; so I played a waiting game.

"Keep out of Chancery," whispered my second.

"I mean to !" I replied.

Dodging carefully, I got in a stinger once or twice on my friend's frontispiece ; once, however, I got too close, and had to pay for it, for he landed one on my forehead, which brought me to grass, flat as a flounder.

"It's all U P, I fear," said my man.

"No, it isn't—but *I* am !" I responded, leaping to my feet and returning to the charge with such ardour and impetuosity as to change the fortune of the fight.

My opponent's left was not only useless, but a positive encumbrance. He couldn't keep me out nor get in at me. On the other hand, I could do exactly what I liked with him, so long as I kept clear. He was as unwieldy as an elephant, while I danced about like a monkey on hot bricks, every now and then giving him gentle persuaders—mere playful taps—for I scorned to take advantage of his broken thumb.

My men suggested that we should make a drawn battle and shake hands.

"Shake hands with that cub ! that cur who shies inkstands at a fellow !" he retorted ; "only let me get at him and I'll shake his head off !" and at me he went again, hammer and tongs.

I kept out of his reach and laughed, which made him more furious than ever. At last, wild with rage, he lost all control, and went for me like a bull at

a gate. There was only one thing for it—the Derbyshire buttock. I let him have it, and down he went like a load of bricks. The fight was over!

That little passage-at-arms made me free of the school. Carrots had become such a terror to them that I became a hero with the boys of my form, and an absurdly trifling incident added to my popularity with the other fellows.

We had beer for dinner (half a pint each). I can't abide the stuff—never could; so I handed my mug to Carrots, who scowled, hesitated as if half inclined to throw it in my face, changed his mind, gulped it, and growled, "Well, Paddy isn't a bad chap, after all! but if it hadn't been for my thumb I'd have given the young beggar Toko."

Next day and the day after I passed the mug to my seconds, and after that it was dexterously smuggled round the table, so that every one partook of "Paddy's beer" in regular rotation. Father's parting admonition turned out to be more valuable than I had anticipated. My first fight was my last, and Irish and Papist as I was, I ultimately became "Hail, fellow, well met!" with the whole school—that is to say, with everybody except our principal usher.

This gentleman gave out that he was a man of family; had graduated at Balliol, taken a high degree; had kept horses and hounds; had come a cropper through losses on the turf; and had been reduced to the degradation of grinding young cubs into shape, and didn't like the occupation. He was, in the modern phrase, a shocking "bounder," put on any amount of "side," and was vain

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as a peacock. If we happened to meet a girl in our walks abroad, it was amusing to see the fellow ogle her. He aped the dandy, and his dress was so bizarre as to attract attention and excite derision. I actually saw him once turn out to some function or other attired in white duck gaiter-bottomed trousers, a canary vest, brown dress-coat with brass buttons big as saucers, and a huge crimson velvet cap with a great flaming gold tassel drooping down on his shoulder.

Such a figure of fun as he, with his hyacinthine locks and his Piccadilly weepers of perpetually varying hues—to-day black, to-morrow purple, next day the colours of the rainbow—was never seen outside a wax-work show at a country fair. Noting that the weepers were assiduously nursed and cultivated, I somewhat irreverently dubbed the cad “Whiskers.” The name stuck, and whenever or wherever he went—even in school hours—some imp of mischief was sure to whisper “Whiskers.” At the sound he turned like lightning, but always a moment too late to detect the offender. On these occasions he invariably wound up with a baleful glare at me—for he knew (how, I knew not) that he was indebted to me for that term of endearment. I suppose he understood his business; at any rate he discovered almost by intuition when we didn't understand ours, and promptly administered the pedagogic persuader of the period.

I have often heard Charles Reade describe the tortures which he and his brothers endured twenty years previous to my probation, but I don't think it could be worse than ours. At the slightest sign of negligence or

incompetence we were “clapper-clawed” remorselessly and unmercifully. Can it be possible that this barbarous custom survives in these days of school-boards and Education Bills? The process was quite simple. At the word of command the hapless culprit extended his right hand ; down on the palm came the cut of a rattan ; then came the turn of the left hand, and so on till a dose of a dozen or two was administered. I have seen young fellows on the verge of manhood, who could have knocked this fellow into a cocked hat, awed by “the great image of authority,” supinely submit to this demoralising and degrading ordeal.

There was a dear little chap whom we called “Baby Rushton,” who had been so scarred and wealed by this brute that he actually couldn’t use his hands. At length my turn came ; I don’t know what for—Lindley Murray or arithmetic—perhaps both !

“Hold out your hand !” roared “Whiskers.”

“Shan’t !” I replied stolidly.

“What—what ! You dare disobey ? Hold out your hand, sir !”

“Shan’t ! You ain’t going to ‘Baby Rushton’ me !”

“What—what ! You won’t ! Then take that and that !” And he let drive at me with the ferrule.

But he didn’t have it all his own way. I gave as good as I took,—I went for him boots and all, especially for his shins, till he thought he had had enough, when he stopped and ordered me into the playground. When the other boys came out before dinner, they hoisted me and carried me round in triumph, and poor little Baby came and cried and kissed my hands.

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When the dinner-bell rang I presented myself as usual, but Joseph stopped me at the door. "No admittance," said he aloud—continuing, however, in a confidential whisper, "But go to Charette—she'll see you are all right for grub!"

The dear soul did see I was "all right for grub"; but I was all wrong for everything else, peremptory instructions being given that I was not to be admitted to school or meals or prayers till further orders.

About midday on the morrow my father drove up. When he dismounted I saw he had brought with him a salmon, a brace of pheasants, and a box of cigars.

"With my compliments to Mrs. Thorpe," said he to Joe, handing over the birds and the fish. "This" (the box of cigars) "to Mr. Thorpe, and say I'll do myself the pleasure of waiting upon him in five minutes. Martin," he continued, "go and put up at the Red Lion, and get yourself something to eat. When I want you I'll engage I'll know where to find you. Now, young shaver, step this way. What's all this about? Mind! you're on your honour, so no fairy tales."

With that I up and told him everything.

"Clapper-clawing, is it? I'll clapper-claw the thief o' the world if he tries that game with a boy of mine! Now about the books—what have you done with the books, sir?"

I fear he found I had made but little progress with my studies. Indeed, I hadn't much of a chance. Instead of teaching one or two things at a time, they stuffed me with everything—just as those wretched geese are stuffed at Strasburg; and I learnt nothing—absolutely

nothing. Lindley Murray I despised : write legibly  
I could not to save my life.

“The Rule of Three,  
It puzzled me—  
And Practice drove me mad!”

Both Virgil and Euclid I abominated. In fact, I was a hopeless and incorrigible dunce, except that I could spout Shakespeare by the yard. Then I could run, jump, rifle a bird's nest, or rob an orchard with any boy in the school, and, thanks to Sergeant Gribble (who had fought at Waterloo), I was a dab at dumb-bells and single-stick, and could hold my own at the broad-sword with the biggest boy in my form.

My father dined with Mr. Thorpe and Whiskers, and when he bade me good-bye it was easy to see all three had taken more wine than was good for them. Dad gave me a guinea. To do him justice, he always did when he had one to give.

“Hist!” said he, “I’ve made it all right with owld Slow-Coach and Whiskers, and you’ll begin with a clean slate in the morning. And, hist! I’ve seen the Bishop in Birmingham. We subscribed for a Pectoral cross, and I—yes, I!—was deputed to—hic—present it to his lordship. It is a dear old boy he is! Something is going to turn up, and if it comes off—I say, *if* it does—— Never mind! Good-bye! Glad you remembered my parting admonition. You are not a—hic—milksop, after all!”

From which I inferred that he had heard of the little affair between Carrots and myself.

But I am forgetting all about my Sundays—the

happy holidays when I went to my devotions at Kedlaston, where I was always petted and spoiled and made much of, and stuffed with all kinds of good things. The only Catholic in the village (an eccentric old gentleman of the name of Wilcox) was the clerk, and we used to walk to the Park (three miles there and three miles back) every Sunday. There was always a gracious welcome from Madame la Comtesse, and a smile and a kiss from her pretty French maid Louise, and a benediction from the officiating priest—an eccentric old Frenchman who couldn't speak a word of English, while Daddy Wilcox couldn't speak a word of French. Not that it mattered as far as Mass was concerned, inasmuch as every one knows that it is always celebrated in Latin.

Our congregation consisted of her ladyship, Louise, Wilcox, and myself. On one occasion, when dear old Daddy was bed-fast with lumbago, I came to the rescue and did duty for him, without even a rehearsal, to the astonishment and delight of my lady, who was unaware that I had been duly initiated into the mysteries of bell, book, and candle, the thurible, the aspergillas, the customary genuflexions, and the rest of the Oriental formula borrowed by the early Christians from their Pagan precursors.

That day the countess invited me to lunch. The lunch was delicious, but the discourse depressing, inasmuch as she and Father Francis spoke nothing but French, of which I scarcely understood a syllable. To make amends, when I went away, my lady tipped me a guinea, loaded me with apples, oranges, and cakes for



my schoolmates, a pineapple for Mrs. Thorpe, a melon and two bottles of old port—one for the boys to drink her ladyship's health in, and the other for dear old Daddy.

On confiding my good-fortune, on my return, to Monty (the captain of the school), he promptly decided, in the most autocratic manner, that, since it was quite impossible for one bottle to go round, my guinea must be melted for the general good. Carrots volunteered to smuggle in a bottle of rum shrub, and another of sloe gin, for our seniors, while the port was reserved for us youngsters. The banquet was to be held in the principal dormitory, and thither, after prayers, we stole on tip-toe in our nightgowns, like a host of juvenile spectres.

To our surprise a general illumination awaited us. Monty had surreptitiously acquired half a dozen farthing dips and half a dozen ginger-beer bottles for sconces, and a tinder box (lucifers as yet had not arrived in the Midlands). I took charge of the port and the edibles, and allotted them to the best of my ability; and Monty dispensed the other liquids in a variety of teacups borrowed or purloined for the occasion by the bigger boys, while we smaller fry sipped our port out of a couple of egg-cups.

Proceedings commenced in a minor key with the health of the countess; mine followed—a little louder; then Monty's—louder still. By this time Carrots, who was the corker, had taken more than his share, and insisted on contributing to the harmony of the evening by singing (on a Sunday, too!) "The Cork Leg." Carried away by youth, high spirits, and, I fear,

something more potent, we all lustily joined in chorus. At the height of our jollity Joseph burst in amongst us like a bombshell.

"Dowse the glims!" said he. Out went the lights, as he continued, "That sneak Whiskers have just blown the gaff to old Slow-Coach, and he'll be here in two two's to give you beans—so scarper, laddies—scarper!"

Suiting the action to the word, he "scarpered" through the window into the garden, while we youngsters, making a rush to our own dormitory, found ourselves, to our horror, confronted by old Slow-Coach with his terrible rattan, and Whiskers holding aloft a huge lighted candle.

There was but one thing for it—the Buttock; so I let Whiskers have it with (as we used to say in Derbyshire) a "Fullock" which sent him sprawling against Mr. Thorpe, and down went the pair of them like a load of bricks, leaving the corridor in Cimmerian darkness, while we took to our heels. Unluckily for me, however, I left a clue behind, for Whiskers caught hold of the tail of my nightgown.

Rip—rip! it went one way, while I bolted to Bedfordshire the other, and waited for what might come.

I hadn't to wait long, for in about ten minutes Mr. Thorpe strode in, livid with rage, followed by Whiskers, foaming and furious, with a lump on the side of his head the size of a duck's egg, while in his hand he flourished aloft the tail of my unfortunate nightgown.

By this time Joseph had joined the party, carrying a light.

“Get up !” roared Mr. Thorpe.

Up got everybody in double quick time—everybody except me : I pretended to be fast asleep ; but I couldn’t deceive Whiskers, who shook me up and pulled me out.

“Attention !”

At the word of command we formed in a line.

“’Tisn’t your faces we want to see !” snarled Whiskers. “Is it, sir ?”

“Certainly not ! Your backs, you young whelps—your backs ! Face the wall—d’ye hear ? Face the wall !”

The moment we did so, Whiskers caught sight of the rent in my rear.

“Found !” he roared. “Here he is, sir ! This—Papistical young Irish savage——”

“I thought so,” grimly replied Thorpe. “Now, sir, if you want to get off easily, give up your confederates in this scandalous outrage—on the Sabbath, too !—the Sabbath in a respectable seminary of the Established Church ! You won’t, eh ? Very well, we shall see !”

Seating himself on my bed, he continued, “Give me the light, Joseph. Now strip the young vagabond and horse him. Now, you, sir,” to Whiskers, “take this cane and let him have it !”

He did “let me have it” with a vengeance.

I held out as long as I could ; but it was in vain that I clenched my teeth and bit my lip—the brute was too much for me at last, and I tumbled down a heap of lacerated flesh and bruised bones.

Then the boys burst forth in a howl of remonstrant defiance, amidst which Mrs. Thorpe, Charette, and Fanny burst into the room. At sight of my wounds, the dear old soul unceremoniously bundled her worse half and Whiskers out of the room, exclaiming, "Monsters, you've murdered the boy! and I'll have you brought up for manslaughter to-morrow!"

Then gently lifting me up, they carried me to Charette's room, promptly applied a healing ointment and cold water bandages to my poor tortured back, laid me to rest on her bed, and sent for the doctor.

"H'm!" said he. "Might have killed some chaps; but this young imp is tough as a badger, and he'll pull through right enough. If he doesn't," he continued, addressing the master and Whiskers, "it'll be a bad look-out for you, for that wild Irishman, his father, will kill the pair of you as sure as God made little apples!"

"And serve you right, you cowardly brutes!" responded Mrs. Thorpe.

I was not, however, destined to be snuffed out so ignominiously, and, thanks to a good constitution, care, and good nursing, I was soon on the highway to recovery. In a few days, when I began to limp about, I found myself elevated into a hero. Had anything been wanting to enhance my popularity with the boys, Whiskers had done it; while as for him, that duck's egg spoiled his beauty for a month, and, for the rest, we made up our minds to have it out with him before the holidays, which came round more quickly than I anticipated.

At Christmas we had a play in the schoolroom—

*Hamlet*, if you please! That is to say, two acts of it—the first and the last. I was the Prince, but there was no Ophelia, which was highly unsatisfactory to me. Anyhow, I rehearsed Ophelia's mad scene to the countess up at the Hall one Sunday after Mass, very much to her ladyship's satisfaction—so at least she said. At any rate, she gave me another guinea, another load of fruit and cakes and wine, and bade me good-bye very graciously.

Father painted the two scenes, had a new dress made for me, and a sword—a real sword, almost as big as myself; and he borrowed from Mr. Woolgar his George and the Order of the Elephant, his purple riband, and a huge diamond paste star as big as my head; besides which, he borrowed all the dresses for the other people from Mr. Manley himself.

Of course, my *Hamlet* was a great success! Who ever heard of a *Hamlet* who was not a great success? When the play was over, and Father and the rest of the guests, after junketing and guzzling, were settling down to port and punch and cigars, Charette and Fanny smuggled me up to their room in my *Hamlet* dress. Then dear Mrs. Thorpe came up, and they cosseted and coddled me, gave me a jorum of mulled elderberry wine, and sent me rejoicing to bed.

I was so engrossed with my triumph in *Hamlet* that I was seriously contemplating going to bed in my dress, when, lo! a dozen mysterious figures stole in on tiptoe and startled me. Mysterious indeed! They were all in their nightgowns, and each wore a primitive mask made from a piece of crape.

"Now then, Pat," said a voice which I immediately recognised as Monty's, "have you forgotten that we're off in the morning and have to settle accounts with Whiskers to-night?"

"Whiskers!" I responded. "But how, how are we to get at him?"

"Oh, he is as drunk as he can be!"

"And old Slow-Coach?"

"He's got his cargo aboard, too. Everybody else is gone! The Lord has delivered the fellow into our hands—so off with your Hamlet flummery, slip on your nightgown, and let me fake up your mask.

"See! here's the cane with which he let you have it. Now it's your turn to let him have it!"

"Look here!" and he displayed a couple of long slips of calico: "we are going to gag him first, blindfold him next; then, dear boy, you shall give him what for.

"Now step it!" and he led the way to Whiskers' room, where the fellow lay drunk as a lord and snoring like a whole herd of swine.

Never was anything done more dexterously than his punishment. He was bound and gagged and blindfolded before he knew where he was—turned over on his face, with Carrots astride his back, holding on to his weepers like grim death. Ned and Frank (my two seconds in my first and last fight) gripped his arms, while Carrots' seconds hung on to his legs. Up went his nightgown, and I let fly at that portion of his person which he was least able to defend.

He writhed and wriggled like an eel; but he was fast as a rat in a trap, and when I had done with him,

our account was pretty evenly balanced. The whole operation was performed in solemn silence and by the light of a solitary farthing dip, and didn't occupy more than five minutes. When I had finished, Monty motioned us to clear out, which we did noiselessly, but in double quick time, the two last to leave the room being the Captain and Carrots.

We had scarcely reached the dormitory, when yells of "Help! murder!" aroused and alarmed the house. Our equanimity, however, remained undisturbed, and we slept the more soundly from the consciousness of having done our duty.

At morning prayers Whiskers was conspicuous by his absence. The news had spread like wildfire, and at breakfast there was a general jubilation.

At the break-up and general exodus I went to pay my parting respects to Mr. and Mrs. Thorpe. He tried to look serious, but couldn't.

"I suppose," he said, "you were in this business, young devil's clip?"

"Don't understand you, sir!" I replied demurely.

"Daresay not! Anyhow, you've spoiled the poor beggar's holidays."

"Glad of it!" exclaimed Mrs. Thorpe.

My father was waiting at the gate with the trap, and he and Mr. Thorpe went to shake hands while I bade good-bye to Charette and Fanny.

"I'm glad you gave it him!" whispered Charette.

"And now I'm going to give it you," I replied, as I embraced them both.

When Joseph came downstairs with my trunk, Mr.

Thorpe and my father appeared bursting with laughter ; but at sight of me they resumed their decorum.

After dad had tipped Joe, he whispered me, "Hist ! Whiskers knows it's you, and swears he'll be even with you if he has to hunt you through the world !"

"Dear me !"

"Yes, and you done him well, Master John ! You haven't left the brute a square inch fit to sit on for the next month !" and Joe grinned as we drove away.

"What's that fellow grinning at ?" demanded dad.

"Happy thought, I suppose, sir."

"So it appears. Well, and so you've given Whiskers a Roland for his Oliver ?"

"Who is Roland and who is Oliver, sir ?"

"That'll do, sir—that'll do ! None of your d——d innocent airs with me—I know all about it. But after all, you're right—never tell tales out of school. Gee up ! Off ye go there !" and off we rattled.

Despite those two or three castigations, I left Quorndon with regret, for I had become attached to many of my schoolfellows ; but all regrets vanished when mother clasped me once more to her heart. Then there were my sisters—two of the most charming and affectionate girls in the world, both of whom were devoted to their lout of a brother.

Mother was in better health, things were prosperous, father on his best behaviour, and we spent a delightful Christmas.



## CHAPTER IV

### *THE MONASTERY, AND AFTER*

The Genesis Embryo—Quire Brothers and Lay Brothers—White Gowns, Brown Ones, and Wooden Shoes—Celibacy and Silence—Bed at Seven after Vespers—Up at Four for Matins—Doldrums and Dismal Dumps—Light—Light, and Sunshine in the Form of Father Tom—Brother Placid is Irascible and prongs a Heifer—Father Norbert's *Protégés* are not impressed with a Monastic Life—A Great Function—The Cardinal, the Bishop, and the Grace Dieu Contingent—Ambrose de Lisle of Coningsby—Brother Edmund, Brother Francis, and the Prior—Father Tom taken Ill—I make love to the Cook at Grace Dieu, and break Tom's Fast—Shadows Darkling over the Old Home, and White Wings rustling in the Air—I return to say Good-bye to the Angel in the House—Behaved like a Ruffian, and am not ashamed of it!—"Home she's gone and ta'en her Wages"—The Battle of Life begins—The Bailiffs are put in, and the Household Gods put out—Mother's Friends befriend the Motherless Children—The Girls are sent to College—One of the Boys to Brixton, the Other to Sea, while the Intended Bishop becomes a Clerk in a Railway Office, and is dismissed for neglecting his Duties—He makes up his Mind to be an Actor—Runs away to London and modestly interviews Macready at Drury Lane, who wishes him Good Morning—Misses his Train at Rugby—Houseless, Homeless, Penniless—Sleeps under a Haystack in a Blinding Snowstorm—More Dead than Alive, is doctored back to Life.

AT the height of our happiness a calamity befel our whole community. Our dear kind Father Challoner was stricken down with some mysterious but mortal malady, and taken from us almost at an hour's notice, without even so much as a last good-

bye. This was a sad blow to all the congregation, but more especially to my mother, whose affliction was only too evident.

In a short time a poor little hedge-priest came from Ireland to take the place of our fine old English gentleman. The congregation showed no cordiality to the newcomer, nor he to them. Every one gave him the cold shoulder ; in his loneliness and desolation he flew to whiskey for consolation. One market day my father, who found him staggering under more than he could conveniently carry, promptly smuggled him home. In order to avoid scandal, he drove him over to Belper, and by the time they got there, found him on the verge of delirium tremens. He was kept under lock and key for a week, and persuaded to tender his resignation. My father found money for the journey, packed him off to Ireland, and he was never again seen or heard of in the Midlands.

It now appeared that my mother and Father Challoner between them had decided that, of all persons in the world, I was to be made a priest ! A—a priest—indeed ! My mother declared that the Venerable Bede testifies that there was once a certain Bishop Coleman of Lindisfarne ; and at this very time a cousin of mother's, the Very Reverend Father in God, John England, was Bishop of Charleston. A bishop—a real live bishop in the family ! Why should there not be another ? Having saved up a little nest-egg to cover my preliminary expenses at school and college, the dear soul had arranged for me to be sent first to the Monastery of Mount St. Bernard, and next to Douay.

It was in vain that I protested I had no vocation for the priesthood. Mother was convinced that would come by-and-by. By-and-by is easily said—but *après*? For the present I could not find it in my heart to say her nay.

She insisted on seeing the last of me, and drove me to the monastery herself. Just as we were about to start, father said rather curtly, "Remember my parting injunction when you went to Quorndon, and mind you don't forget it—or look out!"

"Oh, John, don't speak so harshly to the boy!"

"Harsh fiddlesticks! I only want to make the fellow a man, instead of a milksop, which he's bound to be if you go on coddling him up. But there! coddle away, my dear—you'll live the longer. All the same, if you've any regard for your health, young gentleman, you'll bear in mind what I say!"

"Let the mare have her head, Martin, and off you go!"

We had a fine brisk drive, and I built castles in the air all the way. Upon arriving at the monastery, we were received with open arms by the prior, Father O'Dillon Woolfrey, and the brotherhood, and a nice lunch awaited us in the guests' room. Mother kept up her spirits wonderfully till the parting came, and then she broke down altogether.

"My boy, my boy!" she sobbed; "oh, what will I do without my boy?"

"Mother dear," I gasped, stifling my own tears, "don't cry! I'll be back soon and make haste to be a man, for your sake."

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“ God send it, dear ! for I fear there'll soon need a man to look after the home. As for your father, poor soul ! he can't look after himself. Oh, my darlings, my darlings ! what'll become of you all when I'm gone ? ”

This was a question easier asked than answered. Filled with dire forebodings, I cried, “ Oh, take me back with you, mother, take me back ! ”

“ A nice way of proving you are a man that would be. Remember what father said this morning. Good-bye, dear, good-bye, and don't forget your mammy ! ”

Then, smiling through her tears, she drove away, while I was left lamenting. And thus commenced one of the most remarkable episodes in my boyish life. The Monastery of Mount St. Bernard is situated in Charnwood Forest, Leicestershire. Why it was called a Forest puzzles me as much now as it did then. I have no distinct recollection of having seen a tree there—unless, indeed, there may have been one or two in the meadows or the orchard, which the monks had reclaimed for pasturage from the barren moor which stretched far as the eye could reach for miles around.

The flora of the so-called Forest consisted of yellow gorse (*Plantagenista*) ; heather (called *ling* in the locality) ; various species of fern, from the delicate maidenhair to the mature bracken which reached breast-high, with stems as thick as my wrist and fronds which spread out like palms ; the bilberry shrub, which grew in wild profusion ; coltsfoot, which the hinds gathered for smoking ; and dwarf sage, which took root in every crevice of the huge rocks that struggled through the ground in irregular eruptions—here, there, and every-

where. This rock, by the way, was the rough unhewn material out of which the Monastery, which consisted merely of a large quadrangle with a primitive chapel and sundry barns and outhouses, was erected.

The fauna consisted principally of rabbits, moles, wild birds, and adders, the latter of which were so abundant that it was no unusual thing, when the monks were engaged in reclaiming the land, for them to slay these reptiles by the score.

A very laborious process this work of reclamation—by a process of the most primitive character ever achieved by actual manual labour. First the heather was fired; next the operator, with a keen-edged shovel, cut away the turf. This cutting apparatus he guided with his hands and propelled before him, the principal propulsion coming from the region of the stomach, which was guarded by a shield of stout leather strapped round the loins. As every cut had to make its way through the roots of ling, bracken, furze, bilberry, and sage, it may be imagined what tough work it was, especially when it was found necessary to cut a slice or two deeper to get to the arable land. When the turf had been exposed to the sun for two or three days, it was thrashed and fired and converted to ashes for manure,—and by this tedious and painful process acre after acre of the moorland was converted into valuable pasturage.

The monks had fled from France during some spasmodic outburst of revolutionary violence, and had sought shelter in England. Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillips, of Grace Dieu Manor House, a friend of Disraeli's,

who figures conspicuously under the pseudonym of De Lisle, as one of the Young England party, in *Coningsby*, inspired partly by the spasmodic zeal of the proselyte, but principally, as I believe, by the native goodness of his heart, was reputed to be the man to whose generosity my new friends were indebted for this haven of refuge.

The prior, Father O'Dillon Woolfrey, was known to the outer world principally as being the brother of a lady known as "The Widow of Carisbrooke," through being the victim of some stupid persecution by some over-zealous patron in connection with tithes in the Isle of Wight. His brother Norbert was an ascetic monkish priest who succeeded our friend, Mr. H——, in his living at Loughborough.

Father O'Dillon was very kind to me, as indeed were all the brotherhood; but as they were vowed to perpetual silence, they had rather an awkward way of showing their regard for the young stranger.

The routine of life appeared abnormally dismal. I was sent to bed at seven, was up at four for matins, breakfast at eight, Mass at eleven, dinner at one, tea at five, vespers at six, bed at seven. The Benedictines, as all the world knows, are divided into two classes—the quire monks and the lay brothers. Their education and their breeding were as distinctive as their garb, which, in the case of the quire monks, was of white cloth; while the lay brothers wore long gowns of brown cloth, with scapulars of black, and huge sabots imported from France for their especial use. The quire monks had some pretensions to culture, the lay

brothers none whatever, and were for the most part mere labouring hinds.

Both quire and lay brethren were supposed to have only one meal a day, preceded by what was called a "refection," which took place at eight. Dinner was at four. The brethren were restricted from flesh meat, but there was an abundance of home-made bread, oatcake, cheese, butter, milk, and eggs, with huge bowls of smoking hot pulse of various kinds—rice, French barley, pease,—vegetables of every description, and *soupe maigre*, which was made from the tenderest of young vegetables, flavoured with butter and delicious French sauces.

The lay brothers did all the manual work necessary. The quire brethren seemed, to the best of my observation, to be principally occupied in doing nothing—except, indeed, Brother Edmund, whose duty it was to receive visitors and show them over the monastery and chapel. This little man was a pretty (if such a term may be applied to a man), vivacious young fellow of Irish extraction. He was born in one of the Channel Islands, of Hibernian parentage, and was educated in France; hence, to Irish *bonhomie* he added French vivacity. He had ingratiating and charming manners, and his accent was a most amusing and delightful pot-pourri of the three nationalities. He and I became great chums, and our intimacy bore strange fruit hereafter. One detachment of the lay brethren did all the household work, assisted by a couple of lads from the adjacent village of Whitwick (now Coalville). One of these youths I have forgotten all about, the other lives

in my recollection as the antitype of a person whose acquaintance I subsequently formed—"a party by the name of Uriah Heep." Another detachment of the lay brothers looked after the farm, the pigs, the poultry, the sheep, and the cattle.

All these worthy fellows were endowed with Gargantuan appetites. Why that preliminary snack at eight was called a "refection" I could never understand, for it was as square a meal as ever a ploughman sat down to devour for breakfast.

As to school, I had Kenelm Digby's *Mores Catholici*, Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, and Lingard's *History of England* to read, and certain lines of Virgil to translate. Oh! how I wished Virgil had never been born! Besides this, I was inducted into the melancholy music of the Gregorian chant.

I was getting melancholy mad, when a blessed deliverance came in the shape of a new tutor, a secular priest, temporarily suspended from the exercise of his sacerdotal functions (in consequence, as I subsequently learnt, of an unfortunate occurrence not wholly unconnected with a petticoat), and relegated to the monastery for a period of probation and purgation. Father Tom had received his training at the English College at Lisbon. A fine manly fellow he was—tall, dark, stalwart, handsome, and not in the least like a shaveling. He ought to have been a soldier, an orator, an actor, a barrister—anything but a priest. Of all functions the priestly calling was the one for which he was least adapted. To the acquirements of the gentleman and the scholar he added a host of subsidiary accomplish-



ments. He could sing any number of Spanish and Italian *canzonettes*, and sing them divinely, to his own accompaniment on the piano—one of the few luxuries allowed him at St. Bernard's. He could swim, fence, dance, box, run, and bound over a five-barred gate with a hand spring. I don't know whether I acquired much book-knowledge from him, but I do know that I am indebted to him for my acquaintance with Byron, Shelley, and a new poem by a new man called *In Memoriam*.

We lived together like elder and younger brothers, in rooms separated from the monastery proper; had our meals together, walked together, talked together, went to our devotions together. I looked up to him with a profound attachment, and I think, young as I was, he found in me a friend and consoler in his adversity. He had no love for his prison or his gaolers, and did not hesitate to express his contempt for "those dirty illiterate drones," as he was wont to call the monks. For my own part, when years after I read Robert Browning's *Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister*, I instinctively exclaimed, "I know that monk! He comes from Charnwood!"

We had a sanctimonious humbug called Brother Francis, who waited upon us, and who was consequently allowed the use of his tongue. This fellow's insolence and hypocrisy became unendurable, and he was at length withdrawn, his place being taken by an eccentric old Hampshire man, who had been a soldier, but was now a gardener and odd man-of-all-work.

There were times when Father Tom had fits of

depression and desired to be alone, I then used to accompany Brother Placid, who had charge of the cattle, to the meadows. The good brother, under the seal of secrecy, was wont to pitch his vow of silence to the winds, and to confide in me his adventures at home and abroad; and very interesting they were—"for he had been a soldier in his youth, and had fought in famous battles." He was a great strapping giant of six feet four, with a voice like a bull of Bashan, and the most cacophonous Lancashire dialect ever emitted from human lungs. One day, while spinning one of his interminable yarns about the horrors of "The Three Days of July," a young heifer which he was driving to the fold suddenly took it into her head to become obstreperous, and started off for a trot round the meadow. The trot became a gallop. Placid followed suit as fast as he could, pitchfork in hand, when——!

But I must here explain! As before stated, the Renaissance was just then dawning—the monastery was a tangible sign of its existence—and converts came from far and wide to see the revival of the ancient institution, which the proselytisers maintained had been one of the chief glories of Merrie England in the olden times. The priests were all activity and audacity, and had begun to carry war into the enemies' camp.

On this particular occasion Father Norbert Woolfrey had convoyed a party of young Protestant ladies to Mount St. Bernard. While he was expatiating on the Arcadian simplicity and pristine purity of the holy brotherhood, they reached the gate of the meadow just in time to hear the furious Placid emitting a volley of objurgations

in the choicest Lancashire, and to see him land his pitchfork in the side of the refractory heifer, who let out a yell which might have been heard at Grace Dieu. Fortunately the poor brute was more frightened than hurt ; the wound was a mere scratch, for the fork had only punctured her hide.

It was a bad day's work, however, for poor Placid, who, for a considerable time, was suspended from open air and exercise, and condemned to do penance in silence and solitude ; and I saw no more of him till the final consecration of the monastery, when I had the honour of serving Mass at the altar to Cardinal Wiseman, Doctor Walsh, the Bishop of the Midlands district, and other ecclesiastical big-wigs. Welby Pugin, the great Gothic architect, an eccentric man of genius who dressed like a sailor ; Father Edmund Spencer, a yet more eccentric member of the Spencer family, who went about in monastic garb, barefooted and in sandals, were both especially kind to me. There was open house at Grace Dieu to do honour to the occasion. But Father Tom's period of probation had not passed, so he remained sullen, sad, and silent, confined to his room, not choosing to meet former friends or acquaintances while he was under a ban. This preyed on his spirits a good deal, and on Friday morning he was unable to break his fast. He was a valiant trencherman, and when he couldn't take his breakfast, I knew he was ill ; hence I left him with a heavy heart.

When I got down to dinner at Grace Dieu, I observed that, while every one else was restricted to fish, soup maigre, rice pudding, and the like, an eminent dignitary

of the Church was vigorously attacking a savoury-smelling leg of Welsh mutton. Upon venturing to inquire of a distinguished lady the cause of "this thusness," I was informed that his lordship was ill, and that roast mutton had been prescribed for his complaint.

Swift as lightning the thought occurred to me, "Father Tom is ill too—roast mutton would be good for his complaint." Making the best excuse I could, I left the table, and, making love to the cook (a good old soul), obtained the reversion of that leg of mutton, and bore it in triumph to my poor patient, who, I am happy to say, did ample justice to my "medicine." This circumstance is impressed upon my mind because this was my last night at the monastery and my last night for some time with Father Tom.

Early the next morning came my father's man Martin with the trap to drive me home. He was ambiguous and oracular, and I had a presentiment of evil. My forebodings were but too fully realised. My poor mother was reaching the end of her journey, and she wanted to see her boy before she took her departure. Unselfish as ever, she thought only of us—and of him. To her *he* was merely the eldest boy of the family. My filial affection and my appreciation of her self-sacrifice and unrequited devotion had made me older than my years, and I had no thought for anything or anybody save for her, and the awful apprehension of the great gulf that was about to divide us. If she could only take us children with her, *he*, indeed, might stay behind with his boon companions; but as for us—oh! if she could only take us!

Through all the dead years the grief and pain of that terrible time come back as though it were yesterday—come back so vividly that I do not care to dwell longer upon it. Two days and two nights we passed without sleep, almost without food, beside her, as she lay tranquil and uncomplaining, talking only, thinking only of the dear ones she was about to leave behind. On the morning of the third day she knew that the end was imminent, and she begged me to fetch my sister Nellie from the country, where she was staying with a friend of the family.

I was barely two hours absent, but on my return all was over! Although I had known for days that the end was nigh, now that it had come I could not realise it. The grief of my brothers and sisters found vent in weeping and wailing and lamentation—there was no such safety-valve for me. The dry, tearless apathy of despair fell upon me. If I could only have gone with her—if I could! That was the only thought which took shape in my mind.

As ill-luck would have it, at this very moment a lout of a fellow who had witnessed my abortive efforts as the Dumb Boy passed by the door at which I was standing. Attracting my attention by the playful ejaculation, "Hurroo, Pat!" he proceeded to inquire "Who kicked the bucket and spilt the water? The Dumb Boy. Yah!" They told me afterwards that I leaped upon the wretched creature like a wild beast, knocked him down, and was proceeding to strangle him when I was dragged away by some of the neighbours, who loudly expressed their astonishment and indignation

at the brutal conduct of the barbarous and inhuman boy who could thus misconduct himself whilst his poor mother lay dead in the house. Miserable creatures! How could they know? *She* knew, though—and I wept my heart out beside her for hours afterwards.

The little nest-egg which she had saved to send me to Douay had vanished during that fatal illness, and the battle of life now commenced in bitter earnest for me and for all of us. The idea of making me a priest (even if I had a vocation for it) vanished also.

To be just to my father, for a time he strove manfully against the debts and difficulties which were now perpetually increasing; but infirmity of purpose and infirmity of temper militated against him, and things got from bad to worse, until the bailiffs were put in, and the dear old home was broken up. Fortunately she had left friends behind her, and her voice spoke from the grave on our behalf. At this critical period two good Samaritans came to the rescue. My sisters were sent to Queen's College. One of my brothers was sent to sea, the other to Brixton School, and I was myself provided with a berth in the accountant's office of the Midland Railway.

Those who know me now will be amused at the idea of my being an authority on logarithms. It was in the early days of the railway companies, and of course I was paid twice as much as I was worth, for I was hopelessly incompetent.

Nothing noteworthy occurred during my probation

here save a journey which I took on a certain Friday to Birmingham with a boyish, handsome lad named Jack Knight, a visitor to our mutual friend Needham, who was located in Birmingham, and who ultimately became Superintendent of the Midland Railway, while Knight himself became Superintendent of the London, Brighton, and South Coast. When Jack and I reached Tamworth, a tall, distinguished-looking, fair-complexioned gentleman, with reddish hair, aquiline nose, and a slight cast in his eye, got into our carriage. At first the stranger was somewhat reserved and austere, but by degrees he thawed, for we talked freely and without restraint. He responded, laughed heartily at our boyish exuberance, and when we got to Birmingham, after the fashion of the time, tipped us a guinea each. When he left us, everybody touched their hats to him, and the guard came up and said, "I say, young shavers, do you know who you've been talking to? That is Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister."

Needham entertained us right royally. When we got back to the station to take train on our return home, as good or ill fortune would have it, I encountered Mr. Fitzroy, whom, it will be remembered, I had seen enact *Henry IV.* at the Derby Theatre. I ventured to remind him of that circumstance. He was affable and chatty, and so engrossed was I in his conversation that I missed the train. In the emergency he was kind enough to take me home with him and put me up for the night. I had always thought this gentleman the veritable son of a king—now I felt sure he was.

Saturday was always a half-holiday, so I took the other

half and made it a whole one. On Sunday I ought to have been serving Mass at the altar at home, instead of which I was disporting myself abroad, and making ducks and drakes of Sir Robert's guinea. Next day was Easter Monday; there was a great attraction at the Theatre Royal, and I could not withstand the temptation to take another holiday.

Although Birmingham itself, instead of being the almost metropolitan city it is now, was then to all intents and purposes a huge straggling village, the Theatre Royal was still a very fine one, and situate in the very heart of the town. It was in this building that I saw for the first time that really great comedian, William Farren the elder, and that admirable and unrivalled comedienne, Mrs. Glover, in *My Wife's Mother*; Harley as Tristram Sappy (*Deaf as a Post*); Miss Faucit (the "divine" Helen's elder sister); her husband, Mr. Humphry Bland; and the famous comedian, Mr. Harry Webb. Of course, one knows now that all these excellent artistes were as good as good could be, but the attraction of the evening for me was the romantic drama of *Cherry and Fair Star*, with its real golden galley and the mimic waves splashing around it. Mr. Woolgar (who had lent me his George and Star and sword for *Hamlet*) was the pirate Captain Sangiunbeck; Mr. Webb was Kosrack the Dumb Slave; Miss Rosina Saker (afterwards Mrs. Wyndham, so long manageress of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh), then a beautiful and accomplished young creature, was Prince Cherry; and Miss Woolgar, then a lovely young girl, was the Princess Fair Star. This was the first spectacular drama I had ever seen, and its



brilliancy and splendour haunted me for weeks and months afterwards.

The immediate consequence of my absenting myself from my duties was, that on presenting myself at the office, I had an intimation that my valuable services were no longer required, and when I brought the news to what remained of the old home I had as fine a hiding as any truant schoolboy ever received.

That visit to Birmingham decided me ; from that time forth I resolved to become an actor. But how—how? That was the question I put to myself by day and night. At last I found an answer, which suggested itself to my mind through reading a memoir of that wondrous boy, Henry West Betty, who ultimately became the father of that prince of good fellows, Henry Betty. The “young Roscius” had emerged from a provincial town, and at one bound had taken London by storm! Why should not I do likewise? As to culture or experience—pssha! those were mere old-fashioned superfluities.

Having arrived at this modest conclusion, I began to prepare myself. *Hamlet* (save the mark!) I had already played ; now I set to work upon young Betty’s parts : Romeo, Young Norval, Achmet in *Barbarossa*, Gustavus Vasa, Warwick—the famous play by Jones (not Henry Arthur, but Jones, the bricklayer), Frederick in *Lovers’ Vows*, and Zanga in *The Revenge!* Every morning I was up with the lark and out in the country with my part, strutting, gesticulating, and shouting at the top of my voice.

The Derby Theatre was now seldom open ; but two

new plays were produced : the first, *London Assurance*, by one Lee Moreton (to be known hereafter as Dion Boucicault); the next, *The Lady of Lyons*, which I remember chiefly from the fact that Pauline was enacted by the beautiful Miss Cooper, soon to become the youthful heroine of the Phelps and Greenwood management at Sadler's Wells; while Claude Melnotte was enacted by her husband, a cranky, waspish little man whom I knew long afterwards as T. H. Lacy, the famous theatrical publisher of the Strand.

Macready was then at his zenith. It was his last season at Drury Lane. Opinions were divided as to the nature and extent of his capacity. Idolised on one hand, depreciated and even calumniated on the other, some maintained he was the genius of the age, others alleged he was an impostor; all agreed, however, that he was, rightly or wrongly, at the head of his craft. With ignorance and presumption I had the audacity to request an interview with this distinguished man.

To my astonishment and delight, I received an autograph letter acceding to my request. Candour compels me to say that in writing I had taken the liberty to perpetrate a pious fraud. In fact, I had represented myself to be my father! Having done so, I improved the occasion by dilating on the ability of my father's hopeful son.

Mr. Macready was careful to say, "You appear to be oblivious of the fact that *any* the *least* degree of eminence on the stage can only be achieved by years of assiduous and unremitting application; but, not-

withstanding, as your letter conveys the impression that your son's is an exceptional case, although there is not the slightest probability of my being able to offer him an engagement, if the young gentleman should be coming to town, I shall be happy to see him and give an unbiassed opinion as to his chances of ultimate success."

Convinced that I had only to be seen to be appreciated, I made up my mind to visit the famous city whose streets are said to be paved with gold. When I was discharged by the railway company, my quarter's salary, then due, had been appropriated to the preservation of some of our household gods from the general wreck ; consequently, having great difficulty in raising the wind, it became necessary to travel third class, in a tub.

It was a bleak, bitter day in February when I set forth. The horrors of those "tubs," uncovered and exposed to the four winds of heaven, one can scarcely realise nowadays. I must certainly have died, had it not been for some kind motherly women who insisted on my lying at their feet and covering me with their cloaks and petticoats. I arrived, more dead than alive, at Euston Square, where an old schoolfellow met me, and took me home to Camden Town ; and his good mother filled me with a hot supper and hot posset, thawed me, and sent me to bed.

The snow was falling heavily when I presented myself next morning at ten o'clock at Mr. Macready's house in Clarence Terrace, Regent's Park. Mrs. Macready (a most gracious lady) informed me that her husband had already gone to Drury Lane ; whereupon I set off

to follow, taking a cab for the purpose. I presented my father's card, under the impression that at the sight thereof the charmed portals of the stage door would fly open to receive their future lord and master. Alas! Cerberus only glowered grimly at me, and growled that he would send in "by-and-by." His "by-and-by" meant half an hour, during which, despite the tall hat in which I had invested to add to my height, my youthful and unsophisticated appearance, and my provincial costume attracted attention and excited audible comment of a more sarcastic than encouraging character.

At last, through an atmosphere of gloom and semi-darkness, I was led across the stage, my conductor threading the way through a heap of pantomime masks and the like, until I was left in a room littered with newspapers, play-books, MSS., and play-bills of every description. Here I passed another half-hour of gloom and depression, until a gentleman appeared, who turned out to be Mr. Serle, the actor and dramatist, author of *Master Clarke*, etc., and who intimated that Mr. Macready was waiting for me in the Grand Saloon.

When we reached there, the great man, clad in a great-coat with fur collar and cuffs, was striding up and down and clapping his hands to keep them warm. A great gaunt creature he seemed, with his rugged features and mop of iron-grey hair. At sight of me he opened his eyes—I now assume, with astonishment or amusement, or both, at my audacity. I made my best bow; he abruptly demanded what parts I had studied, etc.

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," and I glibly



*From a miniature by Thorburn.*

W. C. MACREADY.





ran off the reel Hamlet, Romeo, Zanga, Young Norval. Here I was brought to a full stop, and desired to give a taste of my quality in Young Norval. Now that my eyes are opened, I can scarcely understand how I ever had the assurance to face this ordeal. It appears the more inexplicable, inasmuch as, ever since, even to this very moment, I am a martyr to stage fright.

On this occasion I rattled off "My name is Norval" without the slightest fear or trepidation. Evidently I did not impress Mr. Macready that I was to be Master Betty's successor. He growled, "Err—very good indeed! Err—good boy, go home, get to school, and when—err—you are a few years older, if you are still of the same mind—err—— I think your father said he knew Mr. Manley? Tell him—err—to get Mr. Manley to give you an engagement to 'walk on' as a—err—'speechless noble,' till you know how to stand and speak."

These words dashed all my hopes. I, however, summoned up courage to make a last appeal. *King John* was announced to be in preparation, and I suggested that I did not insist upon opening in Romeo or even Young Norval; that, in point of view, I should be content with Prince Arthur. Both the gentlemen laughed heartily. Mr. Macready growled urbanely, "Er—er—unfortunately the part has been already allotted to Miss P. Horton!" With that he wished me "er—er—good morning!" and Mr. Serle conducted me downstairs, through the vestibule, and showed me the door.

As it closed upon me, my air-built castle vanished!

My friend G——, who had accompanied me, tired of waiting, had vanished too, and I found myself alone in London, without a friend and without a shilling, for my last coin of that description had gone for the cab that put me down at the theatre, from which (meet punishment for my presumption!) I had been so politely but so ignominiously expelled.

Having been somewhat sanguine as to the result of my interview with Mr. Macready, I had confided my views on the subject to my friend and his father and mother. A miracle had occurred in the last few minutes; the scales had fallen from my eyes, and I saw what a confounded young idiot I had been. I shrank, however, from exposing to my friends the depth of my delusion or the anguish of my disillusionment.

There was only one thing for it now: to return to Derby at once. I had a few pence still left, so, strolling up Bow Street, I lounged into Long Acre, went into a coffee-shop, called for a cup of coffee and a penny loaf and pen, ink, and paper. I wrote a line to Camden Town requesting that my carpet bag might be forwarded as lost luggage; then, putting my best foot foremost, I trudged through the snow and the sludge up St. Martin's Lane, through Seven Dials, into Holborn, through Tottenham Court Road, down the New North Road, and so into Euston Square.

In my grief and mortification, unfortunately I got into the wrong train. Upon arriving at Rugby at midnight, I found to my dismay that the train went no farther towards Derby, but branched off to an altogether different destination. The first train available did not leave till



the morning. I was penniless, and the snow was falling more heavily than ever.

What was to be done? For the present, at any rate, stick to the fire in the waiting-room. Stick to it I did till three o'clock in the morning, when the mail from the North passed through. Then out went the lights, out went the fire, out went the porters—out went everybody, including myself.

Had I confided in one of those good fellows, instead of being a thin-skinned idiot, surely one of them would have taken compassion on a poor friendless lad and given him shelter for the night! But then, as now, I preferred to keep my troubles to myself; so I said nothing, but turned out to walk the night away. Night, did I say? It was morning already, but it still wanted four or five hours of the departure of my train. To keep myself from freezing (for the snow froze as it came down), I walked to the town and walked back. I tried this experiment a second time; then I had had enough of it. My feet were like ice, my limbs numbed, the very marrow in my bones frozen; I could walk no farther, when—oh, glad sight!—I caught sight of a haystack in an adjacent field.

The snow and the wind were drifting towards me. The side of the haystack which faced me was what is called in the Midlands "in cut"; that is, a quantity of hay had been cut for food or fodder. Happy thought! Here was indeed a haven of refuge! Stepping over the field as well as my frozen limbs would let me, I made my way to the fodder, rammed my tall hat over my ears, wedged myself into the stack as far as I could get,

covered myself, hat and all, with as much hay as I could pull over me, and in five minutes was asleep and dreaming that I was playing Prince Arthur at Drury Lane.

I was awakened by a horse nibbling at my hat. It was daylight, and I was in a bath of perspiration. The wind had changed, and my side of the haystack was now coated with snow, so that, in fact, I was encased in an inner covering of hay, and an outer covering of snow. Had the snow fallen much deeper, I suppose I should never have survived to relate this story of my own fatuity.

As I returned to the station, the last bell for my train was ringing, and I had barely time to scramble into my tub before we were off homeward. Having got an awful chill on an empty stomach, I reached Derby a most deplorable object. My tall hat was squashed like an accordion, my clothes were creased and torn and stuck over, here, there, and everywhere, with hay.

My father was consoling and complimentary as usual, and told me that since no other occupation was open to me, I had better take an engagement as a scarecrow, for which, indeed, my grotesque appearance eminently qualified me. When he found that instead of arguing the question with him I fell like a log on the floor, he sent for the doctor, who steamed me, parboiled me, and mustard-poulticed me from head to foot. When at length I pulled round, he assured me that the heat generated by that outer coating of snow had saved my life. With health came strength, hope, courage, and the determination to succeed.

'Tis true I had failed ignominiously at my first effort,

but so had Sheridan and Disraeli. The difficulty was how to commence. Could I only make a beginning, the end must come, and it would crown the work. Drury Lane was consecrated by a thousand glorious traditions to the highest achievements of dramatic art. Garrick, Sheridan, and Kemble had reigned there, Macready reigned there now. A time would come when I would reign there too.

It *did* come : it was a long time coming, it is true, but it came at last, and I ascended the throne ; but that story must be postponed to its proper sequence in this narrative.

## CHAPTER V

### *GOING TO SEEK MY FORTUNE*

The Little Rift within the Lute—Ripens to a Rupture—A Three-cornered *Billet-Doux*—Good-bye to my Beautiful Duchess—The Children in Clover—I am to be made an Architect—Farewell to Father Tom—*Cherchez la Femme*—The African Roscius—"That's he, that was Othello!"

MY illness excited some sympathy, and my benefactress graciously gave me another chance. She offered to despatch me to her brother in town, hoping to make an architect of me. The good soul little dreamt that, instead of making me an architect, she was unconsciously providing the means for making me an actor—a vocation of all others which she most abhorred. My sisters and brothers had been provided for by my mother's friends; but the differences between my father and myself at length culminated in a rupture. A scandal had occurred which was an outrage on my dead mother. I felt that I owed it to her memory to protest—nay, to insist that my sisters should not be brought in contact with his mistress. He stormed at my presumption, and actually threatened to thrash me; but when I warned him that if he laid a hand on me he would never have a chance of doing so again, he thought better of it. With that warning I quitted the paternal roof for ever.

No tie remained now to bind me to the place of my birth, and my preparations were soon made for my departure. There were a few perfunctory hand-shakings, a good-bye to my friends the Bregazzis, then hey for the great city and the struggle for bread! I wrote a note to my sweet duchess, which dear old Martin delivered for me, asking if I might come and say good-bye. Paper was scarce, and I hadn't got an envelope, so I utilised a little accomplishment of mother's which enabled me to dispense with an envelope and to make a very ingenious and elegant three-cornered billet out of a sheet of notepaper. There came an immediate response, inviting me to tea and supper; and a very pleasant time we had of it. Mrs. Bregazzi and the girls were very kind; but the duchess insisted on regarding me as her little sweetheart, and practically monopolised me the whole of the evening, during which, by-the-bye, she made me teach her the art of folding that beautiful billet. I mention this trifling incident because a somewhat remarkable occurrence took place in connection with it long years after. At midnight they all tenderly embraced me, wished me good-bye and God speed.

Next day, with a heavy heart, I went to take leave of my friends at Mount St. Bernard. There was neither coach nor rail communication; our horse and trap, even my pony, had disappeared in the general wreck, and so I had to trust to shanks's mare. On arriving at the monastery, Brother Edmund told me that, Father Tom's purgation being over, he had been inducted to a small living at Whitwick, some three or

four miles distant. I wanted to push on there and then, but the Prior would not permit me. He had heard of the trouble at home, and urged me to join the brotherhood. When I told him I was going to be an architect, he replied, "Well, go, my son, and God be with you!"

I put up at the monastery for the night. In the morning Brother Edmund walked with me as far as Grace Dieu, embraced me affectionately, and returned to Charnwood, while I trudged on to Whitwick. To say that I was welcome there would give but a poor idea of the warmth of my reception. Old Harry had accompanied his master, and was now man-of-all-work in the little cottage adjacent to the chapel. The old boy turned out of his snug quarters, ceding me his bedroom, while he improvised a rough shakedown on the floor of the kitchen for himself.

During his short residence, Father Tom had endeared himself to everybody in the village, more especially to the female portion of the congregation, some of whom came to the cottage to consult him for the good of their souls, some for—other purposes.

There was one attractive young damsel with fair hair (heaps of it!), a fine figure (plenty of it), and roguish blue eyes full of mischief, always invading our territory on some pretext or other. Whenever she came, I found myself one too many, and joined Harry for a chat in the kitchen, where we usually heard Tom's sonorous baritone singing some touching ballad, in the chorus of which my lady invariably joined. My favourite song was a charming little Italian

thing, the first line of which ran thus (orthography doubtful), "Ticci Tocci mi bella Tintoretto!"

By-and-by, in years to come, this sweet melody became merged in "Down among the Swamps in Old Carolina." I know not which was the genesis of the other, but I know they are both identical.

"Her's a hartful 'ussey, her is! When I sees her a-makin' sheep's eyes at he, why, then, Muster John, I says, says I to myself, 'Ware hawk, Harry, that thar young baggidge do mean mischief to this poor innocent lamb, and he's bound to come a cropper, as hold Father Hadam did afore him. And when we turn out o' thic yer comfortable little cabin, what's to become of him and hold 'Arry, that's what I should like to know?"

'Twas in these terms Tom's faithful henchman directed my attention to the too frequent visits of this buxom young lady. It certainly was an impudent thing to do, but I made bold to speak to Tom about the matter. He only laughed, touzled my hair, and told me I was a foolish boy, and must have been reading naughty French novels.

The night before I left, Harry begged me to write to him when I got to town, and he on his part promised to write, to let me know how things went on.

Next morning Father Tom walked a couple of miles to give me a send-off. I gasped "Good-bye!" as he embraced me tenderly and bade me God speed; and so with tearful eyes and aching hearts we parted.

I trudged along till I reached the summit of a hill a few furlongs distant. As I turned round to waft a

last good-bye, I saw *Her* standing behind him at a few paces distant, waving a white handkerchief and laughing—was it at him, or me, or both? Thus she stood for a moment, scoffing, as I thought; then she vanished into the hazel copse beyond. He paused irresolute, and waved his hat once more. A mist of tears clouded my eyes for an instant. When I looked up he had gone—gone for ever, and I never saw him again!

When I returned to Derby, Martin met me on the Elvaston road, with a note from the duchess ordering me to come to tea (teas were substantial meals in those days), and inviting me to spend my last night at the play with her, alleging that she had already secured the seats.

A new Shakespearian hero was announced for the Christmas holidays, the famous African Roscius. Mr. Ira Aldridge—so this gentleman called himself—stated that he was the son of an African Prince of illustrious descent. His family had been sold to slavery, but he had escaped from bondage, and found shelter in “the land whose foot the slave no sooner touches than he becomes free” (vide *The Slave*). To be sure, the sceptical (the late Doctor Joy among others) alleged that the so-called prince had been James Wallack's dresser in New York, that he had caught stage fever from *Handsome Jim*, and, knowing that there was no possibility of his being permitted to put foot on the stage in the State, he had made tracks for London, where he played his cards so well that he actually made his *débüt* at Covent Garden as Othello.



As I reached the market-place I saw the prince driving down the High Street in his carriage, and a very princely affair it was. The coachman on the box, the flunkeys behind, and the distinguished-looking coloured gentleman inside attracted crowds as it leisurely rolled along.

Poor prince! When I came to know him two or three years later, he told me that on this identical occasion the gorgeous equipage had been in pawn at the railway station, and it was only through the kindness of the officials he was permitted to borrow it to parade through the town, for the purpose of attracting an audience. He, or the carriage, or both, drew a crowded house, of which the duchess and I were units.

The play was *Othello* and the farce *The Virginian Mummy*—from tragedy to comedy with a vengeance!

The performance appeared rather peculiar, inasmuch as Desdemona and Emilia were conspicuous by their absence, and even *The Virginian Mummy* was acted without the aid of a lady! Desdemona, being indispensable in the last scene, spoke from behind the bed-curtains, which were artfully draped so as to conceal her from the audience. At first I thought that, from a sense of propriety, the fair-haired daughter of the isles declined to be seen in a nightdress; but when a partial derangement of the drapery afforded a glimpse of an elderly matron, with a large pair of blue spectacles and a larger Roman nose, reading the part from a book, I was somewhat disillusioned.

*The Virginian Mummy*, however, restored good temper to the audience, for Mr. Aldridge was a genuine

comedian, and the vagaries of Ginger Blue kept the audience in roars of laughter and sent everybody away satisfied.

That was a fateful night for me. It sent me away dreaming. I had never seen *Othello* before. Despite its being mangled and mutilated thus barbarously, it stood out a heartrending tale of human love and human woe, the one perfect play of all the ages. It held me spellbound, and has held me ever since. If this effect could be produced by a negro and a handful of barn-stormers without even a Desdemona or an Emilia, what might not be achieved with proper treatment? A Moor, too, a noble Moor, a son of the princely Abeuceranges, tinged only slightly with "the burnished livery of the sun," instead of an elderly, obese, woolly-headed Ethiopian, attired like a cymbal-player, and blacker than a Christy minstrel. Heavens! what a chance for distinction!

Kean was dead. I had heard father and Mr. Manley both maintain there was no *Othello* on the stage: Macready, Young, and Charles Kemble had attempted it, but had never come within measurable distance of the Moor. Here, surely, was my chance! A modest aspiration, truly, this, for a gentle youth of fourteen. What then? If there were no aspiration, there would be no ambition. Without ambition the world would stand still. As a matter of fact, within four years from that very day—before I had reached my nineteenth year—I had the distinguished honour of enacting *Othello* to the greatest Iago in the world—to Macready himself!

## CHAPTER VI

### *LIFE IN LONDON*

My Second Visit to Town—At Westbourne Green and the District Surveyor's Office, Marylebone—Charles Dickens—Delights of the Drama—The Minors—The Queen's and *Pedlar's Acre*—The Olympic and *Jolly Dick the Lamplighter*—The New Marylebone—Sister Tragediennes—Mrs. W. West and Mrs. R. Honner—Brother Tragedians—Charles Freer and Charles Dillon—Otway and Edward Edwards—Tragic Deaths of the Tragedians—Brother Comedians—Tom Lee, John Douglass, and the Original "Bogie Man"—Covent Garden and Dan O'Connell—The Liberator's Benediction—The Haymarket and the Great Comedians—Charles Mathews and Mme. Vestris—Behind the Scenes at the Haymarket—Amateur Theatricals at Pym's Theatre, Gray's Inn Lane—The Embryonic Bishop retires from the Architectural Business and takes to the Stage—First and Last Appearance in Shoreditch—A Beautiful Beating—Count Romaldi thrashes his Colleague and takes his *Congé*—*Alone in London*.

THANKS to the influence of a friend at headquarters, I had a free pass to town by the express and a *coupé* to myself. The journey passed quickly and pleasantly; every town and village made a delightful picture as I floated swiftly by, and when the lights of London lay before me in the gathering night, I felt my heart's desire within measurable distance.

My old schoolfellow met me again at the station, and his people again made me at home.

When I presented my credentials at Devonshire Place North next morning, I was informed that I might have three or four days' leave, prior to taking up my abode at the family mansion at Westbourne Green. I made the most of my holiday: the days through Oxford Street, Regent Street, the Strand, Whitehall, to the Tower, the National Gallery, the Abbey, St. Paul's, and the Monument; every night to the theatres—to Drury Lane to see the great tragedian and his unrivalled company in *Virginius*, which was followed by a grand pantomime, with magnificent scenery, by Clarkson Stansfield, and to the Queen's in Tottenham Court Road—then irreverently dubbed "The Dust Hole," but hereafter to be known as the Prince of Wales's, famous for its associations with Marie Wilton, Byron, Robertson, and Bancroft. Here I saw the romantic drama of *The Pedlar's Acre* acted by a company of popular actors, one of whom, the stalwart Pedlar himself, was destined to be my first manager.

At the old Olympic I saw a rattling melodrama, precursor to the realistic dramas of London life of to-day. *Jolly Dick the Lamplighter* was written by Lemman Rede, a distinguished author and actor of the period. The hero was enacted by the manager, George Wild, the well-known comedian, and his sweetheart by the buxom and beautiful Miss Le Batt, with both of whom I had hereafter the pleasure of being intimately acquainted. The remainder of the company were metropolitan celebrities, the most conspicuous of whom were FitzJames and Charles Baker, the comedian, my first stage-manager.

On Sunday I went to Moorfields to pay my respects to Cardinal Wiseman and to hear his eminence preach, and on Monday to the office to commence business. My chief was the district surveyor of Marylebone. My duties were various: to copy letters, to try to copy plans, to go to the bank (Sir Claude Scott's in Cavendish Square), to pay money in and draw it out, to take the pass-book to and fro. I had to be up at seven and to leave Westbourne Green at nine for Devonshire Place North, which is opposite High Street, Marylebone. I opened the office at ten, and remained there till four or five. If any records remain to attest that I once tried to fulfil my duties there, they will be found merely in sundry blurred and blotted shreds of drawing-paper, in which various plans are defaced and spoiled.

Charles Dickens, then in the zenith of his fame, lived exactly opposite to us. He used to turn out pretty punctually between one and two, either with a pony and trap, or on horseback; and as I generally timed my so-called lunch for the occasion, I was nearly always in evidence when he turned out. At that time he was a young, handsome fellow, and seemed to know it. There was an abounding vitality about him. His eyes were bright, his hair long and wavy, his whiskers luxuriant. His costume was peculiar and pronounced. It might have been my fancy, but the deserted street seemed to wake up into life and animation when he came forth. I used to stand open-mouthed, gazing with wonder and delight at this glorious and exuberant creature, reverentially taking off my hat to him

just as I should have uncovered to the Queen. Becoming quite accustomed to my unsophisticated homage, he invariably smiled and gave me a nod of recognition as he went away.

Once Macready came out with him. When he caught sight of me, he whispered to Dickens. They both laughed as they drove off, little dreaming the pain their laughter left behind. This visit of Macready put a stop to my innocent pleasure, for I thought he recognised me. I couldn't keep away from my idol altogether, but I used to slink away whenever I saw Macready.

I had an allowance of a shilling a day for lunch, but it is an institution which I abominate. I quite agree with Charles Reade, who always maintained that "lunch is an insult to one's breakfast and an outrage to one's dinner." Hence my luncheon money, instead of being devoted to food for the body, was devoted to food for the mind. The fact is, the theatre swallowed my lunch; and as I walked to the office in the morning and back in the evening for dinner, I saved two omnibus fares—sixpence each way, so I pocketed another shilling *per diem*. We dined at six, and as soon as I could leave, I was off to the play. There was not a theatre in London I did not visit. There were no penny omnibuses in those days, so in most instances each visit to the play was attended by a walk of six or eight miles. The Marylebone and a new theatre in Paddington, called "The Yorkshire Stingo," were the most frequently visited. It was at the former that I first saw Charles Dillon, and Elton, who was drowned off Holy Isle in

the wreck of *The Forfar* ; Charles Freer, an admirable actor, afterwards well known in New York ; and Edward Edwards, an excellent rough actor.

On one occasion I saw a remarkable combination for Freer's benefit—Sheil's play, of *Evadne*, taken from Shirley's *Traitor*. The heroine (Miss O'Neil's part), by Mrs. Honner, admirable ; Ludovico (Macready's part), by Freer, powerful ; Vicenzio (Charles Kemble's part), by Charles Dillon, most striking ; and Colonna (Charles Young's part), by Mr. Edward Edwards. At a supreme moment in this play, when Vicenzio reflects upon Evadne's honour, her brother Colonna hurls his glove in the faithless lover's face, with the words :

There's my answer !  
Within the hour, beyond the city gates,  
I shall expect you.

Since then I have seen the best actors in the world, but I have never seen anything which has left a more vivid impression on my mind than the noble ardour and consummate skill with which this all but forgotten minor theatre actor invested this exciting incident.

The final exits of the tragedians darken every chapter of theatrical biography. Here is a tragic trio which this play brings to mind : Dillon, struck dead as if by lightning in the High Street of an obscure Border town ; Freer, found stiff and stark in a miserable garret off Drury Lane, with "that across his throat which you had scarcely cared to see." ; and Edwards stricken down by phthisis, dragging himself from his death-bed to

ask his old master, John Douglass, to grant him a benefit to enable him to avoid a pauper's funeral. Truly

This wide and universal theatre  
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene  
Wherein we play!

Among other small celebrities of the Marylebone company were Otway, a pedantic tragedian of whom Alfred Bunn makes most amusing mention in his interesting book *The Stage*; Tom Lee, the famous Irish comedian from Drury Lane, and his buxom wife, Miss Martin, from the Surrey; Coney and Blanchard, the famous "dogmen"; the sprightly Clara Conquest, afterwards Mrs. Charles Dillon; Mrs. W. West, who acted all the heroines to Kean at Drury Lane; John Douglass, the manager, and the original "Bogie Man," the renowned "Bogie King," so called from his funereal aspect and sepulchral voice.

At this time Bulwer Lytton's story of *Night and Morning* was at the height of its popularity. Charles Dillon had dramatised it for his own use, and I went to see it. The most vivid recollection I retain of this play is Gawtreys (John Douglass), the coiner, breaking out of the roof of a house, while the hero on the eminence opposite threw a rope over, which Gawtreys made fast to the chimney-stack behind. Then, clinging to it, he worked himself hand over fist across the giddy height till he reached a place of safety. As I write these lines the same effect is dragged in head over heels as the latest novelty in a primitive, old-fashioned drama now crowding a fashionable West-



End theatre nightly. Truly "There is nothing new under the sun!"

On the occasion of my visit to "night and morning," "Bogie" aforesaid, having also escaped from prison, rushed on in a front scene with a file in his hand, exclaiming, "Free—free once more, thanks to thee!" (*apostrophising the file*) "Oh, faithful friend! ye remind me of the mouse and the lion! Thou art the mouse—I, the lordly lion; and when I stalk abroad, the wide forest shall tremble with my roar!"

OLYMPIAN ADMIRER. Right O! Bogie! Right, old man, you are the champion roarer!

JAILER (*without*). Follow—follow!

BOGIE. Ha! here they come! Bloodhounds, I laugh at and defy ye! (*laughs, defies, and exit*).

[*Enter JAILER and supers in pursuit.*]

JAILER. Ha! vanished! But, no matter, I will find him if he lurks on the face of the v-earth. Follow! (*They follow.*)

DILLON (*stage manager, behind, to stage carpenter*). Jones, are ye ready yet?

JONES (*also behind*). Not half ready!

DILLON. Jerusalem! Here, Bogie, go on and vamp!

BOGIE. That's all very well. But what am I to say?

DILLON. Say? Oh, say you've swallowed the file.

BOGIE. Right you are! (*He re-enters.*) My ruffianly pursuers have gone round the corner to imbibe liquid

refreshment. While they indulge in an orgie, I am without the humble but indispensable *denarii*, without which it is impossible to obtain the inspiring beverage for which my parched soul pants! Life without liquor is not worth living, and I will end it. One brave blow and—— Aha! confusion! (*apostrophising the file*). Thy point is not sharp enow to penetrate the epidermis. No matter, I will swallow thee, and we will sleep the last sleep of love and death together. Oh, earth! thou art a shadow, but herein there is peace (*dies*).

OLYMPIAN. I believe you, my boy!

DILLON (*without*). Ready now, Jones?

JONES. Yuss, sir.

DILLON (*from the prompt entrance*). Come off, Bogie! come off!

BOGIE (*aside*). Can't!—I'm dead!

DILLON. But you must, I tell you.

BOGIE. Send on the supers to carry me.

DILLON. Can't find 'em!

BOGIE. Well, lower the lights and tell Nosey to play eight bars slow.

[*Lights lowered—"Eight bars slow."*]

BOGIE. Ha! What means this weight of thickening blood? Have I swallowed the file or did I dream it?

OLYMPIAN (*sympathetically*). No, you didn't dream. Got it right enough, old man.

BOGIE. What's to be done?

OLYMPIAN. Try an emetic.

BOGIE (*rising and bowing politely*). Right you are, my

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son. Without there ! A mild emulsion and a stomach pump to follow ! (*Exit.*)

[*Audience rise to the situation. Shrieks, yells, roar upon roar. Piece cannot proceed. Curtain falls, and BOGIE and the AUTHOR are recalled with acclamations.*]

An event of this exciting nature was, however, of rare occurrence. I recall more dignified impressions of the great houses, though even they were not without their disappointments. Going one night to Old Drury to see Macready and La Belle Nesbett as Beatrice and Benedick, to my dismay I found that the Duke of Sussex had most inconsiderately taken it into his head to die an hour or two prior to my arrival, and that consequently the theatre was closed. Upon another occasion I tramped from Paddington to Covent Garden (then under the management of Harry Wallack) to see a new comedy by Dion Boucicault called *Woman* ; but some pecuniary difficulty had arisen, and I found a notice on the doors intimating that "from unforeseen circumstances the season had terminated."

My first visit to Covent Garden was not to see a play, but to see one of the greatest players on the political stage, Daniel O'Connell. It was immediately after the verdict at the State trial in Dublin had been reversed by the writ of error from the House of Lords. For the moment all Liberal London, regardless of race and creed, streamed forth in their thousands to do honour to his triumph. Upon reaching Trafalgar Square, I had great difficulty in penetrating to the front, for the multitude overflowed from the Strand, St.

Martin's Lane, Pall Mall, and Whitehall, till the roads were impassable and all traffic had to be suspended. When at length the great tribune appeared, accompanied by his two stalwart sons, Maurice and John, a roar arose which "shook the earth and rent the sky." Then there was a rush forward: men, women, and children—I among the rest—struggled to get near him, to touch the hem of his garments, to hear the sound of his voice. Something he said—what, I know not; but it restored order and self-possession. Then, leaning on the arms of his sons, and towering head and shoulders above the multitude, the jubilant acclaim of victory ringing in his ears, with slow and stately step he strode down Whitehall and passed into St. Stephen's. Except on the occasion of Garibaldi's triumphal entrance into London, never have I witnessed a display of such genuine enthusiasm.

The next night a public reception was given to him at Covent Garden. Thither, too, I made my way. The huge edifice was packed from base to dome. Crowded out of the pit, boxes, and dress-circle, ultimately, by dint of much persuasion and a little bribery, I got on to the stage amidst the committee and others of the privileged class. The audience hung spellbound on the words of the great orator. His resonant and magnificent voice, flavoured with its rich Hibernian accent, held both soul and sense captive. As for me, my Celtic blood took fire, my heart throbbed with passionate indignation or melted into tears as he dwelt upon the wrongs of my beloved country. Never, surely, was such a born orator! Stern men cried one moment

and laughed the next. Strange to say, they never laughed in the wrong place, though once at least he afforded them a unique opportunity. As he approached the end of his oration, carried away by his theme, he took his wig off (a brown "jazey"), put it in his hat, and mopped his beautiful bald brow with a great flaming crimson bandana. The action appeared so natural and appropriate that no one seemed to think it absurd or even incongruous.

When the meeting broke up, I made bold to ask him to let me shake hands with him, that I might be enabled to say hereafter that I had once clasped hands with the Liberator. He benignantly complied, and gave me his blessing, and something else—a guinea!

"Keep it, my boy!" said he. "Keep it, and as long as ye have it, ye'll never want money."

I *did* keep it as long as I could, and then, alas! it went the way of all guineas that I ever handled!

At that period, with his stalwart form, his rubicund face, his *bonhomie*, he looked as if he might have taken a new lease of life. Alas! only a couple of years later he died, a broken-hearted man, bequeathing "his body to Ireland and his soul to Rome."

It was at or about the time of that Covent Garden demonstration that I became affiliated to an amateur society whose headquarters were at the Athenæum in Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road, next door to the Queen's Theatre. It was here, by the way, that I first heard that conscientious and admirable social reformer and apostle of the co-operative movement, George Jacob Holyoake, whose pure and perfect English

made one oblivious of his cold and colourless elocution. Our stage manager was a very gentlemanly little man, a solicitor named Wyman. He had been a member of Madame Vestris' Company at the Olympic, and partner with the elder Conquest at the Garrick Theatre. Our leading lady was a young Scotch girl of remarkable beauty and distinction of manner; our low comedian was my friend Harry Nye Chart, for so many years manager of the Brighton Theatre.

My youth and the necessity which existed for my getting home early heavily handicapped me with my amateur colleagues; but perseverance and a little coin accomplishes wonders, and I soon found myself taking part in a series of performances given by the club (I think we called ourselves the Garrick) at Pym's Theatre, Gray's Inn Lane. The manager, who was said to be by day a clerk in the Bank of England, by night was proprietor, manager, carpenter, and property-man of the private theatre in Gough Street. He was a tall fellow with protrusive and pendulous gills, a bulbous and bibulous nose, a watery blue eye, and an insatiable and devouring thirst. What with his unchanging suit of rusty black and his white choker, he looked a clerical replica of Bardolph.

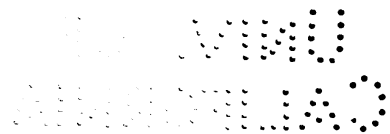
My first part was Francesco Foscari, in Miss Mitford's tragedy of *Foscari*; my next, Hamlet (of course!); Miles Bertram, in *The Wreck Ashore*, and the Duke Aranza in *The Honeymoon*, in which, to our astonishment, our charming leading lady refused the part of Juliana, and insisted on enacting the secondary character, Zamora. Our astonishment, however, gave way to admiration when



*From a portrait by Jones.*

CHARLES JAMES MATHEWS.







she came forth in male attire. Truly she was "Jove's own page." Evidently she knew it. That was her last appearance on the stage. The Rolando of the night—a gentleman in an important mercantile position—lost his too susceptible heart to the fair Zamora and her beautiful legs, and they were married a month afterwards, and retired into private life, much to my indignation, as she had promised to play for my benefit in Buckstone's drama of *The Bear Hunters*, founded upon one of Colley Grattan's novels.

In the last scene of this play I introduced an effect never contemplated by the author. I had to strangle the villain; unfortunately, I had cut the web of my thumb badly a week before, and when I took my enemy by the throat, the wound burst out afresh, deluging the wretched Estevan with blood. The audience thought this a fine realistic effect, and applauded accordingly. It was realistic with a vengeance, for it nearly caused my death by lockjaw.

It was while recovering from this accident that I first became acquainted with Charles Mathews, whose debts, difficulties, gaiety, and matchless assurance were rife on all men's tongues. Our "chief" had an old country house to let contiguous to his own place at Westbourne Green, and the redoubtable Charles came to inquire about it. Except Count D'Orsay, he was said to be the most elegantly dressed man in London; certainly I thought him so. Before his advent at Devonshire Place North, I heard the chief discussing the matter of payment for fixtures, references, etc.; but when he left us, both the governor and his son—a somewhat lugubrious gentleman—could do nothing but dilate upon

the ease, the grace, the vivacity, and the numberless accomplishments of their new tenant. Besides, had not the gentle Charles been an architect himself—nay, more, a surveyor—a district surveyor, too—surveyor, if I mistake not, of the district of Pimlico? Long after, he told me he never obtained a single fee! Mathews was not the only person who never obtained a fee where he was concerned. Only the other day Sir George Lewis, while deploring our poor friend's irreparable loss, assured me that during the many years he was represented by Lewis & Lewis, they never asked or dreamed of asking for a fee, deeming themselves amply repaid by the pleasure of Charley's company.

When the arrangements were approaching completion, I had to take the draft lease to the Haymarket, where he was then acting. It was after office hours, and I might have left the lease at the stage door; but that would not suit my purpose, as I had a deep-laid scheme in view. It was five o'clock when I inquired of the porter at what time Mr. Mathews was likely to arrive. Cerberus looked at me suspiciously, and growled, "Don't know: perhaps he won't arrive at all."

This was unsatisfactory. The play-bill, however, was reassuring, for there was my hero announced for Dashwould in *Know your own Mind*, and Motley in *He Would be an Actor*. Madame, too, was announced for *Lady Bell*: so I prowled up and down Suffolk Street till half-past six o'clock. At length my patience was rewarded. Just as the clock struck, up drove a brougham, and out jumped the airy light comedian and assisted Mrs. Mathews from the carriage. His

back was turned to me; so, approaching timidly, I touched him on the arm. Turning round like a shot, he inquired, "At whose suit?"

As soon, however, as he saw me, he burst out laughing, and exclaimed, "Oh, it's you, young shaver! By Jove! I thought it was a copy of a writ! But come along."

Thus, under his protecting wing was I permitted to penetrate behind the scenes of the Haymarket. Had I been alone, I think I should have dropped on my knees as Hans Andersen did at the theatre in Stockholm. As soon as we reached his dressing-room, I took heart of grace and told Mathews I wanted to be an actor: could he help me to procure an engagement? He laughed again, and asked me what I should like to play. With the modesty of youth (*à* fifteen) I replied, "Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth."

He drily suggested "that was rather high-flown to begin with. "But" (for I was tall for my years, as tall as I am now, and had put a year or two on my age) "I will try to get you an engagement for *Utility* in the Norwich circuit" (which engagement never came to hand, by-the-bye).

Then he asked me, "Would you like to see the play?"

Would a duck swim? He gave me his card, and dismissed me. The next minute I was in the pit.

In the comedy, beside himself and Madame Vestris, who in *Lady Bell* introduced the ballad of "Rise, Gentle Moon, and light me to my Lover," there were William Farren, the elder, Tom Stuart, the growler, and Mr. Henry Holl, a very handsome man who unfortunately

had a pair of legs like a parallelogram : had they been straight, they would have been as handsome as their owner ; even as they were, they contrasted most advantageously with poor Dashwould's spindle-shanks, which were as attenuated then as they were thirty years later. There was the great Mrs. Glover, most superb of comediennes, and there was Mrs. Edwin Yarnold, whom I remember chiefly because of her hair, which was as remarkable for its colour as its abundance. It was red—deep Titianesque red—and came down, literally, to her knees. I'm afraid (I was always a susceptible youth!) I was very much "gone" on that young lady and her wonderful head of hair, and although I didn't know him, cherished an instinctive and insensate hatred for Mr. Edwin Yarnold, whoever that gentleman may have been.

The comedy was delightful enough, but *He would be an Actor!* Oh! Mathews never had a note in his voice, but how charmingly he sang "Jenny Jones"! He was the only actor who ever "sold" me in the matter of a disguise. When that elegant French lady came on, it was in vain I consulted the huge, splotchy play-bill (in those days programmes were not) ; the fair Parisian's name was conspicuous by its absence. It was in vain I consulted my neighbours of more mature years ; they were as ignorant as myself : indeed, it was not until the French beauty lifted up her skirts and made a bolt of it that I recognised Master Motley's pipe-stems under mademoiselle's petticoats.

Soon after this visit to the Haymarket, Charley brought his household gods to Westbourne Green. I can never

forget his kindness and condescension. At first I was rather shy ; but both he and Madame, then in the ripe maturity of charms which had dazzled and delighted a preceding generation, received me with such affability that I was not only permitted the run of the library, but made almost a son of the house. This was, however, too bright to last. At the end of the Haymarket season they went upon a provincial tour. I saw them no more, and the Norwich engagement was as far off as ever.

Meanwhile, I was drifting into disgrace at Devonshire Place. The truth was I had neither the ability nor the inclination requisite for my new vocation. I tried to do my best, but bad was the best. The end was that I received an intimation that my services were no longer required, and, as my kind friends in Camden Town had returned to the country, I found myself at the age of fifteen alone in London. I recall that time now with an all-pervading emotion of horror—a horror which words cannot describe. I had a little money and a decent wardrobe when my fight with fate or fortune, or both, commenced. It was not until then that I realised to the full extent what I had lost by my negligence, or, rather, by my obstinate devotion to one fixed purpose, which seemed as far remote from my reach as the poles.

Mathews had given me an introduction to Mr. Kenneth, a famous theatrical agent in Bow Street. This gentleman took one of my few remaining guineas as entrance-fee, and told me to call again and he would see what he could do. I did call again and again, but all to no avail.

Then I tried Mr. Turnour, an actor at the Olympic,

who had an agency at the Harp Tavern, a famous house of call, opposite the pit door of Drury Lane Theatre, said to have been much affected by Edmund Kean when at his zenith. Mr. Turnour extracted another guinea, but still the same answer: managers wanted actors, not amateurs.

Somehow or other I got to know that some one was wanted at the old Standard Theatre in Shoreditch, a little place about the size of the Royalty. Off I went, and tackled the manager, a little man named Grundy. At first he wouldn't listen to me, but when I explained that my views were accommodating, that I would do anything or everything, take anything or nothing (for the company were upon shares), he relaxed and consented to my joining his small but efficient troupe. There were two or three excellent actors who afterwards became celebrities, and a beautiful being in the shape of the heroine, to whose blandishments I succumbed, and whose bond-slave I immediately became. Of course, she was twice my age; but what did that matter? Boys always fall in love with their grandmothers. Really and truly I found in this charming creature something like maternal solicitude.

I had pitched my tent at Camden Town, and had to walk from thence to Shoreditch and back twice a day. During the whole of my engagement I never received a shilling for my services. To be sure, I was to have a benefit, and as all my amateur acquaintances from Gough Street had promised to act and to take tickets, I might reasonably anticipate a fair house. My Dulcinea must have had a pretty good idea of the state of the land, for after a prolonged rehearsal of *Joan of Arc* (what a

gorgeous creature she looked in her golden spangled armour!) she invited me to take tea. Her mother, a charming old lady, and her brother, a lad of my own age (afterwards a distinguished American manager), gave me a cordial welcome and a delicious mutton chop, for the actor's tea in those days meant dinner as well. These dear, kind creatures took compassion on my loneliness and desolation, and from this time forth I was daily expected at tea-time.

At the theatre I was occasionally entrusted with parts which the more important members of the company declined to study. One effort in this direction brought my engagement to an abrupt and sensational termination. I had the temerity—or shall I say the folly?—to attempt, in an emergency and at a few hours' notice, Count Romaldi in *The Tale of Mystery*—a “villain of the deepest dye,” who gives about two hundred music cues for a mysterious dumb man to pantomime to. This wretched count is bullied and insulted by everybody, and finally found out and handed over to justice. There had been a breakdown somewhere. The old birds fought shy of M. le Comte; but it needed little persuasion to induce me to make a fool of myself. I was righteously punished for my presumption, for I broke down ignominiously, was chaffed most unmercifully by the gods, and held up to ridicule by the actor who played the “exempt.” This noble youth, who afterwards became a distinguished man of letters, had to read a proclamation offering a reward for my apprehension. He availed himself of the occasion to describe me as “a young gentleman with straight hair and curly teeth, who

had the additional advantage of being knock-kneed, bandy-legged, and generally imbecile!" Of course, the audience roared at the delicate irony of this description.

I think, however, they would have roared still more heartily had they witnessed the performance which followed the fall of the curtain. My heroine had witnessed the outrage of which I had been the victim: it only needed that to add fuel to the flame of my anger. My insulter stalked into the green-room. I was about to follow, when she muttered through her white teeth, "Thrash him, John, thrash him within an inch of his life."

"I will," I replied, and I did thrash him there and then; and I am bold to say I gave him a most beautiful beating.

The cad had some occult influence with the management, and the result was that I was dismissed there and then, and, worse still, denied my benefit, because, forsooth, "I had broken the rules of the theatre." My heroine's indignation was so great that she withdrew from the company, and went immediately to Manchester. There an enterprising American impresario discovered, and secured her for New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, where she captured all hearts, and more especially that of a famous millionaire, who made her his wife and the mother of his children. I wonder does she ever bestow a passing thought on her boyish admirer, who at her departure was left stranded and alone in the wilderness of London, and who after all these years still cherishes a grateful recollection of her kindness?



## CHAPTER VII

### *MY FIRST ENGAGEMENT*

Charles Calvert and I interview Phelps the Day he opens Sadler's Wells—But interview him in Vain—"Learning to live without Eating"—I become an Author, and get a Cheque for my First Story—Tom and I walk to Windsor—Interview the Manager and obtain Engagements in the Royal Borough—In walking Home we lose our Way—But are invited to Supper—My Chum takes more than is good for him—Becomes Obstreperous—I become Pugnacious—A Fight on the Queen's Highway—A Benevolent Waggoner and a Bountiful Breakfast at the Half-way House—Couched among the Cabbages—A Scarecrow—Dear Little Daisy—A Night's Lodging in the Park, and a Dip in the Serpentine—In the Row among the Upper Ten—The Queen and Prince Albert—Pam—Peel and the Iron Duke—D'Orsay, Dizzy and Louis Bonaparte—Lady Blessington and Pelham—The Earl of Eglintoun and the Queen of Beauty—Dives and Lazarus—"The Colonel" invites me to dine at the Bedford, and takes me on "The Ran-Dan"—The Coal Hole—The Cider Cellar—Judge and Jury—*Poses Plastiques* and Evans's—At the Last Gasp—Mother's Writing-Desk—Letter from Old Harry—Delilah, oh, Delilah!—Turning Stroller, I stop at Richmond to do Homage to the Memory of the Prince of Strollers, Edmund Kean—Season at Windsor—Turning the Corner—William Robertson engages me for Leicester—My Comrades wish me Good-bye and God speed—The Boys escort me to Slough—Tom turns out Trumps after all.

**A**T or about this period the memorable Phelps and Greenwood *régime* commenced at Sadler's Wells Theatre. The very day the theatre opened, two boys besieged Mr. Phelps at the stage door, begging him to take them on in any department. The late

Charles Calvert was one of the boys, I was the other. Phelps was up to his eyes in the rehearsal of *Macbeth*. In our ignorance it never occurred to either of us to think how ill-advised it was to trouble him at such a moment. He, however, came to the stage door immediately and gave us audience.

Having only seen him on the stage made up to represent villains and old men, I was astonished to find him with a smooth, beardless face, almost colourless eyes, and an abundance of light brown hair. He gave himself no tragic or autocratic airs, but was gracious and patient—very much so considering the circumstances—and ended by informing us that we were both too young (myself in particular), and that we had better go back to school.

Calvert went one way and I the other, nor did we meet again till many years had elapsed. Baffled, but not wholly disheartened, I made my way to Drury Lane, where T. P. Cooke was then acting William in *Black-Eyed Susan*, under Bunn's management. Here—oh, woeful change!—here, where I had hoped to have made my *débüt* as a young Roscius, I asked to be taken on as a super; but, despite my frock-coat, my high-heeled boots, and my tall hat, I was still pronounced too young for even that humble calling.

There was one comfort—I should grow out of that if I lived long enough. But how to exist meanwhile? That was the question. As yet, though I had made various experiments in that direction, I had not learned to live without eating. In this crisis my back had to suffer for my belly, and my poor wardrobe dwindled

and dwindled away till I had little or nothing left. Yet to be poor and seem poor is the height of imprudence, so I still struggled to keep up appearances, and was brave in clean linen and kid gloves, but always hungry.

It now became a question not of bread and cheese, but of bread without the cheese. At last there came an end even to that. How I lived through that terrible time, it is awful to think even now! What was to be done? Go back to the Midlands? Death sooner! Finding it impossible to get into the theatre, I tried to obtain a clerkship or any other sort of employment by which I might get a living; but all doors were closed against me.

Then it occurred to me to try scribbling, but I wrote such high-falutin' stuff that the editors would none of it. At last I wrote a story—a nineteenth-rate replica of *The Christmas Carol*—and sent it to the editor of *Lloyd's Miscellany*. Oh, joy! oh, rapture! I received a cheque for two guineas, and had the delight of seeing myself in print! These two guineas kept the wolf from the door for fully a month, It is astonishing how far a little money goes when you neither smoke nor drink; when, in fact, you eat to live instead of live to eat.

Just as I was getting to the end of my small hoard, I accidentally heard that the Windsor Theatre was about to open for the summer season, and immediately I set off to walk to the royal borough with a stage-struck casual acquaintance, who, like myself, had been destined for an architect, and, like myself, had failed. As luck would have it, immediately upon our arrival, we met the manager swaggering down the High Street, carrying a rump-steak

upon a skewer. A fine, handsome, stalwart fellow he was. The moment I caught sight of him, I recognised the hero of my first play at the Dust Hole, *The Pedlar of Pedlar's Acre*. To be brief, he entertained our proposal, and engaged the pair of us for *Utility* at twelve shillings a week each! To be sure, the season did not commence for a month, but I had got over so many difficulties that this did not daunt me. The day was still young, so we went to see the State apartments at the Castle, and afterwards for a swim in the river. Having refreshed the outer man, the inner man claimed attention. Our simple repast made a hole in my last half-crown (I was purse-bearer), and off we started to walk back to town. Night fell earlier than we expected, and fell in total darkness—indeed, so dark was it that we soon lost our way. After wandering to and fro for some miles, we halted at an inn at the junction of four cross-roads. The landlord and landlady, jolly, kind-hearted old folk, were very communicative and very hospitable. They were just sitting down to supper, and invited us to join them. Nothing loth, we accepted the invitation, and vigorously attacked a magnificent baron of beef, a salad, and heaps of home-made bread and cheese. Tom (so I will call my companion) washed down his share of the repast with copious draughts of old ale, and after supper joined mine host in a pipe and various libations of gin cold, with the result that when we bade our friends good-night, and turned out to finish our journey, he immediately became very drunk and very quarrelsome.

At that time I had never tasted intoxicating drink in my life, and had seen so much misery occasioned by

it that I was not so tolerant as I might have been to my companion's infirmity. Still, as we had to get to town together, I endured the affliction, if not with complacency, at least with patience as long as I could. Unfortunately Tom got worse and worse.

Now I must premise that my friend aspired to low comedy, and had already enacted John Reeves's famous part of Marmaduke Magog in *The Wreck Ashore* in an amateur performance at Smithson's Theatre in Catherine Street (afterwards the office of *The Echo*).

There is a scene in which Magog returns,

O'er all the ills of life victorious,

from a village merry-making. This particular scene Tom insisted upon acting at night and in darkness on the King's highway. The worthy Marmaduke is hilariously drunk, so was Tom. Despite my protestations, he sang, he swore, and shouted, and became at length so uproarious that I threatened to leave him and pursue my journey alone. This led to a violent altercation, amidst which he made a lunge at me with my own umbrella, prodding me violently in the back and ripping up my coat (my only one!) from the waist to the collar.

Anger is a brief madness. We were both maddened, the one with "supper and distempering draughts," the other with anger and indignation. I shame to say it even now, after all these years, that after a rapid and violent conflict, I landed poor Tom on his back, and left him roaring out, "Down among the Dead Men," while I set forth to London alone.

Presently it came on to rain, and I had left my umbrella behind as well as Grimstone. The lightning flashed, the thunder roared, and down poured the rain with a vengeance, until I was drenched to the skin. "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind," and my thoughts reverted to poor Grimstone, until I became overpowered with remorse. Suppose I had seriously injured him? suppose he should die out there overtaken by this cruel storm? Distracted with these contending emotions, I turned back, resolved to find him.

By this time the clouds had lifted a little, and the first faint glimmer of morning trembled through darkness into dawn. I was utterly lost, and had not the faintest idea where I was. Far as the eye could reach there was no sign of human habitation, and, worse still, three or four roads lay before me, and which to take I knew not. While in this state of dubiety I heard the sound of slowly revolving wheels and the tramp, tramp of horses' feet. The sounds got nearer and nearer, until at length there emerged from the darkness a waggoner, a pair of stalwart dray-horses, and a huge waggon, which lumbered slowly along till it came up to me. The waggoner was a big, jovial fellow in the usual smock-frock of the period. He was as astonished to see me as I was delighted to see him. He told me his gaffer was a market gardener, and he was bound for Covent Garden with a cargo of cabbages. He had seen nothing of Grimstone, and I therefore consoled myself with the thought that the poor fellow had had the shelter of the umbrella, and, as the storm was now over, that he was on his way home, which eventually turned out to be

the case. Having arrived at this conclusion, I felt a little easier in my mind. I had reached my last sixpence, but with that I struck a bargain with the waggoner to give me a lift to town.

“We shall be at the half-way house in an hour’s time, so jump up, young master, t’other side of the shafts,” said he.

Up I jumped as well as I could, and away we lumbered till we reached the half-way house, where we found a dozen or more waggoners, waggons, and horses, all bound for the same destination. My waggoner rubbed down his horses, gave them their morning meal, and then looked after his own. For my part I was shivering from head to foot, so I made the best of my way to a roaring fire, which blazed away in the kitchen where the men were at breakfast, stowing away, it seemed to me, gallons of coffee, mountains of bread, pounds of butter, scores of rashers of bacon, and dozens of newly laid eggs. The smell of those eggs and that bacon, as the delicious compound frizzled away in the frying-pan, was most tantalising to a hungry lad of fifteen.

“Happy waggoners!” thought I. “How I envy you!”

At this moment my new acquaintance gave me a slap on the back which nearly shook the breath out of my body.

“Now then, young master,” said he, “thou canst na’ eat the fire, but thou canst eat thy breakfast, I warrant; and here it is ready and waiting!”

With that he almost lifted me to the kitchen dresser, where a great smoking dish of bacon and eggs had

evidently been prepared for our especial delectation. It was in vain I argued I had no money; the honest fellow wouldn't take "No" for an answer. Hunger triumphed over false pride, and between us we polished off that dish of eggs and bacon. After breakfast, my friend had a pipe, and then he made his preparations for the remainder of the journey. He got a handful of hay from the ostler, and spread it out on the cabbages to make a bed for me; then he covered me with the tarpaulin, and I fell asleep, and never woke till I found myself in Edgware Road at the bottom of Portman Market, trying to force my last sixpence upon my honest waggoner. The generous fellow, however, would have none of it, but bade me get home and get to bed at once.

I caught sight of myself in the window of a pawnshop near the Marylebone Theatre, and a precious scarecrow I looked with my battered hat and my torn coat, with a *chevaux-de-frise* of hay bristling about me in every direction. Fortunately it was pretty early, so I did not attract the attention I should doubtless have excited a few hours later. As I tottered along the Regent's Park Road, the trees on one side and the houses on the other seemed to be performing a kind of devil's dance as to which should get to Camden Town first. Primrose Hill threatened to tumble down and pulverise me to atoms. My head turned round and round, and I barely retained sufficient consciousness to keep the use of my limbs until I staggered into my squalid garret and threw myself on the bed.



## My First Engagement

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I was so awfully done up with jumping and jolting that I slept all day and didn't turn out till the next morning. When I came to overhaul my clothes, to my astonishment I found the rent in the rear of my unfortunate coat had been so ingeniously repaired that I could scarce distinguish a trace of the tear, and, indeed, my entire suit had been cleaned and brushed so deftly that it looked as good as new. While wondering what good fairy had come to the rescue, Daisy, my landlady's dear little daughter, came up and looked at me from head to foot.

"Not so bad!" she said, with a saucy smile, and ran away.

I was ravenously hungry, so I made my way to a coffee-house near the Mother Redcap, and expended my last sixpence in as square a meal as I could get for the money. Then I returned home, went to bed, and awoke hungrier than ever.

I was in debt at my lodgings, and did not like to take my landlady into my confidence, so I merely formulated excuses about expecting remittances from home. Up to this period there had always been a frugal breakfast prepared for me; now there was none. Little Daisy was no longer permitted to wait upon me, and the grim old Gorgon, her mother, began to remind me every morning that her bill was continually increasing. The poignant tragedies of life are to be found in the small things—the pitiful, the squalid, the ignoble! Now, while these lines are being written, the papers are full of stories of miserable creatures found dead from starvation—dead in ditches, dead in highways and

byways, in holes and corners. We read of these things, and we languidly murmur, "Poor d——! why didn't he or she go to General Booth or the poor-house?" Then we pass the claret, take another cigarette, and change the conversation.

There are some people, though, who prefer to keep their misery to themselves. I was "built that way," so at this most critical period, for some days (I forget how many, for I lost count of time!) I scarcely had enough food to keep body and soul together.

I had been nurtured tenderly, pampered upon dainties, had "ate of the fat," and, I was about to add, had "drunk of the sweet"; but that would not be literally accurate, save as far as it applied to tea and coffee, or lemonade and similar beverages. Were I to give my pen full play to describe the ignoble horrors of that time, I should horrify the reader. It was not all horror, though; there was a dash of humour in it occasionally. I had just been reading *Pickwick*, and in the hopeless muddle in which my mind was now confused I only retained one clear impression of that delectable work, and that was (shall I confess it?) *Pickwick's* immortal message to Mrs. Bardell, "Chops and tomato sauce." Oh for a mutton chop and chips!

Naught is so bad but it might be worse. Had it been winter, I could never have survived; fortunately it was golden summer and the height of the season.

In the morning I wandered to and fro the busy thoroughfares; at noon I loafed about the banks of the river, which appeared so cool, so clear, so inviting—above all, so restful—that it seemed, as it rolled placidly

down to the sea, to murmur, "Foolish boy! what are you making all this trouble about? Come to me and I will give you peace."

At this moment Mr. Mantilini was wont to step up and whisper, "Don't make yourself a demnitioned, damp, unpleasant body, dear boy!"

Then I resolved to postpone that last plunge, and off I went to stroll in the Parks; through St. James's, by the duck pond, past Piccadilly, and so on to the Row, to feast my eyes on the celebrities of the fashionable world as they rolled by chattering and laughing, all oblivious of the pariah on the other side of the rail. It was the old story of Dives and Lazarus—Dives in purple and gold, and Lazarus in rags and wretchedness: on the one side, splendour and luxury, repletion, indolence, disdain; on the other, emptiness and hunger, poverty and misery, envy, hatred, and despair. Here came brave men, beautiful women; sometimes Queen Victoria (in those days a homely, comely young lady) rolled by in her chariot, accompanied by her sprightly children and her handsome husband. Upon one notable occasion Her Majesty was accompanied by Sir Robert Peel and the Iron Duke himself. Here, too, came that strange compound of Hercules and Adonis, Alfred, Count D'Orsay, said to be the best-dressed and the handsomest man in town, riding cheek by jowl with a dreamy, sinister-looking personage with vulturine features, clouded dreamy eyes, and a nose like an eagle's beak, known then, even to me, as the so-called nephew of his uncle, and reputed to be a dreamer of dreams, hereafter to be known variously as the assassin of the *Coup d'État*—

Napoleon III., Napoleon le Petit, Badinguet, and finally as the Man of Sedan.

Usually following in the wake of this strangely assorted pair came a woman of rare and exceptional beauty, in an open Victoria, with a cavalier, younger and if possible more *débonnair* than herself. Resplendent in all the colours of the rainbow, his crimson vest festooned with a huge gold chain, his great flaming eyes flashing fire from out the heart of a black pansy, and his hyacinthine locks clustered in great flakes of glossy curls—such was my first glimpse of “the wondrous boy who wrote *D'Alroy*” and of the beautiful Lady Blessington!

Sometimes the seat of the future Prime Minister was occupied by the redoubtable “Pelham,” the most floridly dandified of all the dandies. Slender and elegant, languorous and affected, Roman-nosed, wasp-waisted, wax-moustached, luxuriously whiskered, his curled hair glittered in the sunshine like a golden nimbus. It seemed scarcely possible to realise that this stay-laced, barbered, powdered, pomatum'd coxcomb should not only be a man of genius, but the most prolific author in the brotherhood of letters.

Lord Eglintoun, fresh from the Scottish tourney, which everybody was speaking of, came almost daily, escorting the “Queen of Beauty,” my Lady Seymour.

The “Grand Old Man” of a later period (a very handsome young fellow then) I saw only occasionally; but Don Cupid (Lord Palmerston) was always in evidence, fluttering about from flower to flower of beauty like a gay old butterfly. Of course, these great people were like

comets "to be wondered at, not to be approached"; but, seeing Sir Robert Peel ride by, I ventured to lift my hat. He bowed courteously in return. A preposterous idea instantly occurred to me—to remind him of our journey from Tamworth to Birmingham, and to ask him to give me something to do in any department, however humble. Day after day I went resolved to speak if opportunity presented itself; day after day I bowed; day after day he gave me a smiling nod of recognition, but my heart always failed me at the last moment. At length I wrote a modest note, and was actually waiting at my accustomed post to deliver it into his hands when the fatal news came, that very day, that very hour, he had been thrown from the horse I had seen him astride the day before, and was killed! Thirty years later, dining with his son, the late Sir Robert, during the yeomanry week at Lichfield, I related the circumstance to him.

"You were an ass!" said he. "My father was just the man to have put a poor friendless lad on his feet!"

The news of Sir Robert's death drove me to despair, for I had at length grown to believe that he would have helped me.

When things had got to the worst, I met a friend of my father's one morning in the Strand—a certain Colonel Graham, a stalwart Hibernian officer of dragoons who had retired from the Service and taken to picture-dealing. He invited me to dine with him at the Bedford that evening. That was the longest day I ever passed in my life; but seven o'clock came at

last—so did the dinner. Dinner? It was a banquet, a feast fit for the gods—fish, flesh, fowl, fruit, and wine! Yes, for the first time in my life I tasted the generous, life-giving juice of the grape. It put new life into my famished veins. The wonder was it did not get to my head; but it didn't. My gallant host was the soul of hospitality, but I fear he was a loose fish. Anyhow, he took me to the Coal Hole, to the Judge and Jury, and wound up with a jovial supper at Evans's. Rather a large order this for immature fifteen! Fortunately for me, I was wise enough not to participate in my friend's libations after we quitted the Bedford; for when we parted he was more than half seas over, while as for me, I was so overcome with dinner and supper and the dissipations of the evening that I actually fell asleep on the Hampstead Road while walking home, and was sent spinning by a cab-horse, with, happily, no worse result than a slight shaking.

When I called the next night to pay my *devoirs* to the gallant colonel, I found he had already left town, and was actually on his way to Plymouth. Here was a cruel blow! Had I made known my condition to him, I felt assured he would have helped me; but while availing myself of his hospitality, I didn't like to broach the subject. So confident was I of his good offices that I had assured my Gorgon that I should be enabled to make her a payment on my return that evening. I was so despondent, and so afraid of facing her after this disappointment, that I didn't dare to return home, and I resolved to pass the night in the Park.

Here was a contrast with a vengeance! Last night

feasting on luxuries at a West-End hotel—hobnobbing with half the “swells” about town at the Coal Hole and Evans’s; to-night dining with Duke Humfrey and “Hail, fellow, well met!” with ragged outcasts in Hyde Park. Fortunately the night was mild and balmy, and I slept as soundly on the grass as if I had slept on down and damask.

When I awoke, I had a dip in the Serpentine, which, although it refreshed me, made me ravenously hungry. At this moment it occurred to me that I would go to Charles Dickens, tell him of my parlous state, and implore his help. Down I went through Marylebone Lane and so on to Devonshire Terrace. As I caught sight of No. 1, my heart sank within me, for there before me stared a huge placard intimating:

THIS HOUSE TO LET.

Ten days more and my engagement was to commence, as I have said, at the princely honorarium of twelve shillings a week! So near to port and yet to be shipwrecked! No, not while I could swim a stroke. I was at daggers drawn with my father, who had bitterly reproached me for having left the architect’s office, and had threatened to disinherit me and cut me off with the proverbial shilling.

Happy thought! I would write to Father Tom and to the prior at the monastery; so I turned into the Regent’s Park, and dragged my weary limbs after me till I reached Camden Town. The letters were soon written; but then came the question of postage. To ask my landlady for the loan of twopence would open

a flood-gate of vituperative eloquence. A sudden inspiration occurred to me—my writing-desk! my mother's gift when I went to the monastery. I had clung to it because she gave it me. It was made of ebony, beautifully mounted, and apparently of some value. In my debilitated condition it was a heavy load to carry; but it had to be carried, so I staggered beneath it to a second-hand furniture-shop in the neighbourhood. The man in charge (who evidently belonged to the great historic race) chaffed me. This is an accomplishment I lack culture to appreciate. Had it not been for this fellow's impudence I should readily have jumped at the five shillings he offered, but his insolence put a pound in my pocket.

Assured now that I had something worth selling, I hailed a passing street Arab, who shouldered the desk and carried it down to Hampstead Road, where I speedily disposed of it for five-and-twenty shillings. Tossing the lad sixpence in a lordly fashion, I posted my letters, adjourned to an adjacent restaurant, feasted regally on "Chops and tomato sauce"—feasted to such an extent that I wonder the feast did not prove fatal; but we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and the digestive apparatus of youth is the most wonderful thing connected with the human form divine! Making my way home, I mollified the Gorgon with a trifle on account, slept like a top that night; on the morrow more chops, minus tomato sauce, till the pangs of hunger, being somewhat assuaged, my appetite resumed its normal condition.

I began to look anxiously for an answer to my



letters. I never received an answer from the prior, but I did get one—not from Father Tom, alas! but from poor old Harry. It ran to this effect:

“DEAR MAISTER JHON,—

“Yew wus allays a pickel but I’m sorrie to ’ear yew are in trouble, and if this yere five pounds his of any yuse it is yewrs to command. Pay it back when yew like—or if yew never pays it it don’t sinnify seein’ as ’ow I’ve allays got a bit left for a rainy day.

“Dear young maister, my ’art is a-brakin’ all along o’ *Him*. Hit ’as turned hout hexastly as I frognosticulated. That their blaimed young Jezabel, which is a scarlet woman of Babylon, have run away with him, poor lamb—and what he’ll do without me to look after him, Gawd He only knows, for her’s a shiftless hussey, her is, as can’t sew on her own buttons leave alone his. The Bishop ’ave been ’ere, and the Prior, and their ’ave been h—ll and Tommy to pay in the village, for they have excommunerated him, pore dear! with bell, book and candle. Hif he had honly tuk me with him I wouldn’t ha’ minded so much, for I’ve got a bit in the Bank besides my pension, and we could have rubbed on together—and now I shall ’ave to go back to the Monastery with their seven o’clock bed and their four o’clock matins, their soup miggry slops, and other muck, which an old soldier’s stomick can’t habide.

“If you want a bit more let me know for it’s hall my hown and them there monks, expecially that brother Francis Xavier shall never touch it. He ’ave been ’ere,

the old beast, a-talkin' about Him, a-sayin' 'He noo he'd never come to no good!' But I says, says I, 'Shut hup, yur sanctemmerous hold humbug! If you dar say another word about Him, it won't be your gownd as'll save your back. He's a better man nor ever stood in your wooden shoes. Meanwhile, this 'ouse ain't yourn yet, so just you clear hout while you've got a hole skin,' and then he tuk 'is hook in double quick time.

"And so no more from yews to command your lovin' servant and hold friend,

"'ARRY FURSTER.

"*Noty Beany*:—Of course you've got the gift of the gab, but I never thought you'd make a priest, you wan't cut out for it; but I don't think much o' the play-hactin' bizness. They is a low lot! In hour parts they used to get the linen in when the lakers come round. A smart young chap like you ought to sarve your Queen and country. It's a fine life when you're young; I know it, I've been through it. If He'd only bin a soger now, he'd never 'ave bin in this hole, for when a soger loves he rides away, and leaves his baggidge behind. A gentleman soger stands a good chance now, that is if he minds his hye, and looks hafter number one. You're nearly hold enough now. If not, put on a bit—say a year or two. Go down to Westminster and take the Queen's shilling, and you'll be a hossifer in a yere or too, and then I'll come and look hafter you.

"Good-bye; God bles̄ you,

"HOLD 'ARRY."

Dear old Harry! I often heard from him afterwards, but never a word from "Him" whom we both loved so dearly. What became of him? Had he found shelter in a faithful heart, or was he, as such men are wont to be, banned by bigots and fanatics and cast forth a wanderer and an outcast? I pray not, for her sake as well as his! One thing is certain, whatever became of him, two faithful hearts have always loved and cherished his memory.

Thanks to Harry's opportune help, I was enabled to clear my scot in Camden Town, to release two or three necessary articles from durance vile, and to obtain one or two "properties" requisite for my forthcoming engagement. Properties, I may explain to the uninitiated, are certain articles of dress, such as "tights," silk stockings, lace collars, hats, feathers, boots, shoes, gauntlets, wigs, etc., and a sword, which actors of that period had to provide for themselves.

At length I received official intimation of the meeting of the company, and as my outlay had caused me to run very short, I journeyed again to Windsor on foot. The carpet bag which contained my slender wardrobe was slung on my back and supported there by my sword, which I passed through the handle. It seemed a perfectly proper thing to do. Edmund Kean had done so before me, and I was proud to follow so illustrious an example. Nay, more, I broke my journey and my fast at Richmond, paid a visit to the little theatre, where Helen Faucit and Harry Howe interviewed the great little man, and strewed a sprig of laurel on his grave in the churchyard. At the sight I forgot my past troubles and

trials, and could only think of future triumphs. When I crossed the bridge which led to Windsor, there was some holiday going on connected with the Eton boys, and the town was all alive. I was soon settled in the vicinity of the Brocas with an old widow, who housed me for three and sixpence a week, for I meant to live on my income.

At the meeting of the company Tom turned up in gorgeous array. It was rumoured he had had a windfall, and he was all over money. Evidently he had neither forgotten nor forgiven the Marmaduke Magog business, and, confound him ! he didn't return my umbrella. My impression was that he lost it that night, and was so "tight" that he had forgotten all about it. The company were all very nice people, and were most kind to the poor novice.

On our opening night I became, for the first time, a victim to a malady which I have never since been free from—stage fright. As an amateur I derided the notion ; but now that I was about to become an actor, the responsibility impressed me so awfully that up to the last moment I was half inclined to cut and run.

The first piece was a drama by Albert Smith called *The Chertsey Curfew*, the great effect of which occurs in the belfry of Chertsey church. It is during the Parliamentary war. The heroine's lover is doomed to die at the hour of Curfew. She penetrates to the belfry just as the bell is about to strike, seizes the hammer, and, frantically clinging to it while it swung to and fro, prevents the bell from tolling, and by this means saves the hero's life.

Two or three years ago an American author utilised the same incident in a new and original (?) American drama, acted by an American company at our own Adelphi!

To return to our opening, I had a small but important part to play—a swashbuckler of a trooper who commences with a soliloquy. I stood at the wings trembling from head to foot, till my cue was given; then the prompter came and pushed me on the stage. When I reached the footlights, the house swam before me, my head turned round and round, there was an awful buzzing in my ears, my tongue was transformed into a lump of mahogany, which stuck in my throat. I stood and gasped and gasped, but deuce a word could I utter till Tom came on and stirred me up; then I found my tongue, rattled out what I had to say, and saved myself by getting a slight hand of applause at my exit.

For my lack of ability and experience I endeavoured to atone by attention and assiduity, and found my lines were cast in pleasant places. If any of the more important people “shied” at a part through short notice, it was relegated to me, and as I had a prodigious memory, I was at any rate always reliable for my “words.”

Here is a case in point. Miss Matilda Heron, who afterwards became an important personage in America, starred with us as a juvenile prodigy, enacting *The Irish Tutor*, *The Irish Lion*, and as an especial attraction for her benefit, *Richard the Third*! By some oversight the part of Radcliffe was omitted in the cast, and the over-

sight was not discovered till rehearsal (there was only one). Mr. Baker, our stage manager, called upon me to come to the rescue, and I stepped into the gap without hesitation. As I had never acted in the play in my life, or even seen it, the general opinion was that it would be impossible for me to be perfect in the text by night. Tom offered to back an adverse opinion by a bet of a guinea to ten shillings, and I accepted the challenge. The matter was left to the decision of the prompter, who declared that I was letter perfect ; consequently I won that guinea, and got it too.

Among other popular plays of the period we acted for a few nights (a remarkable occurrence for a town with so scant a population) a drama called *Shakespeare's Early Days*, which had been produced with some degree of success at Covent Garden by Charles Kemble, who himself enacted the titular *rôle*. I was cast for the Bard's friend and patron, the Earl of Southampton, and had to be decked out in gorgeous array. An indispensable property was a pair of silk tights. Tights I had none of any kind. I had actually never had a needle in my hand before, but I resolved to make myself a pair of tights. Taking one of my two pairs of white ducks, I cut and carved them as well as I could contrive to make them fit. They were so stiff and inelastic that I had great difficulty in getting them on ; I had no difficulty, however, in getting them off, for when I knelt to pay my *devoirs* to good Queen Bess, the wretched things split in every direction, and I bolted off the stage amidst yells of laughter.

Although the work was pretty hard, we found a

little time for relaxation, mostly on Sunday evenings, when little picnic tea-parties were improvised by the girls in one or other of the beautiful hamlets adjacent. The "boys" (we were all "boys and girls" then) provided the edibles, and the girls the tea-things, including the tea-kettle, with a spirit lamp—a new-fangled invention then. With our youth and animal spirits, there was a lot of innocent fun knocking about: "Hunt the Slipper," "Kiss in the Ring," etc. One evening, when we had had tea under Herne's Oak, and had grown tired of our usual amusements, a desire for practical joking got the better of some of the "boys." Being the youngest and greenest of the lot, I was selected as the victim, and should certainly have been victimised, had not one of the "girls" (a dear good creature) warned me in time. The joke was rather a clumsy one. A bet was made by our low comedian with the juvenile tragedian that he (the low comedian aforesaid) would take me away for five minutes and conceal two newly laid eggs about me in such a manner that it would be absolutely impossible for the tragedian to discover where they were hidden. The bet was for lemonade for the "girls," and old ale for the "boys," to be imbibed at Datchet on our way homeward. If the tragedian discovered the eggs, the low comedian had to pay the piper—or *vice versa*. Just as I was being led like a lamb to the slaughter-house, one of the girls whispered me, "Beware, John Orderly!" I immediately pricked up my ears, and when the low comedian ingenuously explained that, if I secreted the eggs beneath my shirt and under

my arms, it would be literally impossible for any one to discover them, I replied, "The idea is capital, but as I've never tried it, I should prefer you to show me how the trick is done."

"With pleasure. Allow me!" and he endeavoured to place the eggs under my arms.

"No, no!" said I. "I want a practical illustration. Show me how *you* do it."

"Certainly—thus! I take an egg and place it under my right armpit, thus. Now I take another and place it under my left armpit, thus; then keep my arms pressed to my side thus. Observe! you can't *see* them now, can you?"

"No! but you can *feel* them, can't you?" I replied, as I brought his arms down with a bang, smashing the eggs to smithereens, and playing old gooseberry with his linen and Sunday-go-to-meeting turn-out.

The biter was bitten on that occasion, and poor Johnny never heard the last of those scrambled eggs while I remained in the company.

The houses were not very good, and, as a natural consequence, the "Ghost walked" somewhat irregularly. Upon one occasion my manager paid me half-salary, and suggested that I should take out the balance in a pair of boots (misfits, which were too small for him), and I gladly availed myself of the suggestion.

Most of the members of the company belonged to the various London theatres, to which they returned at the end of the season. I was the only person without an engagement, and apparently likely to be without



one. The old man of the company was a crank, and took every opportunity of impressing upon my mind that I should never make an actor, and that if I ever did succeed I should be sure to be out of an engagement half the year round, and that during the other half I should never earn more than thirty shillings a week. *He* had never earned more, and where he had failed it was not likely I should succeed. I had almost begun to believe this old kill-joy, when one day there came a letter from Mr. William Robertson, manager of the Lincoln circuit, offering me an engagement at a guinea a week to join his company at Leicester in ten days' time.

At some personal inconvenience my manager kindly permitted me to go away a day or two earlier than the period stipulated in the bond. We parted with mutual regret, for he and everybody else (even the irascible old man) had been most kind to me; and so my first engagement ended.

Although the train left at six o'clock in the morning, the "boys" came to see me off, carrying my carpet bag for me, and bidding me good-bye and God-speed on my way to Leicester. To my astonishment, Tom, with whom I had not exchanged a word for the past month, joined us, and we glared at each other in silence all the way to Slough.

At last he burst out, "I want to speak to you! Look here, old chap! perhaps we may never meet again, so let's shake hands and part friends." We clasped hands. "I've been thinking of the row that night. No two ways about it, I had taken more

than I could carry, and I suppose I did lose your precious parachute, and ought to make it good; besides, you'll excuse my saying so, but you've got a shocking bad hat! They say old Robertson's a crank, and if you turn up in a tile like that, you'll get your billet before you open your mouth."

"I expect so," I replied rather ruefully.

"I suppose you're all right for your fare?"

"As far as Paddington, yes."

"No more?"

"Not at present!"

He gave a long, low whistle.

"But," I resumed, "I expect a letter in town."

(I had written Harry asking him to write to the Paddington or Leicester Post Office.)

"Expect my eye! I've been expecting ever since I was as high as my thumb, and, of course, something will turn up for me one of these days, but not till my old governor turns up his toes. Anyhow, I'm not going to see you stranded if I can help it, so here's a quid for the gingham." With that he handed me a sovereign.

"That'll clear your fare and leave you five bob for a four-and-ninepenny topper."

"Where in the name of Fate am I to get a hat at that ridiculous price?"

"At a shop next door to Drury Lane Theatre. If you didn't know it was a four-and-ninepenny touch, you might take it for a five-and-twenty bob Lincoln & Bennett! You've made up your mind to stick to this beggarly business? Well, I shall chuck it.

## My First Engagement

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'Tain't good enough for yours truly, so I'm going into the pork trade. I've an uncle in the business ; he's offered to take me into the firm, and I'm on. Good-bye! Good luck!

By-the-bye, Tom ultimately developed into the great pork-pie man, and made a colossal fortune. Every one to his trade—his was pork!

## CHAPTER VIII

### *MY SECOND ENGAGEMENT*

My Second Visit to Rugby—Among the Breakers with the Navigators—  
I arrive in Leicester—A Charming Young Lady—Am notified of  
my Opening Part—An Involuntary Sabbath-Breaker—I present my  
Credentials and report myself to my New Manager—That Unfortunate  
Hat causes most disastrous Results—The River, the Road, or the  
Regiment?—Enter Tom Robertson—The Dramatist of the Future—  
I am graciously vouchsafed a Month's Notice—Brother Edmund from  
the Monastery turns up—Mr. Sam Butler—A Remarkable Personality  
—Chums and Comrades—At the Expiration of the Month, I am  
re-engaged subject to Certain Conditions—We migrate from  
Leicester to Derby—My Sisters—Mother's Grave—Mr. Micawber  
(junior)—Last Interview with the Author of my Being—Arrival in  
Sheffield—Additions to the Corps Dramatique—My Opening Part—  
Taken out of the Hon. Mr. Derby—Called upon to go on in the Mob  
—Indignantly refuse, and am immediately dismissed!

THERE was no letter from Harry at Paddington.  
Fast as the 'bus could take me, off I went to  
Drury Lane and secured the wonderful "four-  
and-nine," literally three-and-nine (bandbox included),  
inasmuch as the shopman allowed me a shilling for my  
old hat. From Drury Lane I went to Euston, and  
thence took train for Leicester *via* Rugby.

That "four-and-ninepenny touch," as Tom called it,  
inspired me with confidence, for I knew I should  
be *point device* when I presented myself to my new  
manager.

## My Second Engagement

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It was a bright sunshiny morning, and as the train rolled rapidly along, I was in Elysium—after only six weeks, too! How many years had Edmund Kean striven and struggled and starved before he got a chance like this!

Engrossed in this delightful castle-building, I reached Rugby, where, it will be remembered, on the occasion of my former visit, I had slept under a haystack in a snowstorm. That dreadful time was past, never to come again, and before me the future dawned bright and clear—perhaps glorious.

Happy thought! I would get out and stretch my legs. It was the Saturday half-holiday. Railways were springing up everywhere like mushrooms. The platform was swarming with navigators, smoking, swearing, shouting, spitting, all more or less drunk—principally more so. I had a corner seat, and, to make sure of it, I placed my bandbox, containing my precious new hat, in the corner.

When I returned, five minutes later, I found the tub crowded with navigators, and one huge hulking brute, more drunk than the rest, had flopped down on my bandbox and smashed my beautiful topper as flat as a flounder!

When I went to take my place, this gentleman treated the matter as a good joke. Furious with rage, I pulled the drunken ruffian out and flung him on the platform before he had time to realise where he was. A general row ensued, amidst which the station-master and officials extricated me and the remains of my hat, popped me in a first-class compartment, and off we went.

At Syston Junction the navigator fraternity finished their journey. Swarming round my carriage, they swore they'd "limb me;" but they couldn't get at me, for the door was locked, and I reached Leicester in safety. But when I did reach there, I had also reached my last shilling, or, to be precise, my last sixpence. Off I went to the post office to inquire if there was a letter from Harry. Alas! there was none.

It was market-day, and the town was all alive. Although the season commenced on Monday, there was not a play-bill out, nor an announcement of any description. I had not been advised as to my opening part or parts, so I made my way at once to the theatre, then an almost new, and somewhat imposing, edifice in Horse-Fair Street. The doors were locked, and there was no one about from whom I could obtain any information whatever. Just as I had arrived at the conclusion that I had made a mistake in the date, and was turning away in despair, a bill-poster came up and began to post on the wall the announcement of the coming season: "Mr. Robertson has the honour to announce to the nobility, gentry, and inhabitants of Leicester," etc.

This was the good old flunkeyish style in which the advent of the players was announced by the managers of the period. The opening play was a Lyceum drama by Bayle Bernard, which I have never met since, entitled *The Farmer's Story*. There was a goodly list of names—the one, however, which attracted me most was "The Hon. Mr. Derby—Mr. Coleman, from the Theatre Royal, Olympic [very much

from the Olympic], Derby!" Singular coincidence that my opening part should be derived from "my assigned and native dwelling-place"!

The bill-poster was loquacious enough, but unfortunately totally ignorant of the movements of the Robertson troupe. He guessed they were in Oundle, or Stamford, or Peterborough, or Boston, or Lincoln. But the coach had come in from all those places; consequently there was no probability of the company arriving that night: possibly the "pub round the corner" might be better informed. Round the corner I went. The landlady, fat, fair, and forty, informed me that there were many letters *for* Mr. Robertson, but none *from* him, and there was no communication whatever for me.

This was a bad look-out. I had expected to have found a book of *The Farmer's Story*, or at least a part of the Hon. Mr. Derby, and it was my intention to have studied my part before I went to bed that night, which reminded me that I must set out and look for a lodging at once. After an hour's hunt, I found myself comfortably located in a couple of decent rooms at the modest honorarium of five shillings a week. I got a boy to bring my bag and luggage from the station—nearly half a mile—for a couple of pence.

It now became necessary to apprise my landlady that I had been disappointed in my remittances. She was a kind, motherly soul, and sympathised with the situation. More fortunate still, a new recruit in the shape of a charming young lady was a fellow lodger. The landlady introduced us. Both strangers in a strange place, we were glad of each other's society. My new acquaintance

was thirty years of age, perhaps a little more—I was sixteen, perhaps a little less; but I put on three or four years, and endeavoured to convey the idea that I was twenty or more.

By the time I had finished another letter to Harry, tea and mutton chops were being served in the front parlour. There was a whispered colloquy between the landlady and her lady lodger, and the young man in the back parlour was invited to join in the banquet. At first he stupidly refused, for he was famished with hunger; but when the young lady came herself, and would take no denial, he relented, and astonished her as much as he astonished those mutton chops.

The lady was ambitious. She had just left the Roxby Beverley's (the famous stock of comedians from whom my dear friends Sam, Harry, Bob Roxby, and William Beverley hailed), and was full of her "peaceful triumphs." She had a great store of play-bills and an abundance of anecdotes about old Mr. Roxby, Sam Roxby, and Harry Beverley; and so my first night in Leicester passed away pleasantly enough.

In the early morning I went to the "pub round the corner." Still no letter from Harry and no news of the Robertson troupe. The last train from Lincoln, however, was due at six o'clock. At eleven we went to the Catholic church; in the evening I was destined to be an unwilling Sabbath-breaker. At six I put in a second appearance at the "pub"—a detestable place to me at all times, more especially on Sunday. Here, with some difficulty, I found the prompter, a Mr. Norman, from whom I obtained the Prompt-book, and trotted home



to copy out my part, which was, as well as I can remember, that of a miserable masher of the period. Before I got to bed I was letter perfect, and my fair friend was kind enough to hear me go through my lines.

I slept little, was up at daybreak, and went for a long walk, going carefully and repeatedly over my part. A dreadful anxiety oppressed me: my impending interview with the autocrat of the Lincoln circuit was overshadowed by the condition of my hat. The "call" was for ten o'clock, and there was no time (even if I had had the money) to get my battered beaver restored to its normal shape. I went home to breakfast, and was on the stage sharp at ten to introduce myself to my manager.

I don't think we were either of us much impressed with the other. He was a tall, broad-shouldered, broad-browed, square-chinned, neutral-complexioned man of forty or forty-five, with fiery eyes, which seemed to be on the look-out for a pretext to become angry. His costume struck me as being rather eccentric, at any rate for morning wear: he wore a broad-brimmed, almost clerical hat, a black dress-coat and vest, white choker, with pepper-and-salt continuations. While I was taking stock of him, he was taking stock of me and—my hat!

I was modest and deferential; he was curt and dictatorial. He brusquely inquired how old I was, where, and what I had acted. Candour constrains me to confess that my answers were not entirely veracious. I added considerably to my years, and my

experience ; but evidently he was not impressed with either the one or the other, and he dismissed me abruptly with a vicious glance at my unfortunate beaver.

*The Farmer's Story* was what is called a "stock piece ;" consequently my scenes were the only ones rehearsed, and it was quite evident that the company, who knew their parts backwards, and had played them over and over again, wished the new-comer at Hong-Kong or anywhere but Horse-Fair Street. The rehearsal was so slipshod and perfunctory that it was enough to have upset an old stager, let alone a novice.

"Mrs. Robertson!" called the Prompter.

"Mrs. Robertson is looking out the checks. Read for her," grimly remarked Mr. Robertson.

"Gabble-gabble," commenced the Prompter—"gabble ! Now, sir, that's your cue : on you come from behind the centre arch."

"Where will the arch be?"

"Where will the arch be, Casson?" inquired the Prompter.

"Second grooves," replied the master-carpenter.

"It will be a drawing-room. Here is a chair ; there a table," continued the Prompter.

"But I don't see either the one or the other," I replied.

"No, but you will at night."

"Shall I?"

"Oh, yes! it will be all right at night."

Oh that "all right at night"! From that day to

this I've been fighting against it. I've killed it a million times, but it always comes to life again.

I take off my hat as I bid the Prompter, who is standing up for the heroine, "Good morning!"

"Mind you leave your 'at in the 'awl, sir!" says the Prompter patronisingly.

"But this is a morning call!"

"Morning or evening, it don't signify; a gentleman always leaves his 'at in the 'awl."

"Not always," I reply politely; "but if you'll kindly give me the cue, I'll try to get on."

"Gabble gabble—squeak. Cross to right, then to left and up centre. Mind you give Mrs. Robertson the stage: she wants plenty of elbow-room. Now, Mr. Rogers, if you please."

Mr. Rogers, a short, thick-set man of fifty, with an enormous head and a huge bull-neck, who was known for many years after at the Haymarket as a sound, sensible actor of old men and character parts, is the interesting hero, Stephen Lockwood. This gentleman sits upon me, warns me to give him the stage and to keep my eye on him, and begins to gabble and growl. I respond to the best of my ability, and am about to make my exit on the left-hand side.

"No, my good young man, not that way," interposes the adipose tragedian with dignity.

The "good young man" is intended to be patronising, but it is reassuring, for he calls me a man, at any rate.

"Which side is it, Norman?" inquires the great Rogers.

“Right hup-her hentrance.”

“Then I will cross in front to the left, and you, sir, go up to the right. No, no, not that way! Don't turn your back to the audience. Whatever you do, don't turn your back to the audience.”

Thus am I put through my paces by every one concerned, and then contemptuously dismissed. No one speaks a civil word or gives me a kind look, and, considerably crestfallen, I retire and watch the remainder of the rehearsal to see if I can learn anything.

This is the little comedy which takes place :

PROMPTER. Now, your song, Mrs. Este.

MRS. ESTE. Thank you! All right. A chord in G., Mr. Stannard, please, and keep the brass down.

(MRS. ESTE *warbles!*)

PROMPTER. Now, Miss Wright — Miss Rosina Wright. We are waiting to try your dance.

MISS WRIGHT (*from her dressing-room*). I'm putting on my practising things, Mr. Norman.

THE LEADER. Surely the whole band needn't be kept waiting while this London ballet-girl is putting on her skirts!

MISS WRIGHT. The London ballet-girl has got 'em on, you old bear! (*and on bounds the fair ROSINA, who was “always ROSY and always RIGHT”*).

Always susceptible to grace and beauty, I remain to admire the fair Rosina's pirouettes. We strike up an acquaintance, and commence a friendship which lasts for years.

At last the rehearsal is over and I am off.

When I get home, my fellow lodger, who is not in

the opening performance, is anxious to know how I have got on. We compare notes, and she consoles me by telling me this is "the rough break through which greatness must pass" on its way to glory.

Although I was not "on" until the second act of the play, I was at the theatre an hour or more before the doors were opened, and I was dressed long before the time of commencement. Had I followed that wretched Prompter's *ipse dixit* and left my "'at in the 'awl," I should not have come to grief as I did.

Just as the overture was about to commence, there was some difficulty about the gas, which went out, and left the house in total darkness. The audience were kicking up a row; and the manager was going about "like a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour," when, as my ill-luck would have it, at the very instant the lights went up, he came in contact with me—and my hat!

He had a poetic imagination and a copious vocabulary, by means of which he was enabled without effort to improvise a few florid compliments. Having taken my breath away by the vigour of his vituperation, he renewed the attack by stigmatising me as an impostor and a swindler, and demanded to know how I dared introduce myself into his theatre with such a hat! Fully conscious of the iniquity of my conduct, and convinced that I ought at least to be hung, drawn, and quartered for having attempted to obtain a guinea a week under false pretences, I beat an ignominious retreat into the green-room.

Unfortunately he pursued me there. Two ladies were there also; a further exchange of compliments of a

still more florid character took place, with the result that my worthy manager unexpectedly found himself on his back, while I was "going for him" with the poker!

Those two dear ladies (both young and beautiful then, both angels in heaven, I hope, now!) intervened and separated the belligerents; whereupon the manager retired, ordering me out of the theatre. The ladies took pity on my youth and misery, soothed and even caressed me, until at last I broke down, burst out crying like a child, and rushed from the theatre. Years after, whenever I went to "star" in Leicester, that very room was always allotted for my dressing-room, and, year after year, I never entered it, but I went through that dreadful scene again.

The night was dark and stormy; but, taking no heed of that, I walked on till I found myself on the banks of the river. The future seemed so hopeless that there were only two alternatives open to me—either to drop quietly into the water and end my troubles at once, or to enlist as a soldier. Coleridge and Cobbett had enlisted before me, so there was no lack of good precedents. My mind was made up: I would take the Queen's shilling on the morrow. Having arrived at this conclusion, I made my way home, slunk in unobserved, went hungry and supperless to bed, and cried myself to sleep. All this appears unmanly; but as yet I lacked years of manhood, and was but a poor friendless lad alone in my desolation.

In the morning, as I noiselessly crept downstairs, bent upon seeking the recruiting sergeant, I was confronted by my fair friend and fellow lodger, who had

been in the front overnight, and who demanded why I had not appeared as the Hon. Mr. Derby? There was nothing for it but to recount the whole miserable story. My listener was not only sympathetic, but indignant. She wouldn't hear of enlistment, and insisted on my joining her at a substantial breakfast of ham and eggs, hot French rolls, and coffee, which made me amenable to reason.

At this moment a thundering rat-tat came at the door, and "Mr. Tom Robertson" was announced. The future author descended upon me, with his father's compliments, intimating that for both our sakes it would be better for me to carry out my engagement, and to take the usual month's notice. A month—a whole month! The proposal was a Godsend, and I jumped at it.

Mr. Tom responded with dignity, "In that case you will do Paul in *The Bohemians of Paris* to-night. Here is a book; you had better get your part out and be at the theatre by twelve sharp for rehearsal. Till then, au revoir."

In my delight I had forgotten all about that wretched hat. Go without a hat I couldn't, and go with that thing I wouldn't.

In this emergency my dear kind friend came to my aid.

"Get your part out," said she, "and leave the hat to me!"

"But——"

"But me no buts. Off with you, and copy your part like a good boy."

When I had finished my part, in came my lady with a bandbox, and in the bandbox was a new topper!

She wouldn't listen to my protestations of gratitude.

"Let me see how it looks!" she said. "All right! there is a pair of gloves and a camellia for your button-hole. Now hurry up, keep a stiff upper lip, and the laugh will be on your side after all. Stay! I am going with you."

She was dressed like a duchess, and was as bright as sunshine. I took heart of grace, and we both made a favourable impression on the company.

*The Bohemians* was a new piece, and all the company groped their way both in the words and the business. I didn't do either. I rehearsed letter perfect, which staggered the old stagers, who, when we started fair, didn't have so much the advantage; in fact, while they were mumbling and stumbling over the words at night, I spoke mine. As to acting—ah! that is an art which isn't learnt in a week, or a year! Anyhow, finding me obliging and attentive, Mr. and Mrs. Robertson magnanimously condoned the scene in the green-room. Tom and I fraternised and became sworn chums. We had the same tastes and the same aspirations: he wrote poetry, so did I, though, mind you, we were both pretty bad—I scarce know even now which was the worst. We were to have written a play together upon a famous local murder; but the embryonic apostle of realism insisted upon having the murderer "turned off" by Jack Ketch on the George Barnwell scaffold with the new "drop," while I proposed "a cup of cold—poison" for his quietus. We couldn't agree as to the treatment,





*From a drawing by Mr. W. H. Kendal,*

T. W. ROBERTSON.





so our collaboration fell through. Notwithstanding, we both resolved to be great authors and great actors. Though he never became a great actor, he left his mark "upon the form and body of the time" as an admirable author.

Mrs. Robertson was a remarkably fine woman and an accomplished actress. Her Portia, Constance, and Helen Macgregor were about as good as anything that was done in those days. In Fitzball's drama of *Jonathan Bradford* the heroine goes mad. In this scene, when Mrs. Robertson's rich, reddish-golden hair streamed over her ample and majestic neck and shoulders, she reminded one of Carlo Dolce's famous Magdalen, while her acting was of the very highest order of excellence.

Although exacting enough with the members of his company about their costume, our worthy manager permitted himself any amount of license in that department. When enacting *King John*, the light comedian of the company declined to play Falconbridge, so Mr. Robertson stepped into the breach, literally in his breeches, inasmuch as he actually tucked his street trousers into his russet boots, and, thus accoutred, he flouted their majesties of England, France, and Austria, who were all armed *cap-à-pie*.

At the head of the company, which was both numerous and efficient, was Mr. Sam Butler, the tragedian, a remarkable and portentous-looking person of middle age, who stood some six feet four or more in his shoes. This gentleman hailed from a famous family of comedians who visited a circuit of small theatres in Yorkshire, comprising Harrogate, Knaresborough, Richmond, Ripon,

and occasionally, indeed, invaded York and Sheffield. Long afterwards Phelps told me that he served some of his apprenticeship with these good people, fulfilling one engagement with Mrs. Butler, the mother of Sam, in Sheffield, and another with Sam himself in York. "Sam" was at one time manager of the Old Olympic, where, indeed, this long, unwieldy tragedian, I have been assured, impersonated with infinite gusto the chameleon-like changes of Captain Feignwell in *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*.

He opened in Leicester as Hamlet, and a very ponderous but powerful and scholarly performance it was. He omitted (after the John Kemble fashion) all the early part of the famous soliloquy which ends Act II., and commenced with

I have heard  
That guilty creatures sitting at a play . . .

When he came to the lines, "The play's the thing," etc., he rushed to the table, snatched up a pen, and with "eyes in a fine frenzy rolling" began, *coram populo*, to write the lines "with which to catch the conscience of the king." This was considered by Mr. Robertson to be "an audacious and even idiotic innovation." Subsequently I tried it myself, but, finding it rococo and ineffective, discarded it, to see it afterwards appropriated by other actors, and characterised by many critics as being "a perfectly original and profoundly realistic innovation."

Mr. Butler's performance of King John, The Stranger, William Tell, Shylock, Robert Tyke, and Richelieu, to

my immature mind appeared to be of the highest order of excellence, and I have since heard the same opinion expressed by persons far better qualified to form an opinion than I was at that period.

*Apropos* of opinions, I always had the courage of mine, and was not always discreet in expressing them. Although most anxious to learn from "older and better soldiers," there were certain traditions of the stage against which I instinctively rebelled. For instance, it was laid down as an inflexible rule that we were never under any concatenation of circumstances to turn our backs to the audience. Being entrusted with the part of Rosencrantz on Mr. Butler's opening night, when Hamlet motioned me to move from the left to the right of the stage, I crossed rapidly, turning my back on the audience altogether as I bowed to the Prince, and made my exit.

"No, no!" exclaimed Mr. Robertson. "How often have I told you you must not turn your back to the audience! It is indecorous and disrespectful."

"Dis fiddlestick!" interjected Butler. "The boy is quite right."

"Well, if he's right, we're all wrong."

"We often are, but let us be right when we can," growled Butler.

Tradition dies hard.

At a later period, while playing Macduff to Macready at Bristol, when Rosse made his appearance in my great scene to convey the terrible news of the murder of my wife and children, I rushed over to him, and as I exclaimed, "My ever gentle cousin, welcome

hither," I clasped his hand in both mine. Mrs. Macready's manager and son-in-law, James Chute (an essentially modern-minded man!) interposed and raised the strongest objection to the hand-shaking, stating that it was unusual, that it imparted vulgar and commonplace realism to a great and lofty theme. He was really angry when I persisted in carrying out my views, and dubbed me "a young iconoclast."

Of all Mr. Butler's impersonations, the one which impressed me the most was Richelieu, and the one which impressed me the least was Don Cæsar—a truly funereal effort. Save Macready's, I think Butler's was the best Richelieu I have seen. I am under the impression that this distinguished actor made an appearance at Covent Garden with dubious success under the Kemble *régime*. It is, however, quite certain that he was a highly popular "star" at the minors. Although he failed to attain the highest honours of his craft, he was an actor of distinguished ability. That he was a scholar and a gentleman there could be no doubt.

Despite these gifts, through the instability of his temper and his hauteur and severity of manner, he failed to make friends. Every one feared, no one loved him. At the period of our acquaintance he was a martyr to a terrible internal malady, to which he ultimately succumbed. Poor gentleman! his end was a sad one. Those who are wont to associate the actor's career only with the glitter and glamour of his art are but too frequently oblivious of the obverse of the picture. Mr. Butler's last appearance was at the old Pavilion Theatre, where he had been engaged as a

special attraction to enact Pierre in *Venice Preserved*. He rose from his death-bed to fulfil this engagement. When he came upon the stage, gaunt and grim, the shadow of his former self, his great eyes glittering with the fierce light of fever, his cheekbones almost protruding from his skin, his squalid dress falling in festoons about his wasted form, his hose "a world too wide for his shrunk shanks," which tottered beneath him, a thrill of horror ran round the house. Indeed, it was a night of horrors, the recital of which came to me through Mr. Fred Phillips, the Jaffier of the occasion.

Poor Pierre kept up bravely till he came to the great quarrel scene with Jaffier in the fourth act; then, staggering forward, and, falling upon the neck of his quondam friend, in almost the words of Edmund Kean he gasped, "For God's sake, get me off! I'm dying!"

A brutal young cad, who did not comprehend the gravity of the situation, and attributed the breakdown to an erroneous cause, emitted a yell of derision, whereupon an old Jewish gentleman in the boxes sprang up, exclaiming, "Shame on you, you hounds! Shame on you! Remember what the man *was*, and now see what he *is*! Drop the curtain, Mr. Manager, drop the curtain!"

And so the curtain fell on the unfinished play, whilst the poor player was taken home to die.

Another tragedy actually occurred during the Leicester season. When the great "Splodgers" (as Tom Robertson irreverently dubbed our friend Rogers) had left us for the Haymarket, his place was taken by Mr.

George Wynne, a gifted but erratic actor, who had been one of the popular idols of the York circuit. There he attracted the attention of Elliston, who offered him an engagement for Old Drury at the period when the renowned impresario was 'twixt wind and water. Drury Lane fell through, but for him "there was a world elsewhere."

Horace Wigan told me that at or about this time his father and Robert William happened to be passing by the Surrey Theatre, where there was a bill up announcing—

THIS THEATRE TO LET, WITH IMMEDIATE  
POSSESSION. INQUIRE NEXT DOOR.

"To let!" said Elliston. "H'm! sublime inspiration! Old Drury the other side the water! New Drury this! Friend of my bosom, what is the state of the exchequer? What current coin do you possess?"

"Half a crown," replied the father of the Wigans.

"Quantum sufficit! Hand it over! I will take the theatre!"

And he did take it with that identical half-crown! Had it not been for that miserable coin, in all probability *Black-Eyed Susan* would never have been produced, and certainly George Wynne would not have met with the terrible misfortune which wrecked and ruined his life. While firing a pistol in Douglas Jerrold's drama of *John Overy*, the barrel burst and shattered Wynne's hand, rendering amputation necessary. This calamity so embittered his life that from this time forth he began to descend slowly but



surely, both socially and artistically. Before he joined us, he had been compelled, in some direful extremity, to pledge a highly ingenious artificial hand, which, when attached to the stump (terrible word!) of his arm, could scarcely be told from a real hand. We youngsters (Tom Robertson and myself) were wont to carefully prepare and stuff gloves of divers colours with cotton-wool for our poor friend's use.

He opened in Iago. Although he made a great mark with the audience, the management didn't take kindly to him. He was quick to resent a discourtesy, and, whenever he went wrong, flew to the poisoned bowl for nepenthe. One night, after something had gone wrong in the morning, he turned up considerably more than "half seas over." The play was *Thérèse, the Orphan of Geneva*, and he enacted Fontaine, the pastor. In the last scene, at the moment immediately preceding the fall of the curtain, there is a striking situation. The murderer Carwin, shrinking up the stage, is followed by Fontaine, who says, "Beware! beware! there is an eye upon you!"

"What eye?" demands the villain.

"The eye of Heaven!" responds the pastor, pointing aloft.

The poor drunken and demented creature, in pointing upward, struck off his dummy hand, disclosing that awful iron stump. The curtain fell amidst a yell of horror, and poor Wynne was there and then dismissed. Next morning, at daybreak, he had left the town, and what became of him hereafter I never knew.

After the tragedy comes the farce, and here is

another anecdote *apropos* of an iron hand. In Sunderland, some years ago, the Roxby company were acting Fitzball's drama of *Tom Cringle's Log*. In this play there is a part called Mat of the Iron Hand, a wrecker who has an iron hand with a hook attached to it to enable him to carry things. At the end of the first act of the play, the heavy father is in great trouble. In his despair he exclaims, "Lost! lost! What shall sustain me?"

To which the wrecker, extending his stump, replies, "The hand of your friend!"

The house was a very bad one, and the actors were disposed to play "booty," so the actor of Mat improved upon the author by replying, "The hand of your friend—with a *hook*!"

Mr. Mat had, however, reckoned without his manager, Mr. Sam Roxby, who happened to be looking on unseen from the box lobby. Slipping into the dress circle, he said, "By all means, but take your own hook, my facetious friend, and terminate your engagement this very moment!"

These random recollections are taking me away from Leicester and my experiences there. Our juvenile lady was Mrs. Ware, a young and beautiful woman, sister of Mrs. Buckingham White, of the Haymarket. Mrs. Henry Frazer (daughter of Macready's stage manager, "Peg Leg" Wilmot) was our principal vocalist; a very charming singer she was, and a lady of very fine proportions. When she appeared as Ixion in John Brougham's burlesque of that name, she was "a veritable divinity disrobed."

Mr. Henry Butler, afterwards the well-known theatrical agent of Bow Street, was our light comedian, and found great favour in certain eccentric parts, especially in *Monsieur Jacques*, in which he was said to give an accurate imitation of Morris Barnett, the adapter of the piece and the creator of the part in England.

Years after, Tom Robertson achieved probably his most pronounced success as an actor, in giving a fairly accurate imitation of Mr. Henry Butler.

We had also a genial Irishman, who called himself Mr. Eaton O'Donnell, and who enacted the *Happy Man* and other Irish characters with more or less success, and who was ultimately transplanted to the Grecian saloon, where he remained a fixture as long as he lived.

Mr. John Chute, of the *Bristol Chutes*, was one of our walking gentlemen; Mr. Royston, a tall, handsome young fellow, another; Mr. Harry Andrews (so long a member of the *Beatrice Company*) was the second low comedian; while the utility people of the company were Tom Robertson and myself. Mr. Alfred Faucit Saville (Helen Faucit's brother) was our old man, and a very good one he was; his *Hardcastle* and *Old Rapid* were capital performances, while his *Grandfather Whitehead* was not a long way behind his prototype and relative, Mr. William Farren. All these good people were public favourites; but the idol of the populace was Mr. Ben Ware, one of the most genuinely funny low comedians possible to conceive.

During the season Mr. William Harrison, accompanied by Miss Rainforth, Mr. Stretton, and Mr.

Borrani, came to perform *The Bohemian Girl* and other operas. As they brought no chorus, we had all to put our shoulders to the wheel, and a shocking muddle, I suspect, we made of the choruses; but "I dreamt that I dwelt in Marble Halls," "The Heart bowed down," and "When Other Lips and Other Hearts" took the town by storm. To be sure, the dilettanti of the period said that Miss Rainforth could sing but little, and Harrison scarcely at all, or, if he did, that he sang through his nose; but our public were not so critical, and the lady's beauty and the gentleman's ardour carried everything before them. Then Mr. Harrison's physique profoundly impressed the weaker vessels. The ladies thought he was a splendid man, and they were right. To this day I have never seen a man of his inches (save Edwin Forrest) so superbly built as Harrison. No sculptor, from Phidias downwards, has ever moulded limbs, which, from hip to heel were more symmetrically and majestically moulded than those of William Harrison.

During the engagement of these operatic celebrities they played *Guy Mannering*. In this piece, however, they took a back seat beside Mr. and Mrs. Robertson, who in *Dandie Dinmont* and *Meg Merrilees* eclipsed everybody. In this play I had to enact Franco, the Gypsy Boy, who has to be hauled about a good deal by Dandie Dinmont. Mr. Robertson pulled me about as if he rather liked it. I fancied he was taking it out of me for that little scene in the green-room on the opening night; but it was all in my part and in his, so I stood it like a lamb.

Upon returning home from rehearsal one day, my landlady informed me that an old friend was waiting to see me.

“Where is he?” I inquired.

“In the kitchen, rocking baby to sleep and nursing Tommy.”

“Nursing Tommy!”

“Oh yes! he’s such a nice gentleman; he made himself at home at once.”

Upon entering the kitchen, whom should I find but Brother Edmund, whom the reader may recollect as the guest-brother at the monastery! Sure enough there sat the little man rocking the baby and nursing Tommy. Dropping Tommy on the baby, Edmund sprang up, rushed at me, and embraced me *à la Française*.

“Dear boy!” he exclaimed, “it’s glad I am to see you once more!”

“So am I you! But what in the name of fate brings you here?” I inquired.

“Ah! take me away and give me something to ate, for I am famished, and I’ll tell you all about it,” he replied.

After we had discussed a dish of chops, with mealy potatoes galore, he related his experiences. It appeared that almost immediately after my departure, his father in Jersey had bequeathed Edmund a small fortune amounting to some £9,000. The noble youth went to Saint Heliers to administer the estate, and he administered it with a vengeance. Thinking he would like to see a little life, he commenced with Paris, where, in about six months’ time, he made a hole in five or six thousand

pounds. Then he went to London to economise, and in even less time melted the remainder of his patrimony, with the result that he found himself in Leicester literally without a shilling.

"And how do you live?" I inquired.

"Well, you see, dear boy," he replied ingenuously, "I play a good game at billiards, and when I meet a confiding youth, I'm all right."

"But when you don't meet one?"

"Why, then it's awkward; but, after all, God is good, and tempers the wind to this shorn lamb."

That night I took the shorn lamb to the play. There happened to be a good house. I had a fairly good part—the Duke Vivaldi in *Clari, the Maid of Milan*, and was gorgeously attired in crimson and gold. When the play was over, the lamb came home to sup with me.

After our frugal repast he said, "John, sure it's a lovely life! That magnificent apparel, those beautiful craythurs! Oh! it's a howling time ye're havin', ye young villain! And I'll go bail now you get at layst five pounds a week?"

Not liking to reveal the poverty of the land, I diplomatically replied, "Ahem! not more at present!"

"Are there any vacancies in your corps? D'ye think the manager could find a berth for a little chap like me?"

I didn't afford much encouragement to these dramatic aspirations; consequently I was not a little astonished when, next morning, Master Ned presented himself at the theatre, and with characteristic *naïveté* suggested

to our worthy manager that he should provide him with an immediate engagement at a small salary—say five or six pounds a week to begin with. The pantomime which followed was brief but expressive, and intelligible even to the meanest capacity, and the shorn lamb disappeared through the stage door like a flash of lightning—at point of boot!

A few days after this incident my month's notice expired. I appeared to have given so much satisfaction that I confidently anticipated that my engagement would be renewed. To my extreme disappointment, I found, when I presented myself at the treasury, my services were not further required. This was indeed a bad look-out! That night, however, Mrs. Robertson sent for me, and stated that she had talked the matter over with her husband, and that she had succeeded in persuading him to magnanimously forget and forgive, and, in token of forgiveness, he had consented to retain my services at the modest honorarium of twelve shillings a week—that is, if I chose to combine the duties of copyist with those I had already fulfilled! Had this proposal been made by Mr. Robertson, the matter would have fallen through there and then; but she was a woman, and I—I was only a boy, and knew not where to turn for aid or succour.

All my air-blown castles had faded into the mirage from whence they sprung, and I was stranded again at the very moment when I thought I was in sight of port. There was, however, no help for it, so in sheer desperation I accepted the munificent proposal! Next day I told Edmund the truth as to my impecunious position.

He had met "a confiding youth" the day before, and invited me to dine with him at the Three Tuns. After dinner I urged him to play the prodigal son and return to the monastery. He took my advice, and next day I saw him off. A few days afterwards I got a line to this effect :

"DEAR JOANNES,—I have had an awful wiggling ; but having done with the world and its wicked ways, I have returned to the fold. Come thou and do likewise.

"Your brother in God,  
"EDMUND."

P.S. (Private).—After all, there's bub and grub ; plenty to ate and little to do : come and help me do it, and who knows you might be prior one of these days if you'd only lay your mind to it !"

I didn't "lay my mind to it," and from that time to this I have heard no more of the shorn lamb.

At the end of the season in Leicester we migrated to Sheffield at our own expense. Having to pass through my birthplace, I called on my sisters, who were staying for their holidays with their generous benefactor, Lady B——. We paid a visit together to mother's grave, over which Mr. Micawber had erected a tombstone, with a grandiloquent inscription, at sight of which my heart swelled with indignation, and I turned angrily towards the railway ; but, yielding to their strong persuasion, was ultimately induced to call and pay my respects to the "author of my being." Although my sisters were girls of the highest order



of intelligence, they inherited mother's adoration of—of Mr. Micawber. I was not so appreciative, and did not display the amount of awe and reverence which he expected and, indeed, exacted.

Evidently something had "turned up," for he was in fine feather, and, it being after dinner, he was more than usually after-dinnerish.

"So, sir," said he, "you have at last deigned to report yourself! Don't be alarmed—my darlings. I'm not going to lose my temper with the fellow; I will speak quietly and temperately, though he has brought my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave and degraded a great historic race by becoming a beggarly play-actor. And your mother, sir, your poor mother," he continued, weeping copiously, "'tis well she's gone, though how the poor dear creature rests in her coffin under the circumstances I cannot understand! But there, there! d——n you, sir! you're my son after all—so there! There's a five-pound note to curl your hair with."

"To Hades with you and your five-pound note!" was my unfilial reply.

"Oh, hear him, my children! Hear the irreverent wretch! Take him away, take him away, and never let me see his face again!"

He never did, nor did I ever see his, nor his wretched five-pound note—though, God knows! I wanted five pounds badly enough just then.

The company at Sheffield was augmented by the addition of Mr. Henry Frazer and Mr. Birch, both men of considerable ability. Frazer was a spirited

juvenile actor, a capital scene-painter, and an admirable dancer and pantomimist. Birch (who, by the by, was a nephew of Alderman Birch, the pastry-cook of Cornhill) was an intelligent actor, and proved himself a man of taste by marrying my fair friend, who had endeared herself to me by her great kindness during the troubles at Leicester.

We opened at Sheffield to a crowded house with *The Heir at Law* and *The Dream at Sea*, both plays being very powerfully cast—Mr. Robertson, although by no means a brilliant general actor, distinguishing himself highly as Zekiel Homespun. For my part, I was broken-hearted when I found myself relegated to the pompous flunkey who has to make the portentous announcement, “My lord’s compliments, and he will be with you in the twinkling of a bedpost.”

I took heart of grace, however, when I found that my solitary line elicited the “roar” of the evening.

Next day I was handed the MS. of *Susan Hopley*, with instructions to make a copy thereof. Those who are familiar with my unfortunate caligraphy will readily understand the treat which was in store for the prompter. Suffice it that, after I had written the first act, I was not asked to copy any more manuscripts. My lines in Sheffield were not cast in pleasant places. In consequence of the reinforcements, every one went down a step, and I went down lowest of all. Every decent part I had played was now taken from me, and I was degraded to the level of a super. I bore the degradation as well as I could till one fatal morning. *The Farmer's Story* was destined to be unfortunate to me. After the opening

night in Leicester, the play had been repeated two or three times, and on each occasion I had enacted the Hon. Mr. Derby. Upon its repetition in Sheffield, I was unceremoniously taken out of the part, and called upon to walk on in the crowd as a Chawbacon. I refused, and was then and there dismissed indignantly.

So once more I was cast on the world, and in a situation more desperate than ever !

## CHAPTER IX

### *IRELAND AND THE KEANS*

A Good Samaritan gets me an Engagement in Ireland—I break my Journey at Liverpool—The Theatre Royal, Williamson Square—Benjamin Webster and Celeste and their Famous Company—A First Glimpse of Sims Reeves—The Amphitheatre and W. R. Copeland—Aboard the Boat for Belfast—The Luxuries of a Steerage Passenger—Am received with Open Arms by my New Manager and with Warm-hearted Hospitality by my Comrades—In Bacchi Plenus—Ludicrous Adventure—A Bibulous Comedian—Gets “Balmy” and “Toes the Line”—Seeing the “Commodore” off—Brilliant Engagement of the Keans—Charles and Ellen—Delightful Recollections of these Delightful People—End of the Season—Again left in the Cold.

AT the moment when I was thus stranded and hopeless, a good Samaritan came to my help in the person of Henry Frazer, the juvenile tragedian of the company, who not only procured me an engagement in Belfast with his relative Mr. Cunningham, but provided me with the means of getting there. He “cast his bread upon the waters,” but it came back “after many days.” The help he gave me in my need I was happily enabled to repay years afterwards with interest.

From Sheffield I went to Liverpool *en route* to Belfast, armed with a letter of introduction to Mr. Hield, the light comedian of the Theatre Royal, then under the management of Mr. Benjamin Webster and Madame Celeste. Upon my arrival on Monday, I found to my dismay the boat to Belfast did not leave till Thursday.

Having secured a bed at an adjacent tavern, I made my way to the Theatre Royal, Williamson Square. On leaving my card at the stage door, Mr. Hield came out to welcome me.

As we walked round the square we encountered two gentlemen in eager and excited conversation. One of them, a fair-haired young man, was evidently trying to soothe the susceptibilities of the other, a dark-complexioned young fellow, with a profusion of curling dark hair, a jet black moustache, and flaming eyes.

“Steady, my good fellow!” said the one.

“I won’t, I tell you—I won’t! If the old villain were here I’d knock his adjectival head off!” responded the other, punching an imaginary head as he passed us by. That was the first glimpse I ever caught of Sims Reeves, who was thus emphasising some difference of opinion between himself and his unappreciative manager.

Having welcomed me to dinner, Mr. Hield took me to the theatre to see “Her Majesty’s Servants,” as they were then called. The play was *Don Cesar de Bazan*, the title part of which was acted by Mr. Charles Pitt. Maritana was Miss Emmeline Montague, a beautiful and accomplished young actress, who shortly afterwards became the wife, and is now the widow, of my excellent good friend Compton and mother of a race of Comptons. The Lazarillo was Miss Charlotte Saunders. Those who remember this admirable but adipose actress when associated with Marie Wilton and Fanny Josephs, Ada Swanborough, Kate Carson, Jemmy Rogers, Johnny Clarke, and the rest of their brilliant entourage at the Strand, can

scarcely realise what a meagre, scraggy little creature she was when I first saw her. She had the figure of a farthing rushlight—straight up and down, while her legs, which afterwards developed into such substantial rotundity, at that time resembled two slender sticks of red sealing-wax. *Don Casar* was very well in its way, but the feature of the evening was *Charles II.*, with Pitt as the King, Hield as Rochester, and Charles Bass (without exception the best, the very best, actor of robust old men I have ever seen) as Captain Copp. Miss Rose Telbin, the sister of the great scene painter and a very beautiful young woman, was the Lady Clara, while Mary Copp (a certain Miss Gardener, who afterwards married some local big-wig) was a remarkably handsome girl and a very accomplished vocalist. Edward, the page, was enacted by Sims Reeves, the purity and beauty of whose style and the power of whose voice were even at that time phenomenal. To this moment I recall with the delight of a revelation his singing "The Pilgrim of Love" and a duet with Mary Copp, the burthen of which was "Deep in Love's Confiding Breast."

Next day I devoted to exploring the devious windings of Liverpool and the wonders of her shipping until nightfall, when I turned into the Amphitheatre, then under the management of Mr. W. R. Copeland, the brother of Mrs. Fitzwilliam, and brother-in-law to Douglas Jerrold. The performance was of a hybrid and extraordinary character. It commenced with the morbid but powerful tragedy of *Bertram*, with Mr.

Cathcart as the hero. The Imogen was a wan, slender, fair-haired creature whose very name I have forgotten. Poor lady! she and the weird piece itself haunted me many a day and night long after. *Bertram* was followed with scenes in the circle by an equestrian company, and the performance concluded with *The Irish Tutor*, with Miss Matilda Heron (my Richard III. of Windsor) as Terry O'Rourke. A pretty good dose for one night!

The money which I had saved up for my passage from Liverpool to Belfast having been devoted to the inexorable calls of an insatiable appetite, when the time arrived for embarkation, I found I had barely enough coin left for my steerage fare. Even then I had to leave one of my trunks behind as security for my small hotel bill. My baggage was slenderer than usual; like the Hon. Mr. Dowlas's, it might have been easily contained in my "blue and white pocket-handkerchief," if I had happened to have one. I had, however, retained my sword, which was neatly packed in a sheath of American leather cloth.

When I got aboard, I brought myself to anchor on a beam of Baltic timber which lay across the deck at the steerage end. Having had no dinner, I vigorously attacked a handful of apples which I had purchased with my last remaining copper. The passengers were mainly peasants and drovers. One fellow, a sailor, told me he had sailed round the globe repeatedly, and had been wrecked in every sea and on every shore, and that we stood a good chance of

being wrecked now. He carried a bottle of whiskey and a huge lump of Cavendish, and perpetually urged me to take a swig of the one and a chaw of the other.

Just as we were leaving the Mersey, one of the engineers or stokers emerged from below. Whether my sword really conveyed the idea that I was connected with the military profession, or whether it was merely the natural politeness of an Irishman, I don't know, but he opened fire with, "Bad cess to it! but it's a dirty passage we'll be havin'."

"Wasn't I afther tellin' you so, mate?" interjected the sailor.

"Have you got a berth, captain?" inquired the engineer.

"I am not a captain and I haven't got a berth," I replied curtly.

"Well, if you're not a captain now, you will be one by-and-by. It's aisy seein' that wid half an eye, and it's not for the likes o' you to be on deck this woeful night. Sure, you'll wake up and find yourself a dead man in the morning! Betther have my berth—it's the best in the ship. Ye shall have it for half a crown."

"My good fellow," said I, "I haven't half a crown in the world."

"Never mind, your honour; sure, you'll pay me when you get to Belfast."

"Well, if you like to put it that way."

"Of coorse I do. Keep on deck as long as you can, and at nightfall I'll come and take ye down



below"; and off went honest Pat, leaving me with the sailor, who continued to spin Munchausenish yarns about his adventures by sea and land.

At first I listened with interest; by-and-by I ceased to be interested, then I lost the thread altogether. Presently the boat began to rear up on end as if it were intent on tumbling over me and squashing me to infinite nothingness; then it sank as if it meant to go down to the bottom of the deep; then——!

When I came to, the sailor was dancing a hornpipe and singing, "Cease, rude Boreas, blustering railer!" Evidently he had his cargo aboard.

"Cheer up, mate," says he; "sure Nelson himself was always sick when he went to sea. It's nothin' when you're used to it. Have a nip or a chaw now."

"Only lift me up and drop me over the side!" I gasped.

"Divil a bit! Just you go down abaft the binnacle and have a chunk of fat pork and pease pudden, and ye'll be as right as rain."

"Fat pork—o-h! o-o-oh, you beast!" and off I went again!

It was now dusk, and the storm was rising. Presently a sympathetic voice inquired, "Is it there ye are, captain?"

"Yes, I'm here," I feebly responded. "Can't you stop this infernal thing and put me ashore?"

"Och, sure, ye'll be ashore in the mornin', jewel!"

"If we don't go down to Davy Jones's locker to-night," interposed the sailor.

“Divil a fear! But come! it's time to be gettin' to your berth.”

With that he flung me over his shoulder as if I had been an empty coal-sack and shunted me down below.

Upon arriving at his cabin, he hoisted me into the topmost bunk, where I alighted atop of some one of opulent dimensions who happened to be there already. This “some one” turned out to be a vigorous person of the opposite sex, who promptly deposited me on my back, rousing the whole place with cries of “Help—help—murder!” These were the last sounds I heard for a considerable period—inasmuch as, in coming in contact with the cabin floor, my head was nearly split in two, and every bone in my body almost shaken out of joint. When I returned to consciousness, the good old soul whose territory I had innocently invaded, was nursing my head in her lap, bathing it with warm water, and administering alternate sips of coffee and whiskey.

The storm was now subsiding, and I began to recover gradually. When at length I became capable of understanding what had occurred, I was informed that the berth had been let twice over, once by my man, and once by his mate.

“Sure, ye couldn't help it, poor boy!” said my kind nurse, “and it's ould enough to be your mother I am, anyway. But there, have another nip and ye'll be betther by-and-by.”

“By-and-by” is easily said. As I got better from one form of this infernal malady, another supervened,

and the stench from the engine-room became so intolerable that I crawled upon deck, and there I lay shivering and more dead than alive, till we reached Belfast in the morning.

Pulling myself together and making myself as decent as I could, I made the best of my way to the theatre, and presented my credentials to my new manager, Mr. Cunningham, who received me very graciously, introducing me to his wife—a very charming young lady—and to the entire company. Every one welcomed the young stranger with effusion. Indeed, I had a dozen invitations to dinner there and then. Two young fellows, who were afterwards famous as leading actors at the minors, insisted on bearing me away in triumph to their diggings, where they feasted me right royally upon delicious pork steaks smothered in onions, accompanied by mealy “praties” bursting out of their jackets. I mention the menu to illustrate the difference which exists between now and then. The famous Joseph Biggar was then but a beginner, and the trade which he and others afterwards developed was in its infancy. Recently I have seen, at Matterson’s in Limerick, pigs enter the abattoir pork and come out bacon; but at the time of which I speak, the process of curing and preparing was so imperfect, that tons of valuable stuff now utilised for edible purposes were cast aside as offal, and so it came to pass that my friends assured me that our sumptuous repast, consisting of upwards of three pounds of the most delicious cuts from the spare-ribs, cost but twopence-halfpenny!

It was upon this occasion that I became acquainted

for the first time with a jug of Irish punch. I have never tasted ambrosia ; but if the nectar of the gods be more delicious than this delectable compound, why, then, their godships must have been well served in Olympus.

My new acquaintances arranged for me to have a bedroom at their place and to share their sitting-room and their meals, and indeed made me as welcome as if I had been a brother. I had not only never met these good fellows, but I had never even seen or heard of any member of the company save only one, the lady whom I saw enact Malcolm in the Midlands five or six years before. Here she was, with her horse-face (there could be no doubt that was her own !), and I found myself speculating as to whether the other appendages were her own or whether they were borrowed for the exploitation of Malcolm.

The work of the theatre was incessantly laborious, inasmuch as the programme was changed nightly from tragedy to comedy, drama, or musical farce. Many of the people, however, were familiar with the plays, while Mr. Sydney Davis, our leading man, knew something about everything, and was guide, philosopher, and friend to us youngsters. Highly popular as he was in all the great provincial centres, this gentleman never acted in London except one short engagement at the Marylebone, and yet he was beyond all doubt one of the most accomplished and versatile actors, and certainly the greatest "cormorant" in business I have ever met. During this engagement he played Richmond, Macduff, Iago, the Ghost, Dogberry, Sir Frederick

Blount, Lewson, and Colonel Briton. Subsequently I saw him do Claude Melnotte, Hamlet, Risk in *Love Laughs at Locksmiths* (with the original music), Goldfinch (*Road to Ruin*), and Bagnollet (*Bohemians*), most admirably. His Sir Peter Teazle was the best after William Farren; while Damas, Polonius, Robert Macaire, Salamenes, and Château Renaud were as well acted by him as they have ever been acted within my recollection. To his accomplishments as an actor he added great facility as a writer and considerable skill as a stage manager. *Apropos* of which, during my last engagement at Newcastle-on-Tyne, he gave me a comedy in three acts called *Passing through Fire*, which some ingenious gentleman has since appropriated. The play was adapted from the German of the Princess Amelia of Saxony, and, knowing that my old friend Palgrave Simpson was a great authority on the German drama, I asked his advice about the adaptation. Having carefully read it, he said, "It's capitally done, but it isn't strong enough for three acts; besides which, I've already done it in *one*. In point of fact it was the first piece I ever produced," and going to the bookshelf he handed me a copy of a charming little comedietta entitled *Poor Cousin Walter*.

"It's worth telling how I got that piece done," he continued. "I had tried everywhere, and, of course, failed everywhere, when at length a mutual friend gave me an introduction to Leigh Murray, who at that time was confined to the house with a virulent attack of quinsy—so virulent that it was expected to prove fatal. Now Leigh and I were neighbours in Brompton,

and I passed the crossing opposite to his house daily. The sweeper was a poor cripple, and I always dropped him a copper. This operation, combined with my peculiar appearance, my beard, my swarthy complexion, my cloak, and the sombrero which I affected in the winter, attracted the attention of the Murrays, who christened me the 'Benevolent Brigand.' Well, when I called to present my letter of introduction, Mrs. Murray, who came herself to receive me, could scarcely refrain from laughing in my face.

"'Excuse me one moment, sir,' said she, as she ran upstairs.

"'Who do you think the new dramatist is, my dear?' she asked Leigh.

"'Don't know,' he gasped, for the poor fellow could scarcely articulate a word.

"'Why, whom but the "Benevolent Brigand"!' "

"The idea so tickled Leigh that he burst into a roar of laughter, which burst the quinsy, saved his life, enabled him to play *Poor Cousin Walter*, and gave me my first introduction to the stage."

Our work at Belfast left little leisure for relaxation. After my wont, however, I availed myself of every spare moment to look round and see what was to be seen. The theatre was an ill-contrived, incommodious building, which, with slightly increased prices, could hold on special occasions £120. Usually it was the £20 without the £100. There was a decent wardrobe and a fair stock of scenery, and the pieces were mounted without pretence, but with a good deal of propriety.

Belfast itself appeared to consist of one large street

surrounded by a congeries of slums. It was, however, improving even then, and has continued improving daily ever since. What jarred upon the Southern ear was the strange accent, compounded of a local *patois* in which Scottish predominated everywhere over the native Hibernian. What struck me even more than that, was the openly avowed contempt with which the invader regarded the native Helot, and the hatred with which the latter viewed the interloping alien. Rows occurred continually between the rival factions. When time permitted I used to stroll down to the dockyard on the chance of seeing "a bit of a ruction" during the dinner-hour, and rarely or ever was I disappointed. Your native Irishman dearly loves a fight, and the Scottish invader was always prompt to respond; hence "bloody noses and cracked crowns" were always to be had for the asking. In that respect Belfast has not improved: although now a thriving palatial city, and the first place of business in the sister isle, sectarian bigotry and political animosity are as rampant to-day as they were half a century ago.

One of our first "stars" was Denny Leonard, the comedian (whom I had previously seen at the Haymarket as the Irish Attorney), and who now appeared in *The Irish Ambassador*, *His Last Legs*, and *Rory O'More*.

Strange to say, our next "star" was Collins, another Irish comedian, who was believed to have been a cook in the employment of a distinguished nobleman, who, attracted, it is said, by the quality of his *chef's* voice, induced Osbaldiston (then lessee of Covent Garden) to

afford the ambitious cook an opening in Fitzball's *Paul Clifford* (founded upon Bulwer's novel of that name), in which the *débütant* took the town by storm in *Hurrah for the Road!* Subsequently, he struggled with Leonard for the mantle of Tyrone Power, which, ill-natured people said, was big enough to smother the pair of them! Leonard, who, by the way, was a real live Irish attorney, ultimately returned to his original vocation at Cork, where he enjoyed a large practice, and Collins, who, when I first met him, was a dashing, handsome fellow, returned from America after a long interval of years to find himself forgotten by the fickle public of which he had once been the idol.

During my flying visits to town thirty years ago or more I used to meet this gentleman nightly at the Café de l'Europe, prematurely old, querulous, discontented, and almost broken-hearted at finding the door of every theatre in London closed against him.

The great event of the Belfast season was the engagement of the Keans. Their advent reminds me of a ludicrous occurrence which took place the very night previous to their arrival. It being at that time impossible to obtain an audience on Saturday, according to custom, the theatre remained closed on that night. *Apropos*, when the Liverpool and Manchester theatres were first under the direction of Beau Lewis, the Liverpool theatre was open five nights in the week; the sixth, the Saturday, the company migrated to Manchester, which for a considerable period was the *only* night the theatre was opened in Cottonopolis! In



my young days the Bath and Bristol theatres were conducted in a similar manner—Bath, formerly the centre of the fashionable world, being open *only one night in the week!* The Birmingham theatre and the theatres of the Worcester circuit were always closed on Saturday. “Other times, other manners” with a vengeance. Manchester has now four theatres open every night—Liverpool the same; Bath is open nightly; the Worcester circuit is disbanded, but every town in it has a new theatre, and every theatre is open nearly all the year round.

To return, however, to my story: the old man of the company had formerly been a captain in the Navy, and having upon one particular occasion disported himself as Sir George Thunder (*Wild Oats*) while considerably more than “half seas over,” was summarily dismissed! Every one was sorry for the “Commodore,” who was a genial, gentlemanly old fellow, and no man’s enemy but his own. He had fallen on bad times, so a small purse had been subscribed; and we all went to wish him Godspeed on his way to Liverpool. Prominent among those who impressed upon our old friend that “every inordinate cup was unblessed” was our prompter, Mr. A——, who afterwards became factotum to my friend Benjamin Webster at the Adelphi. The pangs of parting, however, induced A—— and others to emphasise their regret with more than one farewell cup, with the result that by the time the boat had steamed out of the harbour, many of our party were more or less elevated.

A——, who was the soul of hospitality, invited some

half-dozen of us to a banquet, improvised, as usual, from pork steaks, onions, and praties. After the pork came the poteen, which was as insidious as it was delicious. Some of the guests became "o'er all the hills of life victorious"—our host more especially. At length some one proposed a ramble. When our hot heads came in contact with the cool night air, our animal spirits got the better of us. While laughing, singing, and swaggering along, as ill-luck would have it we came in contact with an officious and insolent policeman. One word led to another; the limb of the law laid his hand on me; the old Adam got the better of me, and I promptly landed Mr. O'Peeler in the gutter. As soon as he could recover himself, he began to give the alarm by hulloing blue murder and hammering the pavement with his stick.

Instantly every pavement in Belfast responded to the signal. Discretion appeared now the better part of valour, and there was a general cry of "Deuce take the hindmost!" as we skedaddled in various directions. Every one escaped except poor A——, who ran right into a patrol of police, and was promptly hauled off to the lock-up, accompanied by our original assailant. He glibly recapitulated his wrongs to the chief constable, who, fortunately for A——, was an intimate personal friend of Mr. Cunningham's.

"Aisy now—aisy, Michael Healey," interposed the chief. "Is this the man that knocked ye down?"

"I'll not be afther sayin' that, sir. No! 'twas a young devil's clip in a light Chesterfield; but if I could only catch a howld of him——"

“That’ll do. Now, sir, what have you got to say to the charge of being drunk and disorderly?”

“I am not—hic—drunk!” indignantly hiccupped A——. “Never was—hic—drunk in my life. Give me a chance, and I’ll—hic—prove it.”

“How, sir—how?”

“Draw a line across the floor, and I’ll—hic—toe the mark!”

The chief, who was a bit of a wag, rather enjoyed the fun of the thing, and directed two of his men to draw a chalk line across the floor of the drill-shed. A—— pulled himself together, put on a quarter-deck stride, on which he somewhat prided himself, and began the process of toeing the line. After various ineffectual efforts, he reached the middle of the room, lost his perpendicular, and cannoned heavily on the floor. Alas! he carried the sign of that experiment on his nose to the end of the season. The chief was a real good fellow, for he had the wounded organ carefully attended, and packed poor A—— home in a cab.

That was a useful object lesson, and from that day to this I have never succumbed to Bacchus. Slight, however, as was my indulgence, I had a dreadful head next morning, and felt anything but myself even on the day after, when I had to confront Mr. and Mrs. Kean in *Richard III*.

These distinguished people were then at their zenith. Excepting Charles Mathews and Mario, they were the least bumptious and affected people in the artistic world. In society they were affable and approachable; and in the theatre, although strict disciplinarians, they were

amiable and complaisant. He would have been a bold man, however, who attempted a liberty with Charles Kean, for most assuredly the hand of iron would have been immediately felt through the glove of velvet. It was not customary then to travel, as is now the case, with an entire company; hence our labours during this engagement were absolutely Herculean.

Looking back on Kean's programme, even after all these years, its extent and variety amaze me. During the eight or nine nights of their engagement, they produced *Richard*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Love*, *Much Ado*, *Money*, *The Gamester*, and *The Wonder*; the last two for their benefit. Of course, these works could never have been got through at all save for the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Kean did not require to rehearse their own scenes (*i.e.* scenes which were entirely confined to themselves), and had not the majority of the company been experienced and accomplished actors.

It was terrible drudgery, however, for every one, from the stars downwards. Our rehearsals commenced daily at ten and lasted until four, and sometimes even later. By the time we got home to "tea-dinner," and had arranged our "properties," etc., it was almost time to get back again to commence the performance. It was a labour of love, however, to do whatever we could to help the Keans, not only because it was our duty, but because they made our duty delightful by their grace and charm of manner. I have met persons since, and in high places, too, who rarely attended a rehearsal, or if they did, would keep an entire body of people waiting for an

hour or two, and when at length they put in an appearance, never deigned to offer an apology for their insolence. Obviously this sort of thing could only obtain through the supineness of managers or the servility of actors, who, by their sycophancy, condoned this social indignity and artistic outrage.

The Keans were, however, the first on the stage at rehearsal, and the last to leave it. As for me, I didn't want to go home, morning, noon, or night. I never left the wings for a single moment. My delight was unbounded, and my pleasure enhanced by my wonder, as I beheld each play take form and shape beneath the master-hand. The process reminded me of the story in *The Arabian Nights* where the imprisoned Genie emerges from an iron pot on the seashore, and dilates into the form and proportions of a Colossus. It seemed to my inexperienced mind simply amazing that one head could not only contain the flood of knowledge which Kean poured forth on every subject connected with the text, the costumes, and the "business," but that at every interval occasioned by the setting of a scene, etc., he could unbend, and tell the most amusing stories with the greatest zest.

Both he and his wife were capital *raconteurs*, and we were eager and delighted listeners to their overflowing *répertoire* of original and amusing experiences. Their regard for each other was beautiful to witness: he was profoundly attached to her, and she idolised him.

She used to say with the most perfect *naïveté*,

"When my Charlie was a boy, he was the ugliest lad I ever met : but I could never see his ugly face for his beautiful gig lamps of eyes." To which he responded, "And I could *dever* see yours, *Delly*, because of your beautiful *dose*." "And you could not see much of that, dear, for I was always falling down and breaking it and coating it with scale armour."

That nasal organ must have had an Antean quality of recuperation, inasmuch as its contact with its mother earth had apparently not reduced its somewhat exuberant dimensions by the breadth of a hair.

Although approaching maturity, Mrs. Kean was a finely preserved and splendid woman of more than middle height. Certain natural advantages, in which she took a not altogether inexcusable pride, were very conspicuous in Rosalind, in Viola, and in Ion, in all of which parts she still presented a comely and statuesque appearance. A well-shaped head was covered with a profusion of light brown hair ; delicately pencilled eyebrows surmounted large, beautiful hazel eyes ; while her well-cut ruddy lips set off to advantage two rows of dazzling white teeth ; and, to crown all, "her smile was sunshine and her voice was music."

As to Kean's *personnel*, his face was merely redeemed from being positively ugly by the splendour of his eyes. His head was large and covered with a thatch of very coarse straight black hair, which he wore very long. His brow was majestic and imposing. His mouth and chin were firm and well cut ; but his nose was of so irregular an order that



CHARLES KEAN AS HAMLET.



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I really do not know how to describe it. Although his figure scarcely approached the middle height, it was so muscular, so symmetrical, and so admirably balanced that one ceased to wonder at his being captain of his crew at Eton. His neck was like a pillar of ivory, his chest was broad and expansive, his waist slender, while his legs—well, they were more elegant than sturdy, with perhaps a slight suspicion of the parallelogram inherited from his father.

Charles moved with ease, grace, and distinction, and, despite his plebeian features and his long hair, at all times and in all places impressed one with the idea that he was a gentleman. I was particularly struck with this distinguishing and all-pervading characteristic in his Evelyn. In parts of this character Kean succeeded, despite of nature, for he had a kind of frog-in-the-gutter voice, and usually spoke as if he had a cold in the head; besides which, he had two or three vocal eccentricities, which he could never surmount or even control. For instance, he could not pronounce the consonants "m" and "n."

In the first scene with Jarvis in *The Gamester* he begins by inquiring, "Well, Jarvis, what says the world of me? I'll tell thee what it says. It calls me a false friend, a faithless husband, a cruel father—in one short word, it calls me *Galester!*" In *Shylock* he was wont to say:

You take *by* life

When you do take the *beans* whereby I live.

But his most unfortunate slip occurred in the last line of *Money*, where Evelyn says that, in order to enjoy

the good things of life, we require "plenty of money." In this situation Kean always brought the curtain down with a roar by sarcastically remarking that the one thing necessary to complete our happiness is "plenty of *putty!*"

Despite these drawbacks, he was so earnest and sympathetic, so graceful, so picturesque, and, above all, so gentlemanly, that he rarely or ever failed to hold his audience. As for myself, being a youthful iconoclast, I was more impressed by his delightful personality and his remarkable skill as a stage manager than by his ability as an actor.

He opened in Cibber's adaptation of *Richard III.*, the costumes, arms, and armour of which he brought from Drury Lane, and very authentic and splendid they were. We had only one rehearsal of this play, and from ten in the morning until six at night he never left the stage, nor did we either. Richard was said to be his "crack" part; but I had the audacity and the bad taste to think it a "penny plain and tuppence coloured" performance. Yet how admirably he commenced it! Indeed, up to the end of the second act he was natural, refined, elegant, and insinuating. After that, it was all scowl and shrug, start and strut, fret and fume. His mixture of shout and shriek of exaggerated grimace and gesture, in the "Flourish trumpets! Strike alarum drums!" speech reminded me more of Mr. Punch's *rooty too* than the tone of high command of the last of the Plantagenets. Yet in the very same scene his

Off with his head! So much for Buckingham!

was the perfection of stage trickery. Then he fought like a bull-dog and died like a Briton, and brought the curtain down with thunders of applause.

His Macbeth had splendid and picturesque moments, more especially in the last act. During the performance of this play, Rickards, who afterwards became a popular star at the minors, enacted Seyton. Being "a fellow of infinite jest," he was occupied in telling funny stories in the green-room when he ought to have been on the stage in the fourth act. There was a "dead stick," and Kean was furious. He prowled up and down the stage like a tiger, growling, "Where is the brute? Send him on, that I *bay* kill him!"

After a prolonged delay, Mr. O. Seyton appeared.

"What's your Grace's will?" he inquired in great trepidation.

"Saw you the weird sisters?" fiercely inquired Kean.

To which Seyton ought to reply, "No, my Lord." But with a desire to make matters agreeable to the irate tragedian, he replied, "Yes, my Lord!"

Quite taken off his balance, Kean gasped, "The d——l you did! Where are they, then?"

Utterly unmanned, the wretched Seyton replied, "I'll show your Majesty if you'll deign to step round the corner!"

Of course, not another word of the scene could be heard; but when they made their exit, Kean let fly and anathematised Seyton.

That gentleman was, however, equal to the occasion.

"Although I admit that I am to blame," said he, "yet the fault was yours, sir."

"Bine, sir—bine!"

"Yes, sir. I was standing at the wing looking at the scene, when you magnetised, dazzled, and blinded me by the effulgent light of your eyes."

"Bless my soul! you don't say so?"

"Yes indeed, sir."

Kean, whose weak point was vanity, relaxed into a smile as he replied, "Well, don't do it again, dear boy, because you flummuxed me, and I can't bear to be flummuxed."

As for his Othello, Charles' manager, the late Doctor Joy (who had a vivid recollection of the elder Kean), assured me that he once saw Charles play the valiant Moor at Old Drury, and that he was equal to his father at his father's best. Whatever Charles might have been on that occasion, the only time I ever saw him attempt the part he made a terrible mess of it. He had just heard a bogus report of the alleged death of his intimate friend Murray, the Edinburgh manager, which somewhat unhinged him. He, however, got through his first scene without difficulty; but when he came to the Address to the Senate, he had barely uttered the first line, "Bost potent, grave, and reverend sigbors," when his memory failed him altogether.

He inquired anxiously of me (I was the Cassio), "What is it?"

In the innocence of my heart I responded, "What is what?"

"The word! the word!" he replied.

"Which word?" I ingenuously demanded.

“Why, the word I want!”

“But,” said I, “I don’t know which word you *do* want!”

Mrs. Kean and the prompter both saw something was wrong, and they each tried to prompt the forgetful Othello from the wings, but in vain. At last a luminous idea occurred to me. I whispered the last line of the address; he accepted the suggestion, and, boldly cutting out a hundred lines or more “in one fell swoop,” exclaimed:

Here comes the lady—let her witness it.

Whereupon the entrance of the gentle Desdemona got us out of our immediate difficulty.

Next day he talked over the matter complacently enough, and quoted the story of T. P. Cooke, who, after playing William in *Black-Eyed Susan* two or three thousand nights, broke down at last. In this emergency one of the “Gods,” who knew the play by heart, prompted the gallant tar, who in publicly acknowledging the obligation, remarked, “You see, messmates, a man’s memory can’t last for ever!”

Kean went on to state that on his first appearance in town as Young Norval, he stood trembling and irresolute at the wings until Harry Wallack fairly pushed him on the stage; and when he got there he was so utterly confounded by the warmth of his reception that at first he could not articulate a single word.

He also cited another remarkable story of his sudden loss of memory. The first time he ever played Claude Melnotte he broke down in the description of the

palace by the Lake of Como, and insisted ever after on the prompter standing, prompt-book in hand, in the second entrance, to the right of the audience, keeping time with Claude, or rather preceding him, line by line. During an engagement in Liverpool he acted *The Lady of Lyons* three or four times. For the first three representations the prompter was at his post regularly, and all went smoothly; on the last night, however, he was unfortunately called away. Claude commenced his description as usual with the words:

*Day, dearest, day,*  
If thou wouldst have me paint the——

At this moment he fixed his eye on the spot where the prompter should have been, but found him not.

The Prince of Como paused, and tried back, saying:

If thou wouldst have me paint——  
I say, if thou wouldst have me paint——”

Then he collapsed utterly, exclaiming audibly to Mrs. Kean, who had in vain attempted to prompt him, “It’s *do* use, *Delly!* that d——d prompter has flummuxed me!”

In the old times country audiences were as familiar with the standard plays as the actors themselves; indeed, it is upon record that in his youth, when Kean broke down in the last act of *Macbeth* at Newcastle-on-Tyne, the “King of the gallery” “gave him the word” in the euphonious dialect of the district, and that Charles readily accepted the help of his rough and ready prompter, bowing his grateful acknowledgment—an act of courtesy which quite enlisted the sympathies

of the Tyneside folk with the young tragedian. Years afterwards, when he played Wolsey in the magnificent production (which I saw the first night) of *Henry VIII.* at the Princess's, he suffered more from nervousness than he had ever done, and it was alleged that the two young girls who followed as pages in his train were carefully taught the words of Wolsey, so that, in the event of his breaking down, they might prompt him.

His Hamlet, despite some old-fashioned trickery (said to be derived from his father), was a very fine performance, and even the tricks were done with an ease and elegance which disarmed criticism.

Absurd as it may appear in description, nothing more picturesque or striking could be imagined than his actually sliding down the stage to the footlights in the Closet Scene, and demanding of the queen-mother,

*Day, I dow not.*

Is it the King?

As to his fencing, that was indeed

A very feather in the cap of youth!

But his Huon? Oh—o-o-h!

He had a frank egoism, and liked to talk about his acting. After *Love* was over, he asked me what I thought of his performance of the Serf. With the ingenuousness of youth I told him I thought it was not in the same century with James Anderson.

He replied, "You are right, my boy—you are right; but wait till you see my Benedick."

I did see it, and, oh! what an ebullient, delightful performance it was! His Evelyn was beyond compare

(I never saw Macready in the part) the most charming rendition of the poor scholar I have ever witnessed ; but his Beverley was his part of parts ; while as for Mrs. Kean, though she excelled others in Beatrice and Violante, in Mrs. Beverley she excelled herself.

*Apropos*, Kean had a grievance against Macready in reference to this play of *The Gamester*. One evening, when he had spoken somewhat bitterly on the subject, I ventured to inquire whether there was a feud between him and the "eminent" one.

"Feud, sir, feud!" he replied. "Was there ever anything but feud between the *Bontagues* and the *Capulets*? I made a great study of Beverley, played it repeatedly in the country. Dowing that he *dever* acted it,<sup>1</sup> I *addounced* my intention of opening in it at the *Haybarket*. Would you believe it? The villain anticipated me by producing the play at Drury Lane, where, of course, it was a failure! How could it be otherwise with his Beverley? Well, sir, his object was to take the wind out of my sails ; so he set his *byrbidons* to work to slate the piece, stating that it was old-fashioned, bombastic rot, which even his genius couldn't galvanise into life ; but we've galvanised it into life, haven't we, *Delly*?"

Of course, this sort of thing must be taken very much *cum grano* ; but even were it actually as Kean described, he could scarcely object to "the *de capa* of his own composition," inasmuch as he was always anticipating Macready in the country, and laying his *répertoire* of new pieces

<sup>1</sup> Evidently a mistake. It was one of Macready's earliest parts. He himself informed me that he had acted Beverley with Mrs. Siddons.



under contribution. Hence, while *The Lady of Lyons* and *Money* were being acted in town, Kean got the "pull" of them in the country to such an extent that, to the best of my belief, Macready never acted (certainly not in my time) any of these plays during his provincial engagements. His stepmother (manageress of the Bath and Bristol theatres) was a very eccentric and sibylline old lady. She would snarl and growl enough about the great "Mac" herself, but woe betide any one else who dared to come "betwixt the wind and his nobility." By some sharp practice Kean had procured a prompt-book of Macready's arrangement of *Sardanapalus*, and had anticipated his production of the play in the country. Although Kean thought this a "good business," naturally Macready did not see it from that point of view, and he wrote a very hot letter to his stepmother, reproaching her for having permitted the play to be done in Bristol.

While settling up with the old lady (it did not run to acting managers in those days!), Kean blandly inquired, "Well, *Brs. Bacready*, and what do you think *Br. Bacready* will say when he hears of *by* doing *Sardanapalus*?"

"What do I think Mr. Macready will say when he hears of *your* doing *Sardanapalus*?" growled the infuriate Sibyl. "My good young man, I don't think Mr. Macready is even aware of your existence!"

It need scarcely be said that Kean hardly appreciated this compliment at the moment, though he laughed heartily enough when he spun me the story afterwards.

On their last night these charming people played

*The Gamester* and *The Wonder* to a house crowded from floor to ceiling. So crowded was it that the audience drove the musicians out of the orchestra; then, encroaching still further, they invaded the stage, and at last actually ascended into the "flies"! Strange as it may appear, there seemed nothing incongruous in that awful last scene being acted in the centre of a semicircle of eager and excited auditors in the garb of the nineteenth century.

In accordance with the usual "business" (said to have been invented by Mrs. Siddons), as Mrs. Beverley was being led off the stage, she gave a piercing, heartrending shriek, and precipitating herself on the body of Beverley, exclaimed, "Oh, my Charley, my poor dear, you are not dead—say you are not dead, dearie!"

"Deuce a bit! But you are squashing me, darling," responded the recumbent Beverley.

"Never mind that—only tell me—tell me, Charley! you are not dead!"

"I *am* telling you, *Delly*; but there, there! away you go and get dressed for *Violante*."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Kean, immediately recovering herself; and, springing up, "It's wonderful I should have forgotten about *The Wonder*! By your leave, ladies and gentlemen!"

And so, with a stately curtsey, she made her way through the crowd to her dressing-room.

*The Wonder* went like a blaze of fireworks. In parts like Don Felix and *Violante* the Keans were unrivalled—indeed, in this department, nothing so

elegant, so vivacious, and so distinguished has been witnessed since.

When they took ship for Glasgow next day, we went down *en masse* to give them a parting cheer. Their visit had been a glimpse of fairyland. Plays of the highest order, acting of the best; light, life, animation; smiles, tears, applause; crowded houses; delighted audiences: but, oh! what a change when they left! Dinginess, dilapidation, despair—and empty houses!

We had anticipated that the season would have run to Easter, but, alas! up went the notice, and in a month—"a little month"—up went the shutters!

Mr. Sydney Davis then organised a tour of the Irish towns, selecting the principal members of the company for his coadjutors. I was not one of the fortunate ones, and once more was left in the cold without an engagement or the sign of one!

## CHAPTER X

### SCOTLAND

I am engaged as Juvenile Tragedian for the Theatre Royal, Greenock, and incontinently depart for Scotland—First Glimpse of "Caledonia stern and wild"—First and Last Glimpse of "Scotch Washing"—The Theatre Royal—Messrs. Pike & Gudgeon and their Corps Dramatique—*The Master of Ravenswood* and Lucy Ashton—"Knights of the Table Round"—I make my *débat* in Alonzo—The prodding of Pizarro—A Contretemps—Good-bye to my Beautiful Boots!—My First Acquaintance with a One-Pound Note—Am initiated into the Mysteries of "Stock Debt"—The Lady of Lyons and what came of her—Abrupt Termination of the Season—Stranded again—A Spurt at Port Glasgow—Over the Clyde in a White Squall—In a Turnip Field—Padding the Hoof—O'er Moor and Fell—We arrive in Helensburgh at Midnight in a Snowstorm, and are presented with "the Key of the Street"—*Deus ex mach*—The Gypsy Queen, the Heir-Apparent, and Elsie.

I WROTE here, there, everywhere; but 'twas all of no avail. Just as I was beginning to think again of the Queen's shilling, there came an offer to join the company of Messrs. Pike & Gudgeon at Greenock for the light comedy and juvenile tragedy at a rural guinea a week. The light comedy and juveniles, quotha! At last my ability was being discovered, and doubtless this was the first step on the highway to fortune.

I immediately closed with this munificent proposal and the next night found me in the steerage of the good ship *Roslyn Castle*, bound for Greenock. The

passage was bad enough in all conscience, but not so bad by any means as the voyage from Liverpool to Belfast. Of course, I rendered my customary tribute to Neptune, and a fellow passenger of the opposite sex involuntarily rendered her share of the tribute to me, instead of to the divinity of the deep. Poor soul! she couldn't help it, but that didn't make it any the more agreeable, and I was in a deplorable condition when I got to Greenock. The steward, however, took compassion on me, and suffered me to make myself decent in his cabin.

Young P., who ended his professional career at Belfast, and, returning to a stool of repentance in his father's office at the city, ultimately became my Lord Mayor and a baronet of G. B., disposed of some of his fashionable clothes to me for a reasonable consideration. Resolved to impress the managerial mind, I donned my new attire, which consisted of a brown dress-coat with a velvet collar and elegant brass buttons, which were worth all the money I gave for the entire suit. A canary-coloured vest and gaiter-bottomed lavender continuations, which fitted like my skin, patent leather boots, a white hat, light overcoat, lavender gloves, white cambric handkerchief, cane, and eye-glass, completed my get-up, which I flattered myself was eminently appropriate for the youthful light comedian who was about to take Greenock by storm.

As soon as I landed, I looked out for the bill of the play. Oh, joy! oh, rapture! I saw myself advertised in large letters after this fashion :

TO-MORROW NIGHT THE CELEBRATED JUVENILE TRAGEDIAN, MR. J. C., FROM [VERY MUCH FROM] THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE, WILL MAKE HIS FIRST APPEARANCE IN THIS CITY [WHY CITY?] IN THE PART OF ALONZO IN SHERIDAN'S GRAND TRAGIC PLAY OF *PIZARRO; OR, THE DEATH OF ROLLA*.

(To be sure there was one alloy—I had never seen or heard of the play, and was much exercised in my mind as to who Alonzo was, and what relevance the death of Rolla bore to Pizarro.)

That night *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *The Taming of the Shrew* were announced, with Ravenswood and Petruchio by Mr. Gudgeon, whom I instinctively hated. What right had he to anticipate me in Edgar and Petruchio, both parts in which I was dying to distinguish myself?

“No matter! A time will come!” Meanwhile, I gather some consolation that Lucy, the fair flower of Lammermoor, is enacted by “Miss Love,”—Love! delightful name! doubtless delightful nature! I look forward with interest to my future Juliet and Pauline, for I have stipulated that I am to play Romeo and Claude, and am not without anxiety as to the extent to which Messrs. Plantagenet Fitzroy, Howard, Montgomery & Co., whose historic names figure conspicuously in the play-bill, will interfere with my ambitious aspirations. Thus I build castles in the air while hunting about for lodgings. While engaged in this voyage of discovery I am astonished, and indeed somewhat embarrassed, by the sight of half a dozen

sturdy, bare-legged Scotch lassies standing up to their knees in washing-tubs. Their petticoats are tucked up as high as they can get them consonant with propriety, while they lift one leg up and bring another down on piles of dirty linen. As I stand gazing in open-mouthed wonder at this novel laundry, with a shriek of honest laughter they shout! "Look at him! Lord, save us! has the laddie gone daft, or has he never seen a lassie's legs afore?"

Strange to say, amidst my repeated visits to Scotland, during all the years which have since elapsed, I have never seen that remarkable exhibition repeated!

At last I find a room where I bring myself and my belongings to anchor. My landlady evidently thinks I am a prodigal son, perhaps a laird in disguise. She's a dear, motherly soul, and bestirs herself to get me tea, beef, ham, and poached eggs, and I make up for lost time by stowing away enough for half a dozen.

Night falls,—I forget the time of year, but it must have been in the winter, because it got dark so soon. I don my great-coat, and am off to the theatre. At last I find it. It is fully an hour before the time of commencement; there is not a light or a sign of a light outside the building.

The stage door is open (there is no hall porter). I grope about, and at length find my way to the stage. The gas is not yet on; but by the light of three or four stodgy tallow dips bound together in a vessel, which I afterwards learn is called the "fat pot," I perceive a remarkable-looking person in a shabby black dress-coat and vest, a clerical top hat, white choker, and slate-coloured

continuations sweeping the stage. This gentleman is humming something to himself about "Heather Jock" being "awa." While I am wondering who Heather Jock may be and what takes him "awa," the singer catches sight of me, pauses, and abruptly inquires "Well, sir, and who may you be?"

I respond with the requisite information, and ask when Mr. Gudgeon or Mr. Pike is likely to arrive. My interlocutor informs me that he himself is Mr. Pike, and that his partner, the redoubtable Gudgeon, is expected immediately. Thereupon Mr. Pike thrusts his greasy paw (to the serious detriment of my lavender gloves) into mine, gives me an effusive welcome, produces some snuff, wrapped up in a piece of brown paper, from his waistcoat pocket, and offers me a pinch. Wishing to be civil to the old gentleman, who, I feel convinced, is one of those eccentric managers of whom I have so often heard, I take a pinch, with woeful consequences.

Mr. Pike graciously inquires about my late manager and various members of the Belfast Company, and resumes the apparently congenial task of sweeping the stage. At last the property man appears. This worthy fellow is "three single gentlemen rolled into one"—property man, carpenter, and gasman. He "lights up," and with the aid of Mr. Pike sets the scene and drops the curtain. Then, announcing the arrival of the great Gudgeon, Pike offers to introduce me. I am conducted to a large and commodious dressing-room (for the theatre is a decent little house), where I am confronted by a tall, elderly, bald-headed man, built somewhat



like a spider. His face is deeply pitted with smallpox. He has no chest to speak of. His lower limbs resemble those of a daddy-long-legs. His protuberant digestive apparatus, however, asserts itself in a manner so menacing that it looks as if it were about to burst through the doublet which he has assumed for *The Master of Ravenswood*. At this moment he is making his eyebrows (for he has none of his own) and his moustache with burnt cork. He receives me with a dignity not wholly unmingled with condescension, and flavoured, by no means inconsiderably, with a benignant austerity. He inquires about the Keans by their Christian names, which of course evinces his familiarity with those distinguished artists.

While making these inquiries he leisurely attaches half a dozen corkscrew ringlets to a black scratch wig, which constitutes his *chevelure* for the last Lord of Ravenswood.

"Of course, you've acted Alonzo?" he remarks casually.

As I didn't want him to know I was a novice, I improvise a pious fraud. "Of course!" I reply; "but I shall want to have a look at the book, just to refresh my memory."

"By all means, we'll have it looked out; meanwhile, Pike, perhaps you'd better introduce the young gentleman to the company."

"Certainly," replies Pike; "come along, sir."

When we return to the stage, I hear the band rasping away. Furtively peeping through the curtain, I catch sight of a little man in a Richard armhole robe and a short white wig (through which, in various

places, wisps of stubbly black hair are protruding). He is the leader, fiddling away for dear life at a set of Scottish quadrilles, and is supported by a cornet, a flute, and a trombone. There are two or three dozen people in the pit eating scones and cracking nuts,—altogether a lively and inspiring sight! Presently Mr. Pike leads me to the left-hand side of the stage, where I find a fire round which are grouped three elderly ladies and two boys of my own age.

One of the ladies was a gaunt, elderly person with “no prominences to speak of but her heels and her elbows.” Her scanty tresses were bound by a strip of tinsel lace which did duty for what in those days was called a “zone”; her eyes were like boiled gooseberries; her nose corrugated, but celestially inclined; while a dress of threadbare black velvet emphasised the absence of adipose tissue and the presence of her lank, lean arms. At the moment of my introduction to Mrs Gudgeon, she was taking snuff. The situation was awkward, but she rose to the occasion and cordially invited me to join her. With every desire to make myself agreeable to the lady, the recollection of my last experience emboldened me to decline the proffered courtesy.

The second lady was a buxom party of middle age and ample dimensions, with eyes which must have done much mischief in their time, a piquant, tip-tilted nose, a capacious mouth, splendid teeth, and a still passably fine head of black hair. Such was the better half of Mr. Pike. The third and last lady, Mrs. Melton, was a faded, emaciated creature, who

looked as if she had been pressed in a *hortus siccus*, which had squeezed every drop of blood out of her attenuated body. She still retained traces of former beauty, an abundance of fair hair, bright blue eyes, and pearly teeth. The poor soul was a widow, and mother of the two boys, Harry and Willie, to whom I was now introduced. One of them did Hayston of Bucklaw; the other did half a dozen parts.

By this time the curtain had rung up, and the leader of the orchestra came on the stage for Sir William Ashton. During these repeated introductions I was all impatience to make the acquaintance of "the fair, the chaste, the inexpressive" Miss Love. So I asked one of the boys when she appeared.

"Huts!" he replied, "there's no Miss Love!"

"Then who plays Lucy Ashton?"

"Yon!" said he, pointing significantly to the Gorgon with the grizzled hair, who was taking a final pinch of *rappee* before she went on the stage. My heart sank into my boots as I beheld this gruesome apparition. How I wished myself back at Belfast—anywhere, anywhere out of this museum of antiquities!

The performance was an awful exhibition. Gudgeon was a good, sensible actor of old men, old enough to be the father of Edgar Ravenswood, and looked old enough to be his grandfather. As for Lucy—well, poor soul! she couldn't help being half a century. Pike was Caleb Balderstone, and by no means a bad one.

When the play was over, I went round behind for the book of *Pizarro*. After waiting some time, I was

invited to a round table, where I found Messrs. Gudgeon and Pike dividing the night's receipts.

"Young gentleman," said Mr. Gudgeon grandiloquently, "although you have not yet acted, you are upon the staff; so there's your share."

With that he handed me three and sixpence.

"Share, sir!" said I. "I am engaged upon a salary of a guinea a week!"

"Take it, lad, take it, or ye'll get nothing!" whispered Willie Melton.

After a moment's hesitation, I did take it.

When I left the theatre with the two lads, both opened fire.

"You are another victim!" said the elder. "What in the name of fate induced you to come here? Was there no one honest enough to warn you against these hoary-headed swindlers, with their stock debt and all the rest of their thievery?"

"If they are swindlers, why do you stay with 'em?"

"Because we can't get away, and the mother—— Ah, if it wasn't for the mother! But see and judge for yourself."

This was a lively send-off, but home I went to my frugal supper. Then I set to work and read *Pizarro*, copied out Alonzo, studied him before I went to bed—aye, and rehearsed him letter perfect six hours after.

When I got to rehearsal, the impersonator of the Spanish tyrant did not attend. However, everybody else was obliging, and made things as easy as possible for me. At night I was at the theatre early, and got myself up as well as I could. I had pinched and

starved in Belfast until I acquired a nice Romeo dress, which fitted like my skin ; while as for my beautiful Hessian boots—— But thereby hangs a tale.

Kean's costumes had excited general admiration, and I especially envied a pair of elegant boots of the period of Charles II., which he wore for Don Felix, and, having ascertained that he intended to wear them for Benedick, I resolved to cut a dash beside him. 'Tis true I only played Conrad or Borachio (I forget which) ; but I made up my mind "Jack should be as good as his master." My Hessians were made of the coarsest basil, and had only cost some ten shillings. Kean's were made of the choicest morocco, and doubtless cost five or six guineas. To make myself presentable I gave my "basils" a coat of yellow oil paint and afterwards a coat of varnish, with the result that my worthless imitations quite took the shine out of Kean's splendid realities. But this was too good to last. The beautifier made my wretched boots rotten as tinder, as I was destined to learn before the play was over on the night of my *débüt* in Greenock.

With a jaunty hat and feather, a sword, a pair of smart gauntlets, a Vandyke collar, a pair of white Berlin pantaloons, and the boots aforesaid, I flattered myself I was *point device*. Unfortunately the pantaloons had only just come home from the wash, and all the buttons had been smashed under the mangle. To keep the precious things taut, I borrowed a pair of red worsted garters, which I bound round my ankles and over my blue lambswool socks. Red, white, and blue form

rather a lurid combination, but that didn't matter, as my boots covered everything.

Just as I had completed my toilette, Pizarro turned up. He had been to Glasgow, and had evidently dined "not wisely, but too well." Upon my venturing to remonstrate with him about his absence from rehearsal, he told me to mind my own business—that he knew his. The drunken old duffer prided himself on his sword-play. He had a rapier with a point as sharp as a needle, which he used in the most unscrupulous manner on the slightest provocation, and the lads in the dressing-room beguiled the intervals between the acts by pleasantly recounting a list of his "killed and wounded." As I happened to know how to handle a sword, I made up my mind, if my friend played any tricks with me, to give him a Roland for his Oliver. When we came to the fight, he went at me like a wild cat, so, in self-preservation, I was compelled to "let him have it." I pinked him in the sword arm, disarmed him in a twinkling, sending his sword into the pit, and landing him on his back before he knew where he was.

Unfortunately some idiot in the front pitched the rapier back over the footlights, and in his dying agonies Mr. Pizarro prodded the point of the thing into the web of my great toe. Whereupon, with a yell, I leaped up to the "flies," leaving a portion of my toe and the whole of my beautiful boot in fragments upon the stage. The sight I presented as I danced a waltz round my prostrate foe, with one boot on and the other off, my foot in a blue sock, my white tights

bound round with a red garter, may be imagined better than it can be expressed! All I know is that it converted the tragedy into a farce, and the curtain descended amidst roar upon roar of derision.

Owing, I suppose, to the combined attraction of Pizarro, and "the celebrated juvenile tragedian from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane," there had been a very good house.

After the performance, we adjourned to the "Table Round" to divide the receipts. To my astonishment and delight, I found myself the proud possessor of a very dirty, greasy one-pound note as my share of the "plunder." Although this result was eminently satisfactory to me, my colleagues, the three boys (Pike Junior, Willie, and Harry), were by no means satisfied. As I left the theatre they waylaid me.

"See here," said Willie, "the house is five-and-twenty pounds—the only one we've had during the season. Now we are supposed to share and share alike, and there are only nine of us altogether. There's Gudgeon and the Gorgon—Pike and Mother Pike—George, the mater, ourselves, and you. They've given us a pound each—that is just five pounds between us, and they've kept the rest! Yes, they've nailed twenty pounds or more for their beastly 'stock debt.'"

"What do you call 'stock debt'?" I inquired.

"Stock debt," replied Willie, "means bogus debts supposed to be owing by these old shysters for the past twenty years."

"But I don't understand——"

"But you'll understand all about it by-and-by, when you see our noble friends deducting rent and gas and printing every night, besides exacting four shares for management, two for scenery and wardrobe, five for 'stock debt,' and the rest for sundries, which mean whiskey! *Apropos* of whiskey, come round the corner and have a *deoch* and *dhoroch*, and wish me good-bye and good luck, for I'm going to follow Alick Gudgeon's example."

"Alick Gudgeon!"

"Of course you don't know. He's old Gudgeon's son. He stood this business as long as he could, then he cut and ran, and is now one of the first comedians on the American stage. I'm off to Glasgow to-morrow to seek my fortune."

"You don't mean that?"

"I do, though. I've never had a pound before, and as I'm sure I shall never have another, I'm off."

"And leave the mother, Willie?" inquired Harry wistfully.

"No, laddie, I shall take her with me; it's for her sake I'm going. You must look out for yourself, till I can send for you."

That was the last I ever saw of Willie Melton, and indeed the last the stage ever saw of him, for he went into business in the ham-and-beef trade, became a prosperous merchant, and years ago retired upon a handsome competence. Sensible Willie! Better a good ham-and-beef man than a bad actor, especially an impecunious one! When his departure was known, Pike and Gudgeon enlarged upon his ingratitude in abandon-



ing his benefactors ; whereat Harry and Pike junior made irreverent comments, avowing confidentially that they meant to avail themselves of the first opportunity of following Willie's example. His secession, and that of his mother, rendered it a matter of the utmost difficulty to cast our pieces, as the company now consisted literally of two old women, two old men, and three boys. In this emergency Pike's daughter (who was married to a merchant's clerk in Glasgow) came to the rescue and acted for a few nights. A very nice creature she was, young, pretty, and a very fair actress.

Whatever we did, we played to "a beggarly account of empty benches." Sometimes we shared half a crown a night, sometimes a shilling ; sometimes there was nothing to share.

At length Mr. Charles Pitt (whom I had seen in Liverpool) came to "star." He opened in Richard, and our hearts were gladdened by a fairly decent house, which was, however, as usual, swallowed up in rent, gas, printing, stock debt, etc. I played Richmond. Pitt lent me a suit of spangled armour, and as I knew how to handle a sword, I fairly won his heart by killing him properly at Bosworth Field. He was, or at any rate appeared to be, impressed with me, and promised to obtain an engagement for me at the new Theatre Royal, Manchester, which was shortly about to open.

That engagement, however, never came off, through an unfortunate occurrence which took place on the last night of his engagement, when *The Lady of Lyons* was to be acted. Miss Pike was to be Pauline ; her

brother, Glavis ; and I was to be Beauseant. Poor Miss Pike had prepared all her little fineries. George Pike had made himself a conical hat, a velvet cape for his coat, a pair of Hessian boot-tops of glazed calico, and I had made equally elaborate preparations, besides being up nearly all night to study the odious Beauseant. Indeed, I had been up every night during the week studying Bassanio, Wilford (*Iron Chest*), Lewson, and I don't know what else, to support the "star of our goodly company." Imagine my astonishment upon arriving at the theatre for rehearsal to find the walls placarded with bills announcing that the parts of Pauline, Beauseant, and Glavis were to be enacted by Miss Rosina Saker, Mr. James Johnstone, and Mr. Mortimer Murdoch, popular members of the Glasgow company.

Astonishment changed to indignation when we discovered that this arrangement had been made days previous, and that I and my colleagues had been put to all this trouble, expense, and inconvenience merely to fall back upon in case of disappointment. There was a row in the morning and another at night, for we—George Pike, his sister, and myself—and our small local following resented the indignity put upon us so bitterly that for a time at least the progress of the play was suspended. Pitt addressed the audience from the stage, I addressed them from the front ; there were reproaches and recriminations. Altogether it was a puerile, stupid business, of which I have reason now to feel heartily ashamed.

In an uncontrollable outburst of wounded vanity and

boyish folly I issued a bumptious and atrabilious hand-bill to the public, which certainly did not impress the neighbouring managers either with my amiability or my amenability to discipline. This reprehensible display of bad taste smashed up the season, and (serve me right !) I was once more left stranded and on my beam ends.

The firm of Gudgeon & Pike having dissolved partnership, Gudgeon and the Gorgon went to Glasgow. Pike (who, like myself, was stuck in Greenock) attributed *The Lady of Lyons* business to his quondam partner and to Pitt. We therefore concluded to bury the hatchet, and "padded the hoof" to Port Glasgow, where we arranged a "fit-up" in the large hall attached to the principal hotel. Here we were joined by an American imitator of the famous Jim Crow Rice, one Mr. Harper, who had a song of his own called "Jim along Josey," which would have run "Jim Crow" very hard if the opportunity had ever occurred. But it never did occur ; hence, soon afterwards, like a sensible man, Harper turned Boniface, and invested his savings in a large hotel in Liverpool, where, years later, I met him in flourishing circumstances.

He, Harry and myself, made Greenock our headquarters, while Pike and his family put up at Port Glasgow, which is distant from Greenock about five miles, and as our journey there and back was performed on "shanks's mare," we were pretty well tired out by the time we got home, especially when sometimes we did not get to roost till two or three o'clock in the morning. We did fairly well at the Port, and made many agreeable acquaintances—notably a Presbyterian

minister, who, in defiance of the presbytery, came to our primitive little theatre nightly, and frequently entertained us to supper, while he recalled recollections of Edmund Kean, whom he had known during his strolling days in Scotland, and whom he had seen afterwards at his zenith at Drury Lane. Once he had seen the "Divine Edmund" play Shylock in Glasgow, when he had imbibed "potations pottles deep."

"By ——!" exclaimed the meenister, "he was na fou' wi ordinary liquor, but with the ambrosial nectar of the gods! I just thought he was about to cut the hairt out o' that white-livered Antonio—and he'd have din't—aye, sir, he'd have din't, if that winsome hussy Madame Portia had na turned the tables on him. The little beggar had a giant's soul in the body of a dwarf! Mony's the time we ha' chased the night into morn thegether; and noo he's gone, moved o'er to the infinite—wae's me that I should live to say so! Here's to his memory, onyhoo. Mind, na heel-taps!"

Our pleasant stay at Port Glasgow came to an end all too soon; then another spell of inaction, during which my brown coat (brass buttons to boot) and other portable property disappeared—in fact, everything of any value vanished, and nothing remained except what I stood up in. I again began to dubitate about the Queen's shilling—a detestable alternative to me, who loathed the idea of cutting throats for hire!

At this juncture Pike burst into my attic, and with a shout of triumph informed me that he had taken the Theatre Royal, Helensburgh, ten or twelve miles distant, on the other side of the Clyde. He and the

ladies were going there by the next boat, and the property man had gone there already to fit up the scenery and to get the bills out. That was all very well for my noble friend, but how I was to get there I hadn't the faintest idea. George Pike was in the same fix. He was, however, a fellow of fertile resources, and had an acquaintance, one Sandy Macdonald, a fisherman, who, with his two sons, undertook to row us over the Clyde in an open boat. A most perilous passage it turned out, for halfway across we were overtaken by a white squall which threatened to send us down to Davy Jones's locker every other moment. The current carried us down towards the Brig O'Johnson (some miles beyond our destination), where we landed, drenched to the skin, shivering with cold, and famishing with hunger. Nature abhors a vacuum. A turnip-field, was adjacent, and, regardless of the rights of property, we sought to allay the pangs of hunger by an onslaught on the cooling, but not very nutritious esculent. One was a dose for me ; but my friends were more seasoned vessels, and they played havoc with the turnips. Sandy and his lads had relatives at the Brig O'Johnson ; so, after dragging the boat up high and dry, and leaving her, keel upwards, on the beach, we shook hands and parted.

The horrors of that tramp over moor and fell I can never forget. Cold, hungry, badly shod, thinly clad, drenched with rain, snow, and hail, we limped into Helensburgh at midnight more dead than alive. The place itself was like a village of the dead ; not a house was open, not a light to be seen, not a sound to be

heard save the moaning of the wind and the swish, swish of the advancing and receding tide upon the shore.

Wandering up and down, at length we discovered the inn where the Theatre Royal (save the mark !) was located. Evidently every one had gone to bed. Rendered desperate by our necessity, we rang up the house. The only response vouchsafed us was from an evil-eyed, red-headed ruffian who threatened to set the dogs at us and "tek us before the bailie [or the provost, was it?] on the morrow's morn." The prospect had small terror for us, for unless we obtained shelter for the night (which foreboded another snowstorm), we should be beyond the reach of provost or bailie before the morning. Recalling a former memorable experience, I suggested that we should get to leeward of a friendly hayrick, if one could be found in this barbarous place ; for it was barbarous then, though I am told that it has since developed into a fashionable and thriving watering-place. As we turned away despairingly, not a sound could be heard save the melancholy howling of the village curs baying the moon.

Just as we were ruefully beginning to realise that we must walk the streets till daybreak, if we meant to keep life within our frozen bodies, we saw a tall, swarthy-looking young fellow, smoking his pipe and leaning with folded arms against a stile, at the entrance to a close on the other side of the road. He was the very type of a pure-blooded gypsy, tall, slender, dark-complexioned, black hair and eyes, dark-bearded, and with rings in his ears. Although it was still freezing bitterly, his shirt-sleeves were turned up to the shoulder, displaying his

muscular but finely formed arms ; a yellowish hairy cap was stuck jauntily on one side of his head ; he had a well-worn, double-breasted vest of crimson plush, with white mother-of-pearl buttons ; his shirt was open at the neck, with a yellow silk handkerchief carelessly twisted round it.

Squatted beside him was a huge bull-dog, the most hideous-looking beast I ever saw. Now I have a constitutional dread of hydrophobia, besides which, I had been bitten once, and, had it not been for the look of the thing, I should have turned and bolted. George, however, must, I think, have been lineally descended from the "Whisperer," for I have seen him "gentle" down the most savage brute of a horse in five minutes, while as for dogs, the most ferocious of the tribe were wont to follow him about like lambs.

As we were about to cross the street, the brute sprang forward, with ears and tail erect and flaming eyes ; but when George, advancing boldly, said, "Now then, Bogey, old boy, what's up ?" to my astonishment—I may add, to my relief—the great creature leaped upon him, and began to lick his face, making all kinds of queer, strange noises, evidently expressive of canine delight.

The man looked on with open-mouthed amazement. At last he said, "How the blazes cam ye to ken his name was Bogey ?"

"Why, you see, my friend," replied George pleasantly, "I developed the fact from my inner consciousness, because——"

"Because what ?"

"Because he is so infernally ugly !"

"Ah, weel! handsome is as handsome does, and Bogey's the best beastie that ever walked on four legs."

While this conversation was going on, the dog transferred his regards to me. Although not so affectionate to me as to my comrade, nevertheless he was affectionate enough. George and the gypsy soon established friendly relations, and the latter, turning round to me, said brusquely, but genially, "Well, anyhow, we can gie you shelter for the nicht; so come ben, lads, and tak' pot luck."

Here was a Godsend—we had alighted on our feet after all! Following our guide down the wynd, we entered a large, long stable, amidst the dim light of which we saw two donkeys peacefully slumbering; then we ascended a ladder which led to the flight above; and, emerging from the semi-darkness, we found ourselves in a huge barn, impermeated with delicious odours exhaling from a large black pot which bubbled over a roaring fire, before which were two women, and a large handsome black cat, with a conspicuous white patch of fur on its breast. For a moment Master Tom (for he turned out to be a gentleman) curved his back like a young tiger, but evidently thought better of it, for he immediately capered towards us, and came purring round my legs. Apparently he didn't like the wet, for he shook himself, and, uttering a querulous "mew," returned to the fire.

One of the women—an imposing, weird, sibylline old creature, whose deep, glowing eyes, dark complexion, and strongly marked features sufficiently attested her oriental origin—was smoking her pipe,



the fumes of which she placidly contemplated as she puffed them through her nostrils. A piece of crimson drapery, twisted round her head, contrasted vividly with her beautiful and abundant white hair. Her dress was of some soft dark stuff, the colour of which I could not clearly define. This remarkable personage looked us through and through, then quietly returned to her pipe, as if utterly oblivious of our presence.

Spread out over the hearth was a worn, stained, and greasy deer-skin, on which, extended at full length, in an attitude of indolent grace, a girl of some eighteen or twenty years lay sleeping. Her right arm was thrown carelessly behind her head, with her face turned upwards towards the light. What a face it was! and what a figure! What exquisite undulations the simple garb revealed or suggested! 'Twas a kirtle of some dark stuff, with a short petticoat of crimson, from which the bare limbs extended, round and beautiful as those of some antique statue.

“Hi! hi! granny, stir yoursel’! Elsie, lassie, wake up, wake up, and get the supper!” shouted the man.

The old woman composedly knocked the “dottle” out of her pipe, and leisurely proceeded to reload it.

The girl, in alarm or astonishment, sprang to her feet like some wild doe of the mountains. As she did so, a poll of hair, dark as night, tumbled in dishevelled flakes around her, and became interpenetrated and irradiated with streaks of living gold, reflected in the red glow of the firelight.

“Now then, lassie,” resumed the man, “luik alive! Here’s twa laddies benighted, who’ll just want a dip

in the muckle-pot and the snow melted out o' their cloots, I'm thinkin'."

The girl looked at me as in a dream, rubbed her eyes, and looked again. Bogey came and thrust his jowl affectionately against her knee. Instinctively, without looking down, she patted his great head with her little hand. As she pushed the masses of hair behind her small shell-shaped ears, her eyes and her teeth began to assert themselves. The eyes seemed to emit streams of opalescent light, and her teeth glistened like whitest ivory by contrast with the rich olive of her skin.

A moment more she was awake, and began to glide rapidly about the room, deftly preparing the supper. Meanwhile, the man beckoned us to the fire, and brought forth from some mysterious corner a large brown jar, and invited us to have a nip of *usquebaugh* to take the cold out of our bones. While thus engaged, the steam arose from our wet clothes, and almost filled the place with vapour. The girl looked wistfully at us, and, taking up the lamp, disappeared rapidly into the darkness, from whence she returned almost immediately with an armful of clothing, comprising an old tweed jacket, a worn cashmere dressing-gown (both lined with silk), a couple of fine but frayed cricketing-shirts, and other undergarments, which she handed to the man, who significantly beckoned us to the opposite end of the room, which was curtained into a primitive chamber by means of some dark brown blankets hung from wall to wall upon a rope. In an inconceivably short

space of time we had doffed our sodden clothing and were dry and comfortable everywhere, except our feet.

When we returned to the fire, the snow in our boots (which might have been stouter) melted into steam. The man said something, apparently in Romany, to the girl, who ran down again to the other end of the room, and returned with a couple of pairs of thick Shetland wool hose. Throwing a pair to George, she cast herself down before me, and, taking my foot in her lap, began to unlace my boot. Taken aback by this unconventional procedure, I made a movement to prevent her; whereupon she merely looked up, threw upon me a flood of light from her great eyes, and tenderly chafed my cold feet with her warm, soft little hands.

The pot bubbled on the fire, the Sybil puffed away at her pipe, while the man softly hummed, "Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad," by way of accompaniment, until at last, when my dusky Hebe had thawed my frozen feet, and clad them with the warm woollen hose (which had all the while been toasting before the fire), he sang out lustily, "Noo then, guid folk! supper! supper! and deil take the hindmost."

The banquet—for it was a veritable one to us poor hungry wayfarers—was soon ready. There was neither table nor chairs, but there were mugs and platters, and knives, spoons, and forks, in abundance, and a snow-white tablecloth was soon spread on the floor. On the griddle board, which was fixed on the centre of the tablecloth, was placed the *pot au feu*, into which we found ourselves dipping with the rest of the family

as if it were a lucky-bag, from which came forth at one moment the wing of a pheasant, at another the leg of a rabbit, the backbone of a hare, a savoury junk of bacon, 'or a delicious cup of soup. Then we had oatcake, hot from the griddle, and potatoes baked in the ash, washed down with copious libations of mountain dew for those who cared for it. For my part, I stuck to Adam's ale, which Elsie brought from the spring without, for me, and for herself. Except for an occasional laugh at an unsuccessful dip or a more than usually lucky haul from the pot, we were so engrossed in allaying the pangs of hunger that we had no time to waste on words.

When supper, however, was over and cleared away, we all squatted round the fire in a circle, of which Elsie and I were the centre, while the Sybil, with her everlasting pipe, was to our right and George and the gypsy to our left.

Presently we learnt that our host's name was Donald Lee, that he was a tinker, that Elsie was his sister, and the Sybil his grandmother; that she had been queen of the tribe, had married a Gentile, and been expelled. But, indeed, I was more occupied in studying the unsophisticated creature at my side than in listening to her brother's rigmarole. She had quietly croodled up to me, with the cat in her arms and Bogey clinging to her skirts. I tried to engage her in conversation, but I might as well have been speaking in an unknown tongue, for she remained obdurately silent.

The storm had burst forth without; within, the fire crackled and glowed, and George and Donald were

engrossed with their baccy and their toddy. Grannie apparently was engrossed with us, for she glowered at us with great angry eyes, until I think she must have hypnotised us, for Elsie's head drooped on my shoulder, and she dropped off into a placid, childlike slumber.

That is my last impression of my first night at Hal's Wynd, for the warmth, the comfort, the girl's sweet breath, the gentle moving of the dog, the purring of the cat, the hum of voices, the fragrant odour of nicotine, the ruddy glow of the firelight, the fatigue of my long tramp lulled me to forgetfulness, and I became blissfully unconscious.

## CHAPTER XI

### "THE ONE AND ONLY ALICK"

Day Dawn at Hal's Wynd—Theatre Royal (?), Helensburgh—Another Failure—Good-bye, Sweetheart, Good-bye—We go to Saint Mungo's Town—"The One and Only Alick"—David Prince Miller—Theatre Royal, Dunlop Street, and Adelphi, "Saut-market"—*The Rivals*—Paumier Loraine—Julia Nicol and Laura Addison—An Improvised Scene in *Julius Caesar*—How to use a Horsewhip—"Cutty Sark"—Paisley and "Lang Willie"—On the Queen's Highway—Meeting "Curly"—Advent at Kilmarnock—Pike disappears and leaves me in a Hole—Our New Recruits—Good Samaritans in Petticoats—A Gentleman of the Proletariate—"Monsieur, Madame, and Mademoiselle"—The Shot in the Eye—*La Grande Battement* and the Consequence—Under Ixion's Wheel—My First Pauline—My Friend Gaspar is metamorphosed to Beppo, the Goatherd, and to La Belle Marguerite—Youth, Love, and Beauty in Oxford Street with Charles Kean, while Claude remains with the Starving Strollers in Kilmarnock—From thence to a Barn at Stuarton and another at Irvine—Poverty, Misery, and Starvation—Light and Land at Last!

IT seemed as if I had been asleep barely five minutes when the braying of the donkeys below startled me, and made me wake up and wonder where I was. It was fair daylight, and the sun was streaming into the cubicle, which (with the aid of a couple of blankets suspended upon a clothes-line) had apparently been arranged for the occasion out of a slice of the supper-room of the night previous. Our bed was primitive, but comfortable enough, though it consisted only of clean straw, but there was plenty of it, with a couple of blankets.

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“Stir your stumps, laddie!” shouted George; “breakfast’s ready.”

“And, by Jove! I’m ready for breakfast!” I replied, as up I jumped and looked round for my clothes. I had expected to find them all damp and draggled. To my astonishment (and I may add to my delight), I found them warm and dry, brushed and folded up; my boots were also carefully brightened up, and dry as tinder.

As he struggled into his damp toggery, poor George ruefully growled, “See what it is to be a juvenile tragedian! If I’d only been a Romeo, now, instead of an unfortunate low comedian! Never mind! I’ll take it out of the grub!”

A large brown glazed panshon of cold water, a piece of yellow soap, a comb and brush, and a rough towel were placed on a barrel outside the blankets. Improvising a hasty toilette, we turned out, and found a substantial breakfast awaiting us.

The Sibyl was crouched before the fire as usual, smoking her everlasting pipe, and the *pot au feu* was bubbling away already. Donald was below in the stable, preparing for the day’s journey, while Elsie remained to wait upon us, still fixing her weird, wondering eyes on me. By the light of day she was even prettier than she seemed the night before; but she was as reticent as ever. At length I heard her speaking in some gibberish to the old woman, of whom I ventured to make inquiry as to whether she could not speak English.

“Speak English?” replied the Sybil; “aye, speak it by the yaird, when she’s i’ the mind. She’s no i’

the mind the noo, na mair am I ; so you'd better gang your gait, and guid luck gang wi' ye."

Had she been a queen dismissing us to the holy keeping of Heaven, the ancient dame could not have given us our *congé* with a more regal grace. So, with Elsie leading the way, we descended the ladder. When we got into the street, there was Donald smoking his pipe, with Bogey at his heels, and the two donkeys prepared for the day. One of them was attached to a tinker's barrow—a large, ambitious affair, with all kinds of grindstones and treadles and straps, flaming brass things, and a seat for the driver ; the other had a couple of large wicker panniers on either side.

As we shook hands and thanked our kind friends for their hospitality, it occurred to me that it would be a proper thing to assist Elsie to her seat ; but when I offered to do so, she motioned me aside with a smile, stepped back three or four paces, called out something to the cuddy, and, without the slightest apparent effort, took a flying leap and alighted on the croup, tucking her right foot under, leaving her left leg hanging down, and forming as picturesque a figure as I ever remember to have seen. When she reached the end of the lane, I lifted my hat ; she flushed up to the eyes, kissed her hand, turned the corner, and vanished.

As we strolled down towards the theatre, George told me that, when Donald had got to his third glass, he became communicative, and naïvely admitted that, although he certainly mended pots and pans, and ground all the knives and scissors, and set all the razors that came in his way, like Rob Roy, he despised



“sic mechanical pursuits.” Poaching was his real vocation, and he found it a highly profitable one. Besides always having something for the pot, he never had any difficulty in finding a market for a salmon, a dish of fresh trout, a hare, or a brace of birds. As for the women, they bought anything they could make an honest penny by, particularly old lace, china, brass, cast-off finery, and knick-nacks of every description. These they sold to the dealers in Glasgow at a handsome profit. Between them they had saved a heap of money, and Elsie would bring a stocking-full to her “mon” for her “tocher.”

“There’s a chance for you, old man!” concluded George.

“You don’t say so? But, look! here’s the theatre.”

The “Theatre Royal, Helensburgh,” was the back room of an inn. The scenery was already fitted up at the entrance end. This arrangement was made to spare us from passing through the audience in our tinsel finery, as we had to dress in the inn itself. Although this prevented us from passing through them, it didn’t prevent them from passing through us—a privilege they (especially the feminine section) steadfastly availed themselves of. Our gypsy friends were on the free list, and they came every night, and we not infrequently accompanied them back to Hal’s Wynd, to take pot luck. Indeed, more than once their savoury and succulent messes did duty for breakfast, dinner, and all the rest of it.

One or two other victims now joined the company;

notably a fair-haired girl (one Miss P.), for the juvenile tragedy. If I got little food for the body, I had abundant food for the mind, for here I essayed for the first time Romeo, Edgar Ravenswood, Robert Macaire, Alfred Highflyer, etc.

The attendance, which had been scanty from the first, ultimately dwindled down to nothing. The undaunted Pike, however, informed us that he had taken the Theatre Royal, Kilmarnock, for the season. By the way, he assured us that it was a real "Theatre Royal." Miss Pike came to play *The Rose of Ettrick Vale* for his benefit, and so enabled us to escape from Helensburgh by the skin of our teeth. By some occult means he had arranged with the steam-boat people to take us back to Greenock. Donald and Elsie came to see us off, and with a heavy heart we bade them good-bye. George and the gypsy went off to have a *deoch an dorrach*, while Elsie and I were left alone. I am seldom at a loss for words, but on this occasion I knew not what to say. We both leant over the side of the boat and subsided into silence. The first bell woke us up.

"Ye're gangen, then," said she,—“gangen wi' yonner ginger-headed thing, that I see ye preein' and cuddlin' nicht after nicht?”

"That's only in the way of business, Elsie. She's a stranger to me, and I know little of her, and care less."

"Is that true?"

"Gospel truth!"

"Eh, laddie, but ye've jist ta'en a millstone off my heart, and——" The next moment her arms were

round my neck, while she was crying one moment and laughing the next. What would have befallen then, I don't know, if Donald hadn't turned up.

“I guessed as muckle,” he said. “Hark, there's the last bell. Come ben, ye daft hizzie. Now, ye gowk, pree her mou'!—I didn't tell ye to eat her—mooncalf! There, there! guid-bye and guid luck, laddie!” The next moment they were gone, and we were on our way to Greenock, where we found a letter from Miss Pike inviting her father, her brother, and myself to come and stay for a few days in Glasgow. George didn't get on very well with M. le Mari; hence he declined the invitation, which Pike and I gladly accepted.

Glasgow was even then a noble city, distinguished for its public buildings and its shipping. The Theatre Royal, Dunlop Street, built by and presided over by the eccentric Alexander, was a very fine edifice. That his vanity was as remarkable as his eccentricity was apparent from the fact that he had crowned the portico of the theatre with a life-sized statue of himself, standing, like Garrick, 'twixt Tragedy and Comedy.

Vanity apart, it must be admitted that he was an active and enterprising manager—an admirable stage manager and an accomplished and versatile actor. He was a regular slave-driver though, at work morning, noon, and night; absolutely living in the theatre, and could see no reason why the members of his company should not do likewise. His mania was, that it was his special mission to teach everybody everything. It was currently rumoured that he essayed to teach Edmund

Kean Othello, Charles Kean Hamlet, Macready Virginius, and James Wallack the Brigand. Nay, more, he actually took exception to the barking of Cony and Blanchard's dog Carlo, and was observed one morning teaching the sagacious animal to bark in another key!

Miss Laura Addison assured me that while coaching her up in Helen McGregor, he burst out, "Zounds, madam! you're not within a mile of Heelen. She was nae bread-and-butter miss, but a regular Amazon!"

"An Amazon, sir?"

"Did I not say an Amazon? Remember, there were Amazonian women as well as Amazonian men in those days!"

He could neither sing, play, nor dance. For all that, he taught—the *prima donna* to sing, the fiddler to fiddle, and the *prima ballerina* to dance, and, what is more, frequently made very valuable suggestions to them all.

When I say he could not sing or dance, I mean he had no knowledge of the scientific rudiments of either singing or dancing, and yet I have heard him sing snatches of song in *Crack in the Turnpike Gate* (an inimitable performance) and in his Scotch parts. His dancing was limited to a Highland reel, popularly known as "Alick's lilt." Whenever a breakdown occurred, a hitch in the scenery or the lights, the gods were wont to yell, "Alick, ye auld de'il, gie us the lilt. Dance, mon, dance!"

Just as the mood took him, he would keep the Olympians in good humour by complying with their

request, or lecture them on the impropriety of their conduct.

In certain respects this remarkable man compares favourably with some of our latter-day managers. He was an actor, not a showman, and never descended to the ignoble artifices by which a spurious popularity is so often attained nowadays, despising alike “the puff preliminary, the puff collateral, and the puff direct.” Absolutely unapproachable to the penny-a-liner fraternity, whenever these worthy people had an opportunity they “went” for him; but he had the hide of a rhinoceros, and went straight on his way, looking neither to the right nor to the left, disdainfully indifferent to their praise or censure.

His origin was involved in obscurity. The little that was known of him was that he had been with Ryder, the Aberdeen and Dundee manager; with Murray in Edinburgh, and Phelps told me he had acted under his management at Carlisle.

His first essay in management at Glasgow was made under extraordinary circumstances. There was a commodious building in Queen Street, which included two large halls, the one built above the other. At one and the same moment Frank Seymour, the Cork manager (a person as eccentric and as eminent as “Alick” himself), took the one, and “Alick” took the other. From this moment ’twas war to the knife between the rival *impresarios*. When the one announced a new play, the other anticipated him. While Hamlet above was speaking, “To be or not to be?” the Dougal creature and Captain Thornton were fighting a broad-

sword combat below. While Amina warbled her last solo in Seymour's Theatre, Richard was bawling, "A horse, a horse!—a kingdom for a horse!" in Alick's.

Manager below suffocated manager above with blue fire, or, if that was not potent enough, with a soupçon of asafœtida. Manager above returned the compliment by turning on a waterfall of real water, nearly drowning manager below, and his audience into the bargain. In the end, however, Seymour was vanquished, and returned to the Emerald Isle, while Alexander remained master of the field, worked early and late, became a man of substance, and soon built a new and beautiful theatre in Dunlop Street. For a considerable period he was monarch of all he surveyed, and everything he touched turned to gold.

This good fortune could not last for ever. An enterprising showman named David Prince Miller brought a company of strollers to act on the green during the fair, and outstayed his license. In an indiscreet moment "Alick" evoked the penalties of the law against the poor showman, who was sent to the Tolbooth, which he entered as a misdemeanant and emerged as a martyr! Public sympathy was excited, money was raised, and a very fine and commodious theatre (the Adelphi) was erected for Miller at the foot of the "Saut-Market." A powerful company was engaged, and many of the most eminent actors of the period visited Glasgow for the first time under the auspices of the *ci-devant* showman.

By this time, however, Alexander was in a position to defy the frowns of Fortune. Had it been otherwise,

he would have found it difficult to contend with increasing unpopularity. When he held what was virtually a monopoly, he ruled the actors with a rod of iron. Railway communication with England was as yet expensive and incomplete, and many a poor devil who had crossed the Border, had to kiss the rod which smote him, and to endure as best he might a rule which was arbitrarily despotic. “Alick” not only insisted upon having his own way, but on his own way of having it. Grumbling he couldn’t abide : his motto was, “Don’t grumble and stay, but grumble and go !”

For six days in the week he was rigidly temperate and abstemious, but those who affected to know, alleged that “from morn to dewy eve” he devoted the seventh day to the imbibation of as much of the wine of the country as he could carry, and that, in point of fact, he never sought repose till he was as “fou” as he could hold without bursting. Fortunately he had a head of iron, and was wont to turn out on Monday morning to begin another week of abstinence and hard work, till the succeeding Sunday afforded an opportunity for imbibing another skinful of his beloved beverage.

The morning after my arrival in Glasgow I waited on the autocrat of Dunlop Street, found him disengaged, and was immediately conducted to the august presence. Before me stood on the stage a stalwart, well-preserved man of middle age, dark-haired, dark-bearded, with sparkling eyes of blackish red or reddish black. The head and face from crown to chin suggested a resemblance to Louis Philippe—to be more precise, to a pear. His mouth was singularly mobile, and his

chin, which moved up and down with marvellous rapidity when he spoke, was grotesquely expressive.

At this particular moment he was holding a council of war with Mrs. Alexander (a nice motherly woman, with a presence almost as robust as his own), the carpenter, and property man about the scenery and properties for the night's performance. As soon as he caught sight of me he addressed me in the Glasgow accent, which he affected in his colloquial moments.

“So ther ye are, sir! Come ower this way and let's hae a luik at ye! I'm nae an ogre. I'll nae eat ye! So! ye're the airy young gentleman who published that rumbustious play-bill about Charles Pitt! I'll *go* bail, noo, ye thocht the eyes o' Europe were upon ye! My good youth, the eyes of Europe are better engaged, and they dinna care the decimal part of a d——n for ye! I daur be sworn the eyes o' Europe dinna eien gi' a squint at *me*—at *me*, John Henry Alexander!—and there's mair o' me to look at than there is of you, I'm thinkin'!”

At this juncture Mrs. Alexander interposed.

“You must not be offended with Mr. Alexander, sir; it's just his way, that's all.”

“His way appears rather peculiar, madam!”

“It is, it is; but it's just my ain way, and folk who dinna like it can dae the other thing! Dinna look so glum, laddie; or gin ye do, remember Rob Roy's admonition to Rashleigh Osbaldistone, ‘If you're angry, turn the buckle o' your belt ahen't ye.’”

“Alick,” interjected Mrs. Alexander, “you're ower hard on the young gentleman.”



“Haud your blither, ye auld Jezabel! Awa’ wi’ ye, and see aboot the properties; and mind that dievil’s clip Sandie, yonner, dis nae charge ye tippence for a pennorth of tax!”

Whispering, “Dinna mind him, sir, he’s in one of his tantrums this morn,” Mrs. Alexander made herself scarce.

“Noo, sir,” continued “Alick,” “I suppose ye did na come here merely to stand gaping like mumchance at me! Not but what ye might be worse employed. So look at me—look at me, and look your fill, and remember in years to come ye’ve been face to face with one of the greatest actors on the face of God’s earth!”

This appears ridiculous to relate now, but it didn’t appear ridiculous then. The man’s self-consciousness was so earnestly sublime that he quite impressed me.

“Now, sir, that you’ve taken stock o’ me, what do ye want?”

“An engagement.”

“Aye, aye, ye all want engagements. D’ye think I keep a hospital for the halt, the lame, the blind, the impudent, the impotent, and hopelessly incompetent? God’s blood! I’ve to teach you stage-struck idiots how to act, and pay for teaching you. Nae, sir, at present I’m fou to the bung; and were it otherwise, I don’t want young gen’lemen who rush into print—into print, sir—on the slightest provocation!”

“A slight provocation, sir, a slight——”

“Aye, aye, I read ye, sir. Ye will aye be talking, and naething is so unbecoming to a young man as to be aye talking in the presence of his superiors.”

“Superiors!” I burst out; “superiors be d——d!”

“That’s right! By G——! if I were your age, with your head on my shoulders, and your heart in my body, nae man living should be my superior. Gie me your hand, lad; there’s spunk in ye. Come ben to my room, and we’ll hae a jaw.”

Round to his room we went, where from the recesses of an iron safe he produced a black square bottle.

“This is my favourite poison. I aye allow mysel’ a wee drap for lunch. Try a toothful of Hollands.”

“Hollands!” I cried, as with a movement of loathing I rejected the filthy stuff. “Turpentine, you mean!”

“That’s sheer ignorance, young man! It’s nectar when you’re used to it; but here’s a bottle of Mrs. Alexander’s cooslip wine I’ll go bail will suit ye better. For my part, I canna endure sic catlap; but I see the taste of the mither’s milk’s nae oot o’ your mou’ yet.”

“My mother—my mother!”

“D——n me if he’s nae greeting—for his mither! I’m sorry I trod on your corns, laddie! Fac’ as deeth, I canna gie ye an engagement the noo, for I mek it a rule to keep nae mair cats than’ll catch mice; but by-and-by I’ll mek an opening for ye. Meanwhile, listen to words o’ wisdom. Work airly and late; stick to the words,—the text, laddie, the text; be aye amenable to discipline—and keep oot o’ print! I’ll put your name on the free list, and come and see me act every night you’re in Glasgow. I’m no

for saying but my people understand their business, but ‘Alick’s’ the man for a model. Think on what I’ve said to ye, and guid morn to you, guid morning.”

Although disappointed at not obtaining an engagement, I availed myself of the managerial invitation, and visited the Theatre Royal nearly every night during my stay. My first night, however, I devoted to the Adelphi to see the comedy of *The Rivals* and *The Carpenter of Rouen*, in which the American tragedian, Mr. Hudson Kirby (whom I had previously seen play Richard—very badly, as I thought—at the Olympic), appeared. This gentleman was a big, handsome, manly fellow, and a capital melodramatic actor. *The Carpenter of Rouen* was a drama of the blood-and-thunder order, with a remarkably realistic effect—the pulling down and destruction of the Duke de Saubigné’s palace, and an equally remarkable anachronism—*i.e.* the interpolation of the *Marseillaise* at the period of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew!

Mr. Kirby was a disciple of Edwin Forest, whose peculiarities he imitated so faithfully that when that distinguished actor afterwards came to Edinburgh and Glasgow, the audiences in both cities alleged that the master was a servile imitator of the pupil. The cast of the comedy was as good, if not better, than can be found in any London theatre nowadays; but the character which stood out beyond all the rest was Sir Anthony Absolute. This part was filled by an actor whose voice appeared familiar to me, and in whom I recognised my childish acquaintance, Mr. Boddie, from Derby.

As a specimen of how pieces were cast in the provinces at that period, I quote the cast of

### THE RIVALS

*Sir Anthony*—MR. BODDIE.

*Jack Absolute*—MR. WYNDHAM (the handsomest man and one of the best actors of the day).

*Falkland*—MR. CATHCART (the celebrated tragedian who *débüté* at Covent Garden as Jaffier, and was the original Cromwell in Miss Mitford's tragedy of *Charles I.*).

*Sir Lucius O'Trigger*—MR. G. V. BROOKE.

*Acres*—MR. WILLIAM HOWARD (except James Browne the best eccentric comedian I ever saw).

*David*—MR. MELBOURNE (a sterling low comedian, known afterwards so long as manager of the Queen's Theatre, Hull).

*Fag*—MR. HENRY FRAZER (a remarkably handsome young man, and a most versatile actor, dancer, painter, and pantomimist; afterwards a well-known metropolitan performer).

*Mrs. Malaprop*—MRS. RAYMOND (a very fine woman and a capital actress, afterwards at the Strand).

*Julia*—MISS MELVILLE (Mrs. Hudson Kirby, afterwards with me for years in the Great Northern circuit and at the Queen's; more recently in Wilson Barrett's company).

*Lucy*—MISS MARY GLOVER (daughter of the great Mrs. Glover, remarkable chiefly for a very plain face, redeemed somewhat by a figure of remarkable symmetry and by perfect vocalisation); and

*Lydia*—MISS ROSINA SAKER (an admirable and accomplished actress, for many years manageress of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh).

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When I say that, except Boddie and Cathcart, all these people, both men and women, were in the flower of their youth and beauty, it may readily be realised this night's performance is a delightful recollection.

The first play I saw at the Theatre Royal was Banim and Lalor Sheil's *Damon and Pythias*, cast as follows :

<i>Damon</i>	. . . .	MR. PAUMIER.
<i>Pythias</i>	. . . .	MR. HENRY LORAINÉ.
<i>Dionysius</i>	. . . .	MR. ALEXANDER.
<i>Damocles</i>	. . . .	MR. HUNTLEY MAY MACARTHY.
<i>Lucullus</i>	. . . .	MR. JOHN DAVIS.
<i>Hermion</i>	. . . .	MISS JULIA NICOL.
<i>Calanthe</i>	. . . .	MISS LAURA ADDISON.

I never remember to have seen a more imposing body of people. Paumier, Lorainé (who was at that period the handsomest young man on the stage), and Alexander were regular six-footers. Macarthy and Davis were about the middle height ; so was Miss Nicol (afterwards Mrs. Harris, for many years manageress of the Theatre Royal, Dublin) ; while Miss Addison was cast in the mould of Pallas Athene—fair-haired, blue-eyed, ample, majestic, and superbly symmetrical.

Many of these good people I was destined to know intimately hereafter, notably Miss Addison, and Mr. Lorainé, for many years a popular favourite in England and America and the hero of Falconer's unfortunate *Bonnie Dundee*, which I saw totally damned upon its first night at Old Drury through two unfortunate

words. After the massacre of Glencoe, when "the field lay thick with slain," a lady-like young man with an epicene voice appeared upon an elevation, and, complacently contemplating the killed and wounded, naïvely remarked, "How dreadful!" Whereupon a sympathetic soul in the gallery responded, "Right you are, Jemima!" That response was an epitaph: not another word was heard of *Bonnie Dundee* that night.

Loraine was, however, more fortunate as Anthony to the Cleopatra of Isabella Glyn, in George Vining's sumptuous revival at the Princess's. Mr. Paumier, who had some years previously *débüté* at Covent Garden with dubious success, was almost as eccentric as his manager. During this very season, while enacting Brutus in *Julius Cæsar*, in the midst of the Quarrel Scene he was interrupted and insulted by a drunken bagman in the boxes. With a curt, "Excuse me, brother Cassius," the gentle Brutus leaped into the boxes, took the bagman by the scruff of his neck, dragged him into the lobby, thence downstairs into the vestibule, and footed him into the gutter; then, returning to the stage, resumed his part as coolly as if nothing had happened to mar the even tenor of his way.

Years afterwards Charles Reade told me he saw Paumier act Hamlet in the Durham theatre. Some youths from the college took it into their heads to guy his foil-play and his death-scene. One sprig of the aristocracy (a scion of one of the noblest houses in England) rendered himself conspicuous by his insolence. Paumier said nothing then, but nursed his wrath through the after-

piece, which was *Katherine and Petruchio*. When he came on, fantastically attired for the wedding, and cracking his whip, he was greeted with a roar of derision. This was the spark which set his powder magazine on fire. Striding over to the stage box, he seized the principal offender, dragged him on the stage, horsewhipped him in the eyes of all Israel, and threw him into the orchestra; then, turning round to his tormentors, he said blandly, “Acting is a matter of opinion, and I may not be a great actor, but at least I am a gentleman, and I don’t permit any one to insult me. You have taken exception to my foil-play, but I think you will admit I know how to use a horsewhip! May I venture to add, I am ready to repeat the dose if necessary?” The inquiry was an act of superfluous politeness, for from that time those airy young gentlemen concluded to let the indignant histrion alone.

Paumier’s Damon appeared striking, pathetic, and impassioned, while Loraine’s Pythias was full of youthful ardour controlled by a fine intelligence. Alexander’s Dionysius was a sensible, manly performance, but not one that stood out to the extent I had anticipated. Miss Nicol was a womanly and sympathetic Hermion; but Miss Addison’s youth, her ardour, her sensibility, and her beauty, held my senses captive in Calanthe. The pantomime of *There was an Old Woman that Lived in a Shoe* brought the performance to a close. It was a miserable thing, which has left no impression on my mind but squalor and stupidity.

Next night the drama of *Ella Rosenberg* was acted. Paumier was gloomy and impressive in Rosenberg,

Loraine stately and intelligent in the Elector. Mrs. Thornhill (a capital actress of old women) played Mrs. Flitterman admirably, Miss Addison was lovely in her furred Polish dress and her dainty *bottines*, but "Alick" as Colonel Storm towered over everybody. In that particular department I have never witnessed so admirable, so powerful a performance.

Next night came a Scottish drama called *The Hieland Lad of Glenalpine*, which "Alick" had himself manufactured out of Dimond's *Peasant Boy*, itself, doubtless, an adaptation of some now forgotten French drama. Although the play was strongly cast, I had eyes and ears only for the bonnie Hieland Laddie and "Alick," who was a low comedy Scotchman. He sang snatches of Scottish song, danced his famous lilt, came on and off at opportune and inopportune moments, knocked the villain down, rescued the laddie from all kinds of perils, kept the house in a roar, and carried the piece to a triumphal conclusion.

The Hieland Laddie was my beautiful Miss Addison. She didn't look the least bit like a laddie; there was too much of her for that. She looked like a lassie—a lovely one, too; like Hebe absent from Olympus without leave, and masquerading in "the garb of the Gael." By the way, her dress was, if anything, the least bit too small—indeed, it served more to reveal than to conceal the superb outlines of her perfect form; and there was a pretty feminine embarrassment about her, as if she were afraid this precious garment might prove treacherous and burst out in some unexpected locality. Her acting was as delightful as she was,



Next night I went with Pike to the Adelphi to see the pantomime of *Tam o' Shanter*, in which I witnessed one of the most remarkable incidents I have ever beheld. The scene of the Witches' Revels in Alloway Kirk was rendered most graphically; but, being painted on gauze, “distance lent enchantment to the view” of the gambols of the salacious sisterhood, until Tam rushed out of the ruins down to the footlights, in pursuit of “Cutty Sark,” clad principally in beauty and the one indispensable garment from which she derives her name. There was one gasp of amazement to take in the picture; then down came the “bird” with a sibillation the geese that saved the Capitol never equalled. That hateful sound severely reminded poor Cutty that her zeal had outvied her discretion; hence, with a wild scream, off she went into a fit of hysterics, which brought her histrionic career, for that night at any rate, to a prompt and premature conclusion. Anyhow, that was the last we saw of that exuberant but airily clad young lady.

Our short holiday over, Pike and I started off to walk to Kilmarnock, breaking our journey at Paisley, where we went to the theatre to see the play of *Bertram*. Imogen was enacted by a lady who laboured under a very grave disadvantage. She had lost, or been born minus, the second and third fingers of her right hand. This involved the necessity of constantly carrying a lace handkerchief, which she managed with such skill and dexterity that no one but those who were in the secret of her infirmity could have guessed its existence. Although this lady did not eclipse

Miss Addison, she impressed me very much by her grace and ability.

“Lang Willie” Johnson—a man of gigantic stature—was an earnest and energetic Bertram. The dear fellow, who was an old comrade of Pike's, took us home, entertained us most hospitably, lent us the wherewithal for the remainder of our journey, and sent us on our way rejoicing.

It was a delightful day when we set forth for Kilmarnock. I have described this journey at length in the story of “Curly,” and only refer to it here to state that the central incident of that narrative actually occurred on this occasion, to illustrate in fine form the platitudinal axiom that “truth is stranger than fiction.” While Pike was telling me Curly's story, we actually encountered the poor fellow himself on the Queen's highway between Stuarton and Kilmarnock.

By the time we reached our destination, our little store was exhausted, and our portable property was strictly limited to the small carpet bag which I carried on my shoulder with the aid of my trusty sword.

Pike had advertised in *The Era* for recruits, desiring all communications to be addressed to the Theatre Royal. Now it was necessary to obtain these applications in order to enable him to prepare the opening programme; it was also essential to conceal from the landlord the poverty of the land: hence I was despatched with a note authorising me to receive the letters, and an intimation that the manager would himself put in an appearance in a day

or two. There are always some poor wretches wanting engagements, and this was no exception to the rule. A lady—a member of a distinguished theatrical family—had written from London for the Juliets; another had written from Glasgow for the soubrettes; and a couple of fine old crusted, double-breasted tragedians had written for the Richards, Shylocks, etc. Pike adjourned to the nearest inn upon the outskirts, where, over half a mutchkin, he indited letters engaging various aspirants and devoting his last coppers to postage stamps.

When the letters were despatched it was nightfall, and time for us to be settled somewhere. I suppose my worthy manager was so accustomed to this sort of thing that he took it as a matter of course. There was a house in the market-place, partly whiskey-shop, partly grocery stores, partly bakehouse, partly coffee-house, into which he swaggered bold as brass; ordered beds for two—supper for two. Our supper consisted of sundry rashers of smoked bacon, scrambled eggs, dishes of tea, oatcake, and butter. After doing ample justice to this succulent repast, we retired to our double-bedded room, where Pike's last words to me were that he had a nephew in Kilmarnock from whom he would obtain the wherewithal to settle our score. With this assurance I dropped off into a dreamless sleep, from which I didn't wake till nine o'clock next day.

Looking round for my companion, I found him *non est*. Making a hasty toilet, I went downstairs, expecting to find him awaiting me at breakfast. Upon inquiry, however, I found he had breakfasted already

and departed—leaving me and my carpet bag in pawn for the score! Had I been older and more experienced, I suppose I should have breakfasted too; but it appeared to me very like obtaining food under false pretences: hence, leaving my carpet bag behind me, I went forth with a heavy heart and an empty stomach to seek for Pike.

Here was I in a strange place without a friend, without a shilling. A shilling, did I say? Without a farthing! I called at the Theatre Royal, which turned out to be a shed over a stable. I called at the book-seller's, who kept the keys: a very civil and communicative fellow he was. He had, however, not seen my friend. I then made my way to the public house, where he had written his letters the day previous. No sign there! Back again to the town, wandering aimlessly up one street and down another. Still no sign of the truant!

At last it grew dark; then it began to rain. It now occurred to me to inquire for Pike at the place we had put up at the night before. The moment I entered the shop, before I could even open my mouth, the landlord—a great drunken, leather-lunged lout—opened fire upon me with a torrent of abuse.

The attack was so violent and unexpected, and I was so unprepared, and at the same time so conscious that the man had a certain amount of right on his side, that I was utterly flabbergasted. That's a vile word I learnt from Charles Kean, but it accurately expressed my condition, so let it stand.

The burly beast was not all brutal. Pausing midst

the torrent of his abuse, he looked at me and growled, “God’s truth! but the laddie’s clemmed. Here! d——n your soul to ——! tak’ this!”

With that he thrust a huge scone into my hand. The man meant kindly enough, but I was so incensed with his brutality that I didn’t appreciate the kindness: I only felt the indignity. That I should come to this —to have a piece of bread flung to me as a bone is flung to a dog!

With a wild cry I leaped forward, struck him full in the face, rained blows upon him, felled him to the ground, and rushed out into the gathering storm. Of course, I knew the next moment that his brutality afforded no justification for mine; but the truth was that for the moment I was mad as a March hare.

The rain was beginning to fall heavily, when, as luck would have it, I encountered Miss P—— and the new soubrette, just arrived from Glasgow. Observing my unwonted excitement, the ladies inquired the cause. Of course, I could not take them into my confidence; hence I alleged that I was merely upset because I couldn’t obtain lodgings for the night.

It seems these good souls had been in the same difficulty themselves; indeed, they had only obtained shelter a few minutes previous, and had hurried out to find the carriers to give the necessary directions for the delivery of their luggage.

After holding a short whispered colloquy, Miss P—— said, “Will you come and take tea with us? Perhaps they can manage to put you up for the night. I don’t think you will like it—*we* don’t; but——”

"Any port in a storm," I replied, not very gallantly, I fear.

The rain was now falling in torrents, and we were all glad to get shelter. Our destination turned out to be a sort of second-rate coffee-house. The landlady and her daughter Jeannie, a strapping bare-foot wench, were very civil.

"I'm nae for sure," said our hostess, "whether the young gen'leman will care for our pair accommodation, but it's just the best we've got. As for ye lassies, there's twa o' ye, and tane will tak' care o' the tither."

Soon after tea, which took the place of supper (and in my case breakfast and dinner), the ladies, glad to get their wet clothes off, bade me good night, and made the best of their way upstairs, and I was thinking of following their example when there came a loud rat-tat at the door.

"Jeannie," said her mother, "gang oot and see who's yon at the door at this unairthly hoor."

The girl came back more quickly than she went out, followed by a huge drunken creature, who flourished a ticket over his head, and with a volley of oaths demanded to be taken in for the night. It appeared that this gentleman was a currier on tramp. This was the currier's house of call, and, according to contract with the Trades' Union, our poor landlady was bound to find the fellow accommodation.

"Lord save us!" she muttered as she got supper ready for the new importation, "what'll become o' they pair lassies?"

"Jeannie!" she whispered, "ye'd better get the collops

ready whilst I gang ben wi' the gen'leman and see what's best to be done wi' the lassies.”

With that she beckoned me to follow her upstairs to the sleeping-apartment, which was divided into two compartments of equal dimensions. To reach the one at the farther end it was necessary to pass through the other, from which it was separated by a thin wooden partition. In the antechamber were two beds, merely divided from each other by a foot-board. The inner apartment was usually occupied by the widow and her daughter. It was her intention to-night to sleep on the settle below, ceding the place of honour to the young ladies, while I took up my quarters in the antechamber. She was a good motherly soul, and terribly anxious lest our poor girls should be annoyed by the drunken brute, who could now be plainly heard making night hideous below.

The ladies were already much alarmed, and would have turned out there and then, had not the storm warned them of the madness of such a proceeding. We reassured them, and they barricaded their apartment, while we made our way downstairs, where we found our friend washing down his supper with copious libations of whiskey. Ours being a temperance hotel, he had taken the precaution to provide himself with a bottle of mountain-dew.

I did not think that it was possible for the fellow to get more drunk than he was, but I was mistaken. He cursed and swore and roared out ribald songs, and called on me to join in the chorus. Enraged at my non-compliance, he uttered a succession of more or

less choice expletives. With an abrupt transition, he requested me to drink and be friends, and on my refusal threatened to brain me with the bottle.

Then ensued a conflict dire. Shouts and shrieks alarmed the house. Down came my poor friends, half dressed, and rushed at me, either for protection or to protect me—I'm not sure which. Jeannie and her mother caught hold of the carrier. In the struggle the bottle was smashed to pieces, spilling his precious whiskey. Then he "went" for the poker, and I "went" for him, with the result that he came a cropper. In falling he caught his head upon a small three-legged stool, and had his skull not been of abnormal thickness, it certainly must have been split to pieces. The contact with the kitchen floor quieted him. After I had undone his shirt collar and thrown a bowl of water over him, Jeannie placed a sofa cushion under his head; whereupon, swearing and snoring, he fell into a drunken stupor. With a sigh of relief the ladies once more returned to their room, and the landlady, after exacting a solemn promise that I would follow suit, also retired.

I made this promise merely to get rid of her importunities, and resolved to pass the night on the bench below; but the fire was out, my clothes were wet, my friend on the hearthstone was snoring like a pig. Tired nature asserted herself, and at length I slunk upstairs, crept into the vacant bed in the antechamber, and almost before my head was on the pillow, was fast asleep.

When I got down in the morning the pugnacious tramp had taken his departure, and Jeannie and her



mother were getting the breakfast ready. They asked no impertinent questions about payment, no more did I. Bidding them good morning, I went out to resume my search for the missing manager.

For two or three days there was no sign of him. The poor girls from Glasgow speedily ran out of their slender resources. Consequently, although it was bitterly cold, my great-coat had to go, there was no help for it. With the few shillings obtained from the last refuge for the destitute, we kept starvation at bay, and no one but ourselves dreamed how miserably poor we were.

During this time I struck up a friendly acquaintance with the landlord of the theatre. He told me he had had a letter from Pike stating that he would be in town shortly with his London company, the principal feature of which would be the celebrated tragedienne, Miss Montmorency de Rohan, from the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, and the eminent tragedian, Mr. Plantagenet Fitzroy, from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Meanwhile, he enclosed a copy of the bill for Monday next, when we were to open with *The Stranger*, etc. My new acquaintance did not take a very hopeful view of the prospects of the season.

He told me the last manager was G. V. Brooke, who did so badly that he had to leave the hotel he first put up at, and migrate to the place where Pike and I stayed on the first night; that, driven thence, he had ultimately to take refuge in the theatre itself, where he improvised a bed in the green-room (?) out of the green baize carpet. This was not reassuring.

The Glasgow girls were for getting back there, but I persuaded them to remain for the opening. At length, on Saturday, Mr. Pike turned up at the theatre, sweeping the stage as usual. He excused himself in the most plausible manner, alleging that he had left me to find his nephew; that when he came back I had gone; that he had called and paid the shot; that he had daily endeavoured to find me, etc. Fortunately we had the stage to ourselves, for our colloquy was of an animated character, and it is to be feared, had our new recruits overheard it, they would not have been favourably impressed with their future manager.

I cannot say that I was very much impressed with them. The tragedienne was a sensible, intelligent, wholly uninteresting middle-aged lady; the tragedian was tall, of more than middle age, grizzled and grey with care and trouble, but by no means a bad actor: altogether very nice people, but wholly unattractive.

As I have said, our "Temple of the drama" was located over a stable, which exhaled the most pungent perfumes, the most delectable odours. The horses, too, had a knack of interrupting our most pathetic scenes. Of course, we soon got used to that. The business was simply awful. That, however, was no novelty. Our principal difficulty was that as yet we had not learned to live without eating. When things get to the worst, they must mend or end, and we mended considerably when a certain family of dancers and actors came to fulfil an engagement with us. The troupe consisted of ten souls all told. There were monsieur and madame,

three sons, three daughters, and two Lancashire lads, yclept “The British Buffoes.”

Monsieur, who was a jolly little fat man, and whose personality suggested a likeness to Cupid taking to moulting and running to pod, had been a distinguished metropolitan performer at the minors. He was still a capital dancer, a splendid pantomimist, an admirable ballet-master, and one of the best actors of Frenchmen I have ever seen. Madame, who was tall and stately, with pronounced features, was an accomplished *danseuse* and a highly intelligent actress. The boys were smart, active, and clever ; while as for the girls, they were charming enough, but I had only eyes for one of them, whom I thought the loveliest, as certainly she was the most symmetrical, creature on earth. We were boy and girl together. Our united ages didn't amount to thirty. Small marvel, then, that we began to play *Romeo and Juliet* on our own account ?

Monsieur was very complaisant. In a moment of confidence he informed me that he was the original Idiot Witness in *A Tale of Blood* !—produced ages before you or I were born, gentle reader.

“Wait till you see my Idiot, young gentleman,” remarked monsieur with *naïveté*, and not without a certain amount of dignity, “and you will admit, with the critics, that I am the greatest idiot on the stage !”

I have no distinct recollection of the merits of that justly renowned impersonation, but I still retain a very vivid impression of monsieur's performance of Alexandre in *Victorine*, an impression which at one period threatened

to be indelible, inasmuch as in a moment of effusion monsieur did me the honour of firing a pistol bang into my face at six paces' distance! Unfortunately the property man was not in his normal condition on that evening. Had he been wholly and royally drunk, according to his constant custom, the pistol would not have been loaded at all, and, of course, couldn't have gone off. On this occasion (worse luck for me!) Mr. Sandie, for once in his life, was partially sober: hence the pistol was partially loaded, and hence I got the contents in my eyelids, escaping, however, with my sight.

*The Lady of Lyons* was selected for the benefit of the family on the last night of their engagement. Madame was Pauline—a little too mature, perhaps, for so immature a Claude; but this is a matter of detail. My goddess was Gaspar, though indeed she looked more like Ganymede, and I, for the first time, was to have essayed the part of Melnotte.

The rehearsal was over, and mademoiselle, who had donned her practising-dress, was trying her dance with the orchestra (a fiddle, a flute, and a trombone). The previous night I had acted Miles Bertram in *The Wreck Ashore*, and in the death struggle in the last scene had flung my *chapeau bras* off the stage. I required it for the prince's dress, and sought for it in every direction. At last the stage-cleaner told me she thought it had lodged amidst the spokes of a coach wheel we had used the preceding night for the burlesque of *Ixion*. On that occasion our property man (my usual luck!) had had his full cargo aboard, so he placed the huge wheel in the recess of the wall,

which abutted upon a steep ladder, that led to an abyss beneath the stage, twelve or fourteen feet deep. The ledge of the recess was about six inches wide. Of course, the intelligent Sandie had not secured the wheel to the wall by as much as a nail or a piece of twine. The descent from the stage was by a trap-door; and there was neither balustrade nor rope to guard it. I was going mooning down the ladder, and I may as well frankly confess, instead of looking where I was going, I was intently gazing on mademoiselle's rehearsal of *la grande battement*—a novel and extraordinary performance to me.

While engaged in this interesting and engrossing occupation, just as I had got my hand amidst the spokes of the wheel, my foot slipped; down I fell head foremost upon a heap of bricks and potsherds, and, of course (my luck again!), the wheel, weighing about two hundredweight, fell a-top of me! How long I remained unconscious I do not know. I only know that some time after I found myself seated in the yard outside, surrounded by a crowd of people. At first I was conscious of nothing but a skinful of aching bones. My agonies were somewhat allayed, however, by finding myself partially supported by the soft arms of my charmer—indeed, I began to think that it didn't matter much if every bone in my body was broken so long as my head reclined on that beautiful bosom. All at once, as in a dream, I heard a voice say in curt, sharp accents, “Open his vest, and give him air.”

Like lightning it flashed through my mind that

(not to put a fine point on it!) my shirt was not so clean as I could wish, and that—oh, horror!—I wore a “dickey.” Death sooner than air my dirty linen before my divinity, so up I sprang and wrestled furiously with my tormentors. Then I fainted.

When I came to, I was in bed at my lodgings. It seems I had slept for some hours; but I was still very feeble, and felt as if my backbone had been taken out and not put in again. At six o'clock came the doctor and young B——, the banker—a musical maniac who had composed a polka in honour of mademoiselle, and, what is more, had published it and dedicated it to the object of his heart's devotion. Though rivals, we were not enemies. In point of fact, our mutual admiration for mademoiselle was a bond of brotherhood between us. This good Samaritan brought me fruit and flowers, soup and wine. The fruit and flowers came from “her,” the soup and wine from himself. The doctor warned me that if I went out that night, it would be at peril of my life—indeed, he intimated that it might not be undesirable for me to go to the infirmary—certainly that it was absolutely necessary for me to rest for a month. This was a pleasant prospect. Without me the theatre could not open. What was to become of the company? Besides, perhaps I should never see “her” again.

When monsieur came an hour later, and told me that the house was crowded to the ceiling, that he and all his family (mademoiselle especially!) depended upon the receipts to enable them to leave the town, that an engagement of £50 a week awaited them at

Aberdeen, that if I only came to the rescue in this emergency, he, they, “she” would never forget it, etc., I thought, “I can only die once, after all! It is for *her* sake, and I will chance it!” So out I went, taking my life in my hands. How I got through the night I don’t know. I remember that people helped me to dress and undress at the side of the stage, that I staggered on and off until the curtain fell, and then all was chaos!

When I awoke some days afterwards, my friendly rival, the banker, told me that “the family” were in Aberdeen, but that “she” had written sending all sorts of kind remembrances.

A considerable period elapsed before I again encountered mademoiselle. Years after, when the Princess’s was under Charles Kean’s management, I saw a little piece there called *A Prince for an Hour*, and another entitled *Faust and Marguerite*. Imagine my astonishment and delight in recognising in the hero of the first and the heroine of the second piece (surely Cupid in the one and Psyche in the other) my Gaspar on the memorable occasion when I broke my head and lost my heart, at the Theatre Royal, Kilmarnock. When the curtain fell on the seraphic vision, which terminated the play, it was not without a pang of regret that I realised that if I had not been such an ass as to turn up my nose at a proposal Charles Kean had made me a few months previous, I might perhaps have been the Faust to her Marguerite. I fear had I met David Fisher that night in a dark place, it would not have been well for my friend David.

But I must hark back from Eros and Oxford Street to the starving strollers in Kilmarnock. When we were left to our own resources, the receipts dwindled down to nothing. Unable to pay our way at our lodgings, George Pike, Harry Milford, and I had to follow the example of G. V. Brooke, and take up our quarters in the green-room, and sleep on the carpet.

From Kilmarnock we went to Stewarttown, where we were to have acted in a barn; but, as no one came to see us, we had to walk back to Kilmarnock.

I pause to note a peculiar occurrence which took place during this journey. Half a dozen lassies joined us on the road in convoy of various carts. From their conversation and their dress, I judged that they were farmers' daughters. They were well, some of them even sumptuously, dressed, but stumped along bare-footed. When we got in sight of the town, they plumped themselves down beside a running burn; then, *sans cérémonie*, washed their feet and donned their shoes and stockings, so as to be *comme il faut* for Kilmarnock. One young lady, the heaviest swell of the party, actually had silken hose and sandalled shoon.

Our next "pitch" was at a small town called Irvine, near to Eglinton Castle, where the famous tournament had recently taken place, and where the old feudal custom prevailed of keeping open hall to all hungry wayfarers. Our boys went there daily, and "ate of the fat and drank of the sweet"; but my loathing of the flunky tribe made me, despite the pangs of hunger, hold aloof.

One occasionally hears ancient idiots talking of the



good old strolling times. Thank God! I only trod upon the heels of those times. My shrift was short. It was enough, however, to last for the rest of my life. The buoyancy of youth, health, and strength, hope in the future, ambition, did not enable me to endure with equanimity the squalid, ignoble horrors of those degrading experiences, and even at this distance I recall them with a shuddering loathing.

I had parted with everything except what I stood up in. Poverty and misery and starvation had done their worst, when, lo! George Nelson, a comrade from Belfast, who was located in Glasgow, wrote and offered me an engagement at five-and-twenty shillings a week to join the new Prince of Wales's Theatre in that city.

I did not pause to think, but started off there and then. I walked the journey, four-and-twenty miles, without bite or sup (save a drink of water with which I slaked my thirst from a roadside well), and crawled into my friend's lodgings in Glasgow hungry, weary, and footsore just as evening was closing. My dear old chum provided me with a change of underclothing, a tub, and a dinner, the like of which I had not tasted for many a long day; and when the pangs of hunger were assuaged, and I could keep my eyes open no longer, he undressed and put me to bed, where I lay in a dreamless stupor till the following afternoon.

## CHAPTER XII

### "THE WIZARD OF THE NORTH"

Glasgow Fair Half a Century Ago—Successor to Bartlemy—A Plethora of Theatres—Purpureal Kings and Sanguineous "Villins"—Theatre Royal, Sawdust—The Eccentric and Generous Forkey—I make my *débat* as Mercutio—*Veni, Vidi, Vinci*—Am secured by the Wizard of the North for the City Theatre—Sims Reeves—Laura Addison—Barry Sullivan and James Bennett—"All is Roman but the Roman's Nose"—My first Introduction to the Edinburgh Company and Taglioni at the Theatre Royal—Behind the Scenes—Fanny Fitzwilliam in *The Green Bushes*—I move over to the Adelphi—James Anderson—Hudson Kirby—Cathcart, the Eccentric Tragedian—Tom Lyon—Boddie—G. V. Brooke—William Howard—Mary Glover—And Rosina Saker (afterwards Mrs. Wyndham of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh)—The Massacre of Glencoe—I distinguish myself as John Macdonald—A Great *Impresario Incog.* sees and secures me for Banquo—The Theatre Royal, Edinburgh—Adieu to Strolling and Sawdust.

WHEN I turned out and had tubbed and breakfasted, I felt fresh as paint; then George opened fire. "The Prince of Wales" (so-called) Theatre was a large wooden building erected on the Green for Glasgow Fair. It was in point of fact what we in England should call a "show." I objected to the prospect, but when my friend reminded me that the Adelphi (then occupied by one of the best companies in existence) was built of wood; that the company I was about to join comprised, besides himself, many actors and actresses of undoubted ability and respecta-

bility, and, above all, that the money was sure and safe as the Bank of Scotland, I began to hesitate.

“Anyhow,” said George, “come round and see the place and the people.”

So round we went to the Green, where we found an unexpected and to me an unprecedented sight—a perfect eruption of theatres, licensed and unlicensed—theatres to suit every taste and every pocket. At the very corner of the Green stood the Adelphi, a very fine wooden building, to the right of which stood on the adjacent corner Mumford’s “Baubee Show,” where a very capable company of comedians was wont to give three performances a night of *Hamlet* or *Othello* for three half-pence! Years after, Robert Buchanan, the poet, and Moyer Smith, the painter, have often assured me that in their young days they were frequent patrons of Mumford & Co., and fervent admirers of the tragedian of the company. This gentleman particularly distinguished himself in his “back falls,” which, together with his dying scenes, were enthusiastically encored! When the curtain fell upon *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Richard*, or *Macbeth*, it was invariably taken up again in obedience to vociferous shouts of “Up with the Hippen! Dee again, Geordie! Dee again, laddie, and mair power to ye.”

Lower down, to the left of Mumford’s, stood Calvert’s Theatre—a very large building with a very efficient company. Exactly opposite the Adelphi stood Daniels’ Theatre. This was a brick building, and here was an admirable company of local favourites, many of whom afterwards attained distinguished positions. To the left

of the Adelphi, towards the centre of the Green, stood our theatre, The Prince of Wales ; to the left of that, again, the new and splendid City Theatre, just erected by John Henry Anderson, the Wizard of the North.

Glasgow Fair lasted for fully six weeks, during which all these theatres were in full blast. I am under the impression that even at the period of which I am now speaking this was the sole survival of what had once been a most popular institution in Merrie England. Bartlemy Fair flourished as far back as the time of Shakespeare—witness Ben Jonson—or is it Shadwell's comedy? We know that Alleyn (Shakespeare's rival manager and founder of the College of God's gift at Dulwich) annually plied for hire here. Later, His Majesty's servants from the Patent Theatres thought it no disgrace to come down to Smithfield to make money, and even the genial author of *Tom Jones* did not deem it derogatory to "set up a tambourine of his own" on this veritable Tom Tiddler's ground ; while, of course, every one knows that Edmund Kean did not disdain to take an occasional handspring on the parade of old Richardson's show at Bartlemy.

When I had taken stock of this wonderful sight, I was introduced to my new manager. Mr. Daniel, popularly known as "Forky," was the most cockneyish cockney that ever emerged from the purlieus of White-chapel, but a good fellow withal.

"Well, sir," says he, without ceremony, "are you a bloomin' king or a bloomin' villin?"

The question posed me, and I frankly told him that I didn't understand it.

He then explained that “a bloomin’ king or a sanguineous villin” were to his mind types of the “Tragedy Jack,” of whom he said he had enough and to spare. He wanted “sogers and sailors.”

Upon my replying that I was a soldier and a sailor to boot, he responded, “Then, sir, you’re just the chap to suit my fireplace. You won’t mind my rough way, but under the *circs* p’r’aps a ‘bit’ won’t be amiss!”

Then he shook hands with me and disappeared, leaving a sovereign behind him.

I was a little overcome with the unostentatious kindness of this rough diamond. If I could only swallow my false pride, it was evident I had alighted in a pleasant place, for I was treated with almost chivalrous courtesy by the older members of the troupe, most of whom were ladies and gentlemen in the best sense of the term. Our theatre was not completed and would not be finished until Wednesday. On Monday morning, when I went round to see the stage manager, that gentleman, who was the brother of Mrs. Ryder, wife of the original Rob Roy, informed me I was to open in the juvenile part in *Amazou and Amazitli*, a Peruvian drama taken from one of Kotzebue’s plays. New dresses were made for everybody, and I had to be measured for mine. Evidently costume was Mr. Daniel’s strong point, for he was there superintending this department. When I had been measured, he followed me out.

“My gallant sailor laddie,” said he, “excuse my way of puttin’ it, but I like the cut of your jib!”

Strikes me you've been under the weather with that there bloomin' Mr. Pike! You jist come and take a stroll round, and let's see if we can't put you to rights."

So saying, he took me round to a tailor's in the immediate vicinity.

"Now, Mr. Mucklehose," said he, "this young gent is a friend of mine; he's bin a fallin' among thieves lately, and I want him to be togged out to the nines. Let him have what he wants, and put it down to me—to me, you understand?"

"Quite, Mr. Daniel."

Then the tailor, who was a decent, fatherly old fellow, took me to his own room, called in his foreman to measure me, and overhauled a dozen suits, till he found something that fitted me.

"Ye can wear those," said he, "till yours are ready."

In a few days I was clothed and "in my perfect mind," and a boy once more!

Our Peruvian drama was a great success, not so much, I think, for the acting as for the costumes, which were profusely adorned with zinc ornaments called "Logies," after the man who had discovered them. I had never seen them before, and I don't think the audience had. As we moved about, the stage seemed to glitter with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds. I was completely lost in the splendour of this gorgeous gallimaufry, and made no mark whatever; but it was a very different thing when I came to Mercutio. My manager had watched the play anxiously from the

front, and when I was carried off the stage dying, he rushed behind in great agitation and made a descent upon the stage manager. After a hurried whispered colloquy, Mr. Daniel, quite regardless of what was going on in the play, burst out, “Die—die be d——d! He sha’n’t die! I won’t have it! Ain’t it enough for them bloomin’ kings to be always a kickin’ the bucket and making one low-sperited? He ain’t engaged to die, and he shan’t, that’s flat! Here, I say, laddie,” he continued, addressing me, “you ain’t dead yet; you’re worth a dozen dead ’uns. Go on and give that black-muzzled guffin his gruel!” indicating Tybalt. “Kill the other cove, too,—that there Rummyo; marry the gell yourself, and live ’appy ever arter. That’s my notion of a play!”

“But the author, sir?”

“Blame the author! Is he the boss of this show or am I?”

“But Shakespeare, sir?”

“Oh, blow Shikespeare! What’s Shikespeare got to do with the show?”

“Not much; only he wrote the play.”

“Then he’s an old-fashioned cuss, and ain’t up to date, or he would not have killed a chap like you in the third act.”

“He was bound to do, or I should have killed everybody else.”

“I wish to Gawd you had! especially that muffin-headed Rummyo! He goes moonin’ and spoonin’ about, wantin’ to be a glove upon ’er ’and! What’s the good of a glove? I never wore one in my life! Why don’t

'e jump hup like a man and say, 'Ere, I is, old gel, give us a clip, and on we go to Turkey! Tell 'ee what it is, that cove gives me a pain in the innards, and every time I see him I have to go and get a shuv in the mouth. I'm off round the corner to have one now!"

This incident was repeated with embellishments, and went the rounds of the Green, till it reached Anderson, who, having already opened his new theatre with his legerdemain business, intended to devote it to its legitimate purpose as soon as the fair was over. The first time *Romeo and Juliet* was repeated (and it was acted several times; on some occasions twice or even three times a night) the "Wizard" came in to see it, with the result that he came round and offered me an engagement. Of course, I submitted the proposal to my generous showman.

"Go, laddie," said he. "Go like a bird, and good luck go with you."

"But the money I owe you?"

"Never mind that—I don't!"

"But I *do*! How shall I repay you?"

"How? Why, as you like and when you like, and if you never repay me, I daresay I shall get over it, and with a bit to spare!"

Anderson was a remarkable man. He commenced life in a showman's van at the foot of the Saut Market, making properties and fighting broad-sword combats, in which much despised art he was still an expert. Indeed, he was one of the best swordsmen I ever saw;



but he was not an actor, although he was under the firm impression to the day of his death that he was one. He was wont to say that all the money he had ever made as a conjurer had never compensated for the grievous disappointment he had sustained in not achieving the object of his ambition as an actor. When at the back of Godspeed, up in the Highlands (at Inverness, I think), he picked up an old Italian property man who taught him some sleight-of-hand tricks. To keep the wolf from the door, they went round and gave their performance at schools and such-like places.

Succeeding beyond anticipation, it occurred to Anderson that he had got hold of a good thing, so he went to work with a will, dubbed himself Wizard of the North, put a new face upon his entertainment, got together a glittering paraphernalia of gold and silver plate and some splendid printing, made his way to town, took the Adelphi, which happened to be vacant, manipulated the press, and became famous.

Among his friends at this period was Louis Napoleon (so-called Buonaparte), then in indigent circumstances. The Wizard became his Highness's banker upon more than one occasion, even actually found a great portion of the sinews of war for the Boulogne fiasco. To be quite just to his “illustrious friend,” he not only faithfully repaid the loan, but proved a generous patron afterwards.

Anderson became wealthy as well as famous. He performed before Queen Victoria at Windsor, before Louis Philippe at the Tuileries, before the Czar Nicholas at St. Petersburg, and I don't know where else. When

I first saw him at Belfast, I was struck with his good looks and his stalwart form. He was then a tall, handsome, well-built man of forty, with oval face, fine features, a well-balanced head, and a profusion of fair, sandy hair flecked with gold, parted in the centre and clubbed at the ends. He wore an elaborate evening dress and a wonderful embroidered shirt, large cuffs turned up *à la D'Orsay*, with a certain air of distinction. Had he kept his mouth closed, he might have posed as Cagliostro Redivivus (that is, the Cagliostro of Dumas, not of Carlyle); but, as "that ferocious literary ruffian" (so Byron christened him), Theodore Hook, said of poor Conway, "What a pity it was that the thing spoke!" His first utterance broke the spell which his appearance had created.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he in a strange jumble of cockney and Glaswegian, "you will observe, and I beg you to keep your heye on me, 'ere his three heggs."

Although his grammar was of dubious quality, his legerdemain was never at fault. As a conjurer he carried everything before him; but, alas! he could no more keep out of the theatre than a thirsty cat can keep her whiskers out of a bowl of cream. He had no sooner made a fortune by conjuring than he lost it by management. Prior to the present experiment, he had been manager of the Theatres Royal, Liverpool and Manchester, with the usual result.

The City Theatre was a noble and commodious house, replete with every modern improvement, and built (as all theatres should be) in an open space. Had I

known Anderson's game, I should not have been in such a hurry to enlist under his banner. Determined to carry everything before him, he engaged a double company in every department : an opera company, headed by Sims Reeves, and a dramatic company, headed by the rival tragedians, Mr. James Bennett, Mr. Barry Sullivan, and my idol the beautiful and majestic Laura Addison. He had engaged two ladies and two gentlemen for every line of business, with the intention of having his pick of the best, retaining the successful, and dismissing the unsuccessful, candidates for public favour. As nearly every member of the company had taken long and expensive journeys from England, much discontent ensued, and the theatre was a perfect hot-bed of strife. The disaffection was increased by the unprecedented coercion of nearly every member of the dramatic company into the chorus for the various operas. The opera season lasted for a month, during the greater portion of which time Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Bennett, and Miss Laura Addison were condemned to inglorious inactivity.

For my own part, solaced by the increased emolument of thirty shillings a week and the delightful company amongst whom I found myself, I endured my hard fate with equanimity. Miss Addison, who was rather unapproachable to the masculine members of the rank and file, was graciously pleased, in consideration of my youth and my profound admiration of her ability, to permit me to offer her small attentions, such as seeing her home from the theatre when the play was over, etc. This charming woman was afterwards well known in London under the Phelps

and Greenwood *régime*, and ultimately—poor soul!—was supposed to have committed suicide in America by leaping from the deck of a Mississippi steamer at the very point where the unfortunate Conway had previously leaped overboard, and where Lucius Junius Booth had also tried the same experiment. Many members of our company were already distinguished, and many others ultimately attained distinction, especially our low comedian, young Harry Bedford (nephew of “leettle Paul”), who was a great favourite with the Glaswegians, and who soon afterwards joined the Haymarket Company.

Our rival tragedians were both men of thirty or thirty-five. Bennett was below the middle height, sturdy, and well built, with fine open brow, beautiful and expressive dark eyes, an abundance of luxuriant, curly dark hair, but a most unfortunate nose—a nose of a most irregular order, a rugged nose, an irritating nose, an assertive and defiantly pugnacious nose, which appeared to be always in the way. Just when you had settled down to admire some tender and pathetic bit of acting, up popped the nose and down went the actor.

When I was in Bristol years later, James Chute was wont to relate with great glee an anecdote anent poor Bennett's nasal promontory while he was enacting Titus to the Roman father of James Wallack, in Howard Payne's hotch-potch of *Brutus: The Fall of Tarquin*. It will be remembered that the stern parent condemns his son to death for treason to the Republic. After a last embrace, father and son part for ever. Titus is about to go forth to death. The house was still

as the grave—a pin might have been heard to drop. At this supreme moment a fiend in human form arose in the box nearest to Bennett, and exclaimed in a voice tremulous with simulated emotion, “Oh, cruel Roman father! how could you have the heart to doom to death a son with such a—Roman nose?”

There is only one line to speak after the exit of Titus, “Justice is satisfied and Rome is free!”

The last line spoken on this occasion by Wallack was, “D——n ye! ring down!” and down came the curtain with a roar, in which, to his shame be it said, the Roman father joined, while Bennett’s indignation may be better imagined than described.

Sullivan was tall, slender, and well built. His face, typically Irish, was deeply furrowed with small-pox and scarred with a pistol-shot, which he had received in a stage struggle at Edinburgh years before. Strongly marked and expressive features they were; indeed, had it not been for that unfortunate small-pox, he would have been actually handsome: firm-set jaws, a set of teeth of dazzling whiteness, dark hair, dark beard, huge bushy black eyebrows, and fine piercing eyes of Irish blue. Such was the bold Barry of my youth. He particularly resented being kept idle, and as I sympathised with him, he poured his wrongs into the ears of a not unwilling listener. He told me that he had made his first appearance in Cork under the management of the eccentric genius referred to in the last chapter, one Frank Seymour, the hero of a thousand and one amusing stories. From Cork, Sullivan went the round of the “smalls” in Ireland, acting in barns, at wakes, and

country fairs, until at length, by a lucky accident, he obtained an engagement at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, where he was the stock villain. More recently he had been acting at Aberdeen, Dundee, Arbroath, Montrose, etc. When he accepted the engagement for Glasgow, he anticipated undivided sway ; so did Bennett ; and their indignation was unbounded when they found themselves pitted against each other.

At length the rival tragedians were notified that they were each to open as Claude Melnotte, while Miss Addison and Mrs. Dyas were noticed for Pauline ; but the play was to be done *after* the opera of *The Bohemian Girl*. Then more rows. But the man who "holds the bag" is usually the master, and the Wizard was no exception to this rule. Bennett was the older and more experienced, though not the better, actor, and, though anything but a typical Claude, took the popular fancy. Sullivan ran his rival hard in Claude, Hamlet, and Romeo ; but when it came to Macbeth, Othello, and parts of that class, he was pronounced to be an admirable but too modern walking gentleman actor of tragedy, while Bennett was proclaimed to be a tragedian. The result was (and a very shameful result, too) that Bennett remained "monarch of all he surveyed," while Sullivan was dismissed. This was a wrong which he never forgot and never forgave, even when time had reversed this unjust verdict. Only a few years ago, while dining *tête-à-tête* with me at the Savage, this subject cropped up, and instantly lashed him to a white heat.

During our opera season the Edinburgh company

paid a flying visit to the Theatre Royal with *la grande* Taglioni and Monsieur Silvain, who, by the by, was said to be a Sullivan with an O'—Barry's own brother, and a real Paddy from Cork! The prices were commensurate with the attraction—ten shillings to the boxes, five to the upper boxes, four to the pit, three to the first gallery, and two to the upper.

At our theatre we were all anxious to see the terpsichorean divinity, but the free list was entirely suspended. In this emergency our chorus master, Doctor Deval (he was a doctor of music in some foreign university) undertook to give me a peep.

Our choragus was a very agreeable fellow, but modesty was not his foible. When we got to the box office in Dunlop Street, we were informed that the theatre was crowded to overflowing, and that hundreds had been turned away. Nothing daunted, the doctor took me to the stage door. Presenting his card and sixpence, he demanded immediate audience of Alexander. The moment Cerberus's back was turned, my friend bolted upstairs, bidding me follow him. The ballet of *La Sylphide* was going on, and the whole of the ladies of the Edinburgh company (Miss L. Melville, Miss Julia St. George, Miss Clara Tellet, Miss Nicoll, Miss Cleaver, and I don't know how many others) were in the prompt entrance looking at Taglioni.

“Good evening, ladies,” said the doctor in the most airy manner. “Allow me to introduce my young friend Mr. Coleman.”

Though rather astonished, the ladies received me

with politeness, if not with cordiality. At this moment "Alick" himself appeared furious with rage.

"What! What! Where is he?—where is the blackguard?" he roared. Then, catching sight of Deval, he "went" for him and caught him by the throat. "Ye infernal, impudent scoundrel, how dar' ye come here? Oot ye go—oot—oot!"

And out they did go, tumbling down the stairs, and cursing and swearing as they rolled over each other. The explanation of this mysterious conflict was that Deval had been in Alexander's company a season or two before, and had left without giving the notice stipulated in his engagement.

As for me, safely sheltered by the petticoats, I saw for the first and only time the goddess of the dance, the divine Taglioni. Those who are accustomed to the acrobatic ballerinas of to-day can scarcely realise the swanlike yet vivacious grace which permeated every movement of this renowned *danseuse*. Her dancing was not confined to her limbs, nor even to her body; her very soul seemed to dance in unison with the delightful measure. She was, indeed, "the poetry of motion" incarnate. The nearest approach I have seen to this divinity of the dance in later days was made by the accomplished Henriette d'Or, in "my noble friend's" colossal fairy folly of *Babil and Bijou* at Covent Garden.

After *La Sylphide* came *Ella Rosenberg*, in the shape of Miss Melville, a lady of remarkable beauty and a charming actress; Edmund Glover (first of leading men) as Rosenberg; Robert Wyndham (first of juveniles) as the Elector; George Maynard as



the villain ; Lloyd as Flitterman ; Miss Nicoll (dear, delightful old lady !) as Mrs. Flitterman ; and “Alick,” the unapproachable, as Storm. I protest I liked him better the second time than the first. Excellent as were the Edinburgh comedians on this occasion, he towered head and shoulders above them all !

The termination of our opera season was signalised by a scene between Anderson and Sims Reeves of a somewhat grotesque character. During the last week *Lucia de Lammermoor* was announced, but the performance came to grief during the second act. Who was to blame I don't know, and at this distance of time 'tis scarcely necessary to inquire. Reeves placed the blame upon the band and the chorus ; Anderson placed it upon Reeves and his colleagues. One thing is quite certain : whoever was right or whoever was wrong, Reeves refused to go on with the third act, and the audience resented it. He addressed them insolently ; they rebuked him indignantly ; there was a row and measureless confusion.

Saturday was the last night of the engagement ; and when it came to a settlement, Anderson, by way of penalty for breach of contract, mulcted Reeves & Co. their share of the receipts of the night on which the breakdown occurred. It was growing late (nearly twelve o'clock) ; Anderson was on the stage. Down came Reeves with “his martial cloak round him” and wrath upon his brow.

“What's this—what's this I hear ?” he inquired. “This d——d conjurer refuses to pay our share of Thursday night ?”

“ Yes, sir, this d——d conjurer does ! ”

“ Look here, Mr. Hankey Pankey, I don't stir out of this (adjective) place till I have my share of Thursday night's receipts.”

“ Don't you? Then, by Jove, you'll stay here a long time! Sanderson!” calling the hall porter on the stage, “ ‘when from St. Mungo's tower the bell proclaims the midnight hour,’ mind ye bolt and lock every door in the building, and take care ye don't unbolt or unlock 'em till Monday morning—ye understand? ”

“ Pairfectly, sir.”

“ All right! Good-night, Signor Squallissimo ! ”

Without another word, off went the Wizard. Happening to be an eye-witness of this scene, I waited to see the end. Reeves, Morley, Mr. and Mrs. Alban Croft, held an eager and excited conference, amidst which locks, bolts, etc., were heard being shot, bolted, and barred in all parts of the theatre. Then came the big bell of St. Mungo, with its “ding dong, bom bom”; then the great tenor and his colleagues gave it up as a bad job, and made their exit, muttering “curses both loud and deep” upon the “d——d Hankey Pankey man!”

The new theatre and the strength of the company enabled our astute manager to dispense almost altogether with “stars.” Indeed, our only auxiliary attraction was Mrs. Fitzwilliam, who brought with her *The Green Bushes* and *The Daughter of the Regiment* (then entirely new dramas), and what she called a monologue entitled, *The Belle of the Hotel*, in which

she enacted some half-dozen different characters. “The Song of the Regiment” and the Yankee refrain of “Old Rosin the Beau” caught the public fancy, and were hummed, sung, or whistled here, there, everywhere, from the Green to the Grove of Kelvinside. *The Green Bushes*, too, made a great hit, and packed the theatre nightly. Apropos of this play, Buckstone told me that it was entirely original. The description was unique in its simplicity.

“I took,” said he, “certain quires of foolscap and wrote the piece clean out of my head.”

Despite this assurance, the genesis of “Nelly O’Neil” can most surely be traced to Mrs. S. C. Hall’s interesting novel *The Follower of the Family*. Although this part has been acted by thousands of accomplished actresses since those days, there has never been but one “Nelly,” and her name was Fanny Fitzwilliam. For her benefit she acted one of the numerous plays written for her by Buckstone, called *Native Airs and Foreign Graces*, in which she polyphonically and accurately reproduced every instrument in the orchestra.

By the by, I may here remark that during one of the operatic rehearsals I have seen Sims Reeves take up half a dozen instruments and play difficult passages for the instruction of instrumentalists who were unable to comprehend or at least to execute them accurately.

At this particular period Mrs. Fitzwilliam had reached the meridian of life and the zenith of her powers; and although afterwards she created “Starlight Bess” and two or three other characters, it was with a deep sense of regret that years later I saw

her "lagging superfluous on the stage" of the Haymarket, vainly endeavouring to impersonate characters for which her increasing age and adiposity unfitted her—notably, Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine (*Serious Family*). The last time I ever saw her was in the doublet and hose and Lincoln green of bold Robin Hood, in the burlesque of *Ivanhoe*. It was a sight to remember only to regret.

The Wizard himself enacted Rob Roy, Wandering Steenie (*Rose of Estrick Vale*), and Hardy Canute in a splendid production of *One o'Clock; or, the Knight and the Wood Daemon*, one of those wild, improbable spectacular dramas which Monk Lewis had rendered popular at Drury Lane or Covent Garden nearly a century ago. If not a brilliant actor, Anderson was a very imposing personage, and cut a brilliant figure in his silver armour. In this production I had the pleasure of renewing my acquaintance with "monsieur," "madame," and my divinity, "mademoiselle," who distinguished themselves very highly in the episodic *ballet d'action*.

Among this crowd of ambitious aspirants I rarely got a part of any kind to play, and, as a matter of course, became very disaffected. Although compelled to accept my position in the chorus, I was amply avenged by howling out of tune and time and putting everybody out; but when it came to, "My lord, the carriage waits," I struck and resigned my engagement, and there and then transferred my services to the Adelphi, where I found much greater scope and, indeed, much greater courtesy.

During my stay Mr. Tom Lyon, from the London Adelphi, came to produce *Don Cæsar de Bazan*. From some extraordinary caprice he wore a blanket as a cloak in his first scene of the ragged cavalier. A capital rough actor was Lyon, but not a Don Cæsar.

Mr. James Anderson (then a paragon of manly beauty) came down to his birthplace. This distinguished actor was literally bred upon the stage, and made his first appearance upon it as the child, in *Pizarro*, in the arms of John Kemble. During Macready's management of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, Anderson was admitted, even by the partisans of Charles Kemble, to be the best Orlando, Faulconbridge, and Icilius on the English stage. He was Madame Vestris's leading man at Covent Garden, where he was the original Charles Courtley in *London Assurance* and the original Huon in *Love*. For two seasons he was himself manager of Drury Lane, where he was the original Fiesco (Planche's adaptation of Schiller), and the original *Azael the Prodigal*. In his prime he was the best Claude Melnotte, Petruccio, and Don Felix I ever saw ; and his Hamlet, Othello, and Shylock held their own beside the very best. When I first saw him, in my childhood, he was the beau ideal of Phœbus Apollo ; when I last saw him and had a chat with him some years ago, he was the very handsomest old fellow in existence—the exact type of Jupiter Tonans.

After Anderson came Mr. W. J. Hammond, formerly manager of the Great Northern Circuit and of the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, and more recently of the Strand Theatre, where his Sam Weller in the

Pickwickians and his Othello in Dowling's burlesque upon this great work took the town by storm. His success at the Strand induced him to tempt fate at Drury Lane, with the result that, after a short and disastrous season, he made his last appearance in town at Basinghall Street. Being a decent vocalist, this accomplishment stood him in good stead in some of the old musical farces. His

Amo, amas, I love a lass,  
As a cedar tall and slender,  
Rorum, Corum, Gentivorum,  
Oh! Lovely Feminine Gender!

in O'Keefe's idiotic and now obsolete farce, combined with an extravagant wig, never failed to bring down the house. W. J. had wigs of all kinds and costumes of every description, but he was always Hammond in another wig and another coat. Of all the parts in his numerous *répertoire*, Paul Pry, Tristram Sappy (*Deaf as a Post*), and Fixture (*A Roland for an Oliver*) were about the best—and in these he was hard to beat.

Our leading actor, Mr. Cathcart, father of my friends "Jimmy and Roley" (so long with Charles Kean) and of Jane (Mrs. Heir), a popular actress at the Antipodes, on the strength of his popularity in Dublin, *débüté*d at Covent Garden as Jaffier (*Venice Preservée*), and was the original Cromwell in his friend Miss Mitford's *Charles I.*, on its production at the Victoria. This gentleman had previously been leading actor with Alexander, who had dismissed him at a moment's notice for taking a call before the curtain,

after playing Macduff to Charles Kean's Macbeth. This arbitrary procedure excited great sympathy amongst the Glaswegians, who crowded the city hall, and enabled Cathcart to clear upwards of one hundred pounds by a benefit there ; besides which, it established him as a great popular favourite at the Adelphi.

Nature, which had endowed this gentleman with brains, had encumbered him with a somewhat superfluous amount of adipose tissue. Tall and stout, with florid complexion, blue-eyed, and curly-headed, he had unfortunately a celestial nose and a huge torso, which protruded before and behind, and was supported by a pair of clumsy wooden legs. When in repose, his favourite attitude irresistibly suggested a batrachoid origin, which prompted the irreverent to dub him “Froggy.” His gestures were frequently grotesque and exaggerated ; but, despite his *gaucherie* and occasional extravagance, he always impressed you with the fact that he was a gentleman and a scholar, besides which, he was one of the best Shakespearian readers of his time. If one could have forgotten his physical drawbacks, his Hamlet, Iago, and Jaffier were performances of the highest order of excellence, while his Prospero, Ludovico (*Evadne*), Sir Oliver, Surface, and Master Walter were performances I have never seen excelled.

Apropos of Jaffier, one night, during his performance of that character in conjunction with the Pierre of Mr. Lyon, a very remarkable circumstance occurred. The Belvidera of the occasion was Mrs. De B——, a lady of mature years, but of still remarkable beauty

of face and figure. Just as she had made her entrance at one of the most critical periods of the play, a bronzed and weather-beaten soldier, who was witnessing the performance in the pit, started up, and in a piercing voice exclaimed, "My God! Sure that's my wife! Norah, Norah, acushla alanna machen! don't ye know your own Mickey?"

At the sound of his voice, Belvidera shrieked and fell senseless. The soldier elbowed his way through the crowd, leaped over the orchestra on to the stage, clasped his long-lost wife to his bosom, and the curtain descended upon one of the most sensational tableaux ever witnessed even in a theatre. They had been married in their youth at Dublin. Through some domestic difference, in a fit of spleen he had enlisted, and was shipped the very next day for the Indies. Left wholly unprovided for, she had recourse to the stage for a livelihood. Years elapsed without a sign of her truant husband, and, deeming him dead, she had married a little Irish comedian, Terence O'Brallaghan, dignified into De B—— for stage purposes. Possibly it was just as well for all parties that poor B—— had drunk himself to death, leaving his buxom widow free to return to her first love.

We were particularly strong in ladies. Miss Rosina Saker, our leading lady, was a remarkably handsome woman, and an accomplished and, indeed, admirable actress, good in everything, from a fairy prince to Nancy Sykes or Lady Macbeth. Mrs. Hudson Kirby, too, was at that period equally charming, and, up to a very recent date, retained her vigour and much of



her beauty. Miss Mary Glover, the daughter of the great Mrs. Glover, was an accomplished vocalist and a capital comedy actress. Dame Nature, who had cast her face in the homeliest mould, had endowed her with a divinely symmetrical figure. In *Don Giovanni in London* she was a veritable Apollo.

At or about this time a memorable performance took place at the Dunlop Street Theatre during the engagement of the lady so cruelly caricatured as the “Juvenile Phenomenon” in *Nicholas Nickleby*. It is now a matter of history that the “Vincent Crumles,” so called, was Mr. Davenport, manager for a term of the Norwich Circuit, the Portsmouth, Olympic, and other theatres, and that the “Juvenile Phenomenon” was that admirable and accomplished actress, afterwards known, both here and in America, as Mrs. Lander, whose husband, it may be remarked *en passant*, was a distinguished general in the American Army.

Edward Laman Blanchard always maintained that Dickens had at one time been a member of the Davenport Company in Portsmouth, and the description of the walk of Nicholas and Smike to Portsmouth, and Dickens’s intimate knowledge of the inner life of the theatre, lend colour to this theory. I once ventured to broach it to “the master” himself, but he laughed it off, although he admitted that it was the greatest disappointment of his life not to have been a great and successful actor. When I replied, “But you *are* a great actor,” he retorted, “That’s all very well, but I wanted to be *the* great actor—to have the public at my feet!”

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "you are like Alexander when he sighed for new worlds to conquer. You *have* the public at your feet, and they have you in their hearts. What more can you desire?"

To return, however, to the Davenports. In consequence of Alexander's tyranny, there had been a revolt in Dunlop Street, which culminated in the secession of some of the principal members of the company, who swelled the already overflowing ranks of Anderson and Miller; hence it came to pass that when poor Miss Davenport had to play Juliet, there was neither a Romeo nor a Mercutio left in the company. In the emergency the two old stagers, Alexander and Davenport, stepped into the breach, the one as Romeo, the other as Mercutio. At the announcement, all play-going Glasgow, well acquainted with the facts which led to "this effect defective," was up in arms, and when the night came, the malcontents crowded the theatre with the avowed intent to make a row. This was hard on poor Juliet, but the many-headed monster is a cruel beast. Such a scene was never witnessed in a theatre before, and it is to be hoped will never be witnessed again.

Mr. Clarence Holt (an actor of ability and a manager of large experience) assured me that Miss Davenport in her youth was not only one of the best Juliets, Paulines, Letitia Hardys, and Lady Teazles of her day, but a most accomplished vocalist, who frequently essayed the part of Prima Donna in *Sonnambula*, *Crown Diamonds*, etc. Those mature playgoers who were so fortunate as to witness the admirable art of

Mrs. Lander in Giacometti's *Elizabeth* and other similar characters at the Lyceum, a few years ago, will possibly be enabled to form their own opinions of the accuracy of the great novelist's strictures on the "Juvenile Phenomenon," who, before his advent, had actually been received as a popular and successful "star" at the Haymarket in her Protean performance, *The Manager's Daughter*. Although I had not the good fortune to see this distinguished artist at her prime, I have had the great pleasure of frequently meeting her since her retirement, and a very gracious and accomplished lady I have found her. More than once I have tried to "draw her" about Nicholas Nickleby's experiences at Portsmouth. Evidently the subject was uncongenial; she was difficult to be "drawn," and passed the subject by with the easy indifference of "my dear Lady Disdain."

My stay in Glasgow terminated abruptly and under peculiar circumstances. Mr. Starke, the singing, walking gentleman of the company (as the principal vocalist was then termed), had selected Talford's tragedy of *Glencoe* for his benefit, intending to play the part, John Macdonald, himself. Circumstances occurred to prevent his doing so, and at the last moment I was called upon to take his place. I did so to the best of my ability, and, in order to atone for my youthfulness, bronzed my face with bole-armoniac, and hid a good deal of it behind a mass of crêpe hair. Now it so happened that Mr. Murray, the famous manager of the Edinburgh theatre, was present

incognito during the performance. A week later he was about to commence his season with Miss Cushman in the play of *Macbeth*, in which a *protégé* of Phelps's named Watts Philips (destined hereafter to achieve considerable celebrity as a dramatist, and to become one of my most intimate friends), was to have acted Banquo. At the last moment the new recruit's courage failed him, and *Macbeth* was left without his brother general. In this emergency Mr. Murray despatched Mr. Lloyd, the low comedian of the Edinburgh Theatre, to Glasgow to ask Mr. Miller "if he could spare the gentleman who had played John Macdonald." Mr. William Howard, our stage manager, sent for me, and asked me if I would like to go to Edinburgh.

"Would I like to go to Edinburgh, the first theatre in the kingdom out of London? I should rather think so!"

I was beside myself with joy, and could scarcely realise my good fortune till an hour later, when my dear friends Harry Frazer and George Nelson accompanied me to the railway station. With swelling hearts we bade each other good-bye, and we did not meet again till they had become prosperous metropolitan actors. I had crept into Glasgow weary, footsore, and famished, almost without a coat to my back or a shoe to my foot; I left the city with an abundance of clothing and properties and a pound or two in my pocket. I came a poor starving recruit to the Theatre Royal, Sawdust; I left to play Banquo at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh! I had turned the corner at last! Barely sixteen, and the world before me!

## CHAPTER XIII

### *THE MODERN ATHENS*

Edinburgh by Moonlight—The Great Murray—From the Clouds to Earth—  
—I am relegated from Banquo to the Bleeding Sergeant—"A  
Beggarly Account of Empty Benches"—*La Grande* Charlotte as  
the Witch of Endor in *The Italian Wife*—Metempsychosis—I am  
hypnotised—So is the Audience—A Scottish Sabbath—Visions of  
Holyrood and the Canongate—*Lady Macbeth and the Novice*—I  
make my Peace and am forgiven a Fault I never committed—  
Meg Merrilies—"A Transfiguration and not a Transformation"  
—A Gorgeous Rosalind—I accompany *La Grande* Charlotte to  
Hawthornden—A Maternal Admonition at Parting—The Great  
Tragedienne goes to Glasgow, and I am left Lamenting.

**A**T this time I had the bard on the brain, and as  
an illustration of the feats of memory which may  
be achieved by "the unstuffed brain of youth," I  
may mention that by the time I had reached Edinburgh  
I was letter perfect in the text of Banquo.

The winter's night had fallen when I landed in  
Princes Street to do homage to the memory of my  
boyhood's idol, the veritable Wizard of the North.  
Immediately behind his presentment in marble lay the  
line of demarcation which separates the old town from  
the new, the valley through which the iron horse,  
at that very moment, was ploughing his way to the  
south. Opposite lay the old Tolbooth and the Courts  
of Justice, amidst clusters of houses twelve or fourteen

stories high, each of which displayed a small illumination. To the right Dunedin's historic fortress reared her battlemented crest ; to the left the Grecian ruins arose upon the summit of the Calton Hill. As I gazed on this enchanting panorama, the moon leaped forth from a mass of sable clouds, irradiating the scene with a flood of silvern splendour.

While I stood lost in the wonder of the sight, the belfries of the city reminded me 'twas time to present my credentials. From the Abbotsford monument I turned to the left, and, making my way to the theatre, sent my card in to Mr. Murray. Although barely turned sixteen, I stood five feet ten in my stockings, and the past few months of pleasant company, agreeable occupation, and regular living had effected a wonderful metamorphosis. With my beardless face, my ruddy cheeks, a profusion of hair which at that time was of a golden brown, my turn-down collar, elastic figure, and buoyant manner, I appeared to be younger than I really was.

When I was shown into the managerial sanctum, before me stood an astute-looking old gentleman of medium height, and rather inclined to stoutness. His somewhat chubby cheeks were surmounted by an open and capacious brow and a pair of sharp blue eyes, which glittered like steel. His head was thatched with a profusion of hair of silver grey. His get-up was immaculate : black stock and stand-up collar of the period, with frilled cambric front. A faultlessly cut black frock-coat, white vest, while trousers of Oxford grey tightly strapped over his boots, displayed a well-

turned leg to advantage. He had a soft purring manner, and the idea instinctively occurred to me that that soft, cat-like hand of his would upon the slightest provocation protrude a pair of claws.

Whether he was in jest or earnest I never knew, but, having taken stock of me, he blandly inquired, "Well, young gentleman, when may we expect to see your father?"

"I don't quite understand you, sir."

"Yet my meaning is, I should think, quite obvious. I am speaking of the gentleman who played John Macdonald in Glasgow the other night."

"I played John Macdonald, sir."

"You? Nonsense! Your father, you mean."

"I mean myself!"

"But you are only a lad."

"I've been obliged to do duty as a man for some time past."

"But, my good young friend, I want a Banquo, not a boy."

"I am engaged for Banquo."

"Where is your engagement?"

"I have none."

"Precisely!"

"But I came here at your request, believing you to be a man of honour."

"Talk, talk, sir,—tall talk! As yet I am not aware that I have done anything to forfeit that title. But the idea of Banquo is ridiculous! You may do for Macduff, or even Macbeth himself, ten years hence, but at present the very idea is preposterous. No, sir,

the Bleeding Sergeant is more in your way just now."

"The Bleeding Sergeant!"

"Yes, I think that's about it. Meanwhile, pray excuse me—I have to catch the night's mail. Allow me. Perhaps you would like to see the play? There you are."

And I found myself politely elbowed out of the room and into the stage box. So there was "another check to proud ambition." All my air-built castles shattered at a breath from this quiet, self-contained, but imperious autocrat!

"It is easy to be wise after the event." I know now by the light of experience that he was right; but to my perturbed mind he appeared then a ruthless managerial despot! How I hated him at that moment! I had just been reading Eugene Sue's *Wandering Jew*, and from that time forth, despite his smart get-up, I associated him with the remorseless old Jesuit of that lurid romance. In my indignation I was indiscreet enough to christen him Rodin. The name stuck, and the youngsters rather enjoyed it; but he didn't, and when he came to know that he was indebted to me for the cognomen, it did not improve my prospects.

So great was my grief and disappointment that, had it not been for the fear of ridicule, I would have gone back to Glasgow by the next train. While hesitating as to whether I should go or not, the curtain rose on the first scene of Dean Milman's morbid play *Fazio*. I suppose I was not altogether in the mood to regard anything favourably, and my predisposition was not dispelled by the gloom of the half-empty house.



Fazio and his wife were discovered in his studio. He (Edmund Glover) was a dark-complexioned young man of medium height; she was cast in a more massive mould, and towered above him. There was, indeed, enough of her and to spare, but all seemed hopelessly out of drawing. Her head was plastered with huge coils of tow-coloured, lustreless hair. 'Twixt her eyes, which were grey and opaque in repose, and her defiant mouth, which opened and shut like a vice, there yawned an absolute chasm, in the centre of which a minute pimple suggested an apology for a nose. Her costume, too, was provincial and unbecoming, and contrasted to grave disadvantage with her husband's elegant doublet and hose and well-proportioned limbs. About this strange, weird figure there appeared no trace of feminine charm, and the first sensation evoked was one of aversion, and the next, astonishment that she had ever succeeded in obtaining so comely a husband. No dispassionate auditor, man or woman, could blame the wretched Fazio for yielding to the blandishments of Aldabella or any other "Bella" to escape from such a gorgon. When she spoke, too, her voice, instead of sounding "an alarum to love," was guttural and almost manly.

Such were my first impressions of Charlotte Cushman. As I have already said, there was a wretched house—a mere sprinkling in the pit and gallery, while the boxes were so nearly empty that the sole occupant of the stage box, although hidden from the audience by the curtains, was apparently an object of interest to the actors. At the end of the first act I was so bored that I was anxious to get away; in fact, I was about

to leave the box, when the curtain rose upon the second act, and as I could not sneak out unobserved, courtesy compelled me to remain. I sat almost opposite to Bianca, who never took her eyes from me. Wherever she moved, she returned to the vicinity of my box, and took a baleful glare at me. All unconscious of offence, I merely lolled lazily back in the corner, and smiled blandly, but languidly. This appeared to add fuel to the flame of her wrath, and once or twice she moved as if about to strike me.

When the act drop fell for the second time, I rose to make a bolt, but, lo ! behind me stood Mr. Murray, fixing me with those glittering eyes of his. Of course, I could not escape, and I was in a more captious mood than ever. But when the curtain rose upon the third act, oh ! wondrous glamour of the actor's art ! From the moment Bianca came to denounce her faithless spouse to her detested rival, I forgot my tyrant manager, forgot even Banquo ; I had eyes and ears only for the poor demented creature whose face was transformed into the mask of Medusa, and whose eyes (opaque no longer) glittered with infernal fire ; whose hair, like a mantle of flame, streamed over her fair shoulders, while from the simple tunic of white muslin, which fell from head to heel, gleamed forth a pair of statuesque arms and a superbly moulded bust which rose and sank tumultuously, as though about to burst with the agonies of a tortured, despairing, and broken heart !

How well (though I have never met the play since) do I remember the frantic exclamation, " There's dancing here ! And I—yes, I—have been dancing, too ! "

The words are commonplace enough ; but the tone, the look, the action, as she clutched at the great tumbled masses of hair as if about to tear them out by the roots, were awe-inspiring ! Then, pausing, she rubbed her temples, rubbed, and rubbed again, as if trying to expunge some damned spot, to exorcise the remorse, the agony of the demented brain. A mist arose before my eyes ; a thrill, half-pleasure, half-pain, passed through the spinal column ; a lump arose in my throat ; and I sat shivering and shuddering till the fatal bell, which heralded the death of Fazio, sounded the death-knell of his hapless wife, and she, collapsing, fell an inert and helpless thing, dead ere she reached the earth.

For a moment silence—silence awful and profound ; then the audience, who had been cold and apathetic as the empty benches around, arose like one man, while their voices mingled in an acclamation which one only hears once or twice in a lifetime. I think they must have gone mad ; I know I did. With tears streaming down my cheeks, I waved my handkerchief and shouted myself hoarse. Then, lo ! a miracle ! When she came forth in response, all nods and becks and wreathed smiles, behold ! the ungainly apparition of the first scene transformed into a woman—yea, a woman of rare and radiant beauty ! From that time forth I never noted the lack of comeliness in Charlotte Cushman.

*Fazio* turned out to be an expensive play for me, inasmuch as, lost in the cunning of the scene, I had omitted to secure my usual humble lodgings. It was eleven o'clock, and too late to think of hunting for

rooms, so there was nothing for it but the nearest hotel, which made a hole, and a big one, too, in my first week's salary. Knowing the few lines of *The Bleeding Sergeant* backward, I had no study; knowing also *Waverley*, *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, and *The Chronicles of the Canongate* by heart, I sallied forth next day to explore Auld Reekie, where I stormed the castle; scanned the Canongate and John Knox's house; penetrated to the kirk, where the irate Jean Geddes flung the historic three-legged stool at the unorthodox precentor's head; made my way to Holyrood (being Sabbath, I was denied admittance) and the dismantled Chapel Royal; thence to Arthur's Seat; winding up with a view of the Firth of Forth from the Calton by moonlight.

This day I devoted to Sir Walter, the morrow to Shakespeare and *The Bleeding Sergeant*. At nine o'clock next morning I set forth in quest of lodgings, and succeeded in locating myself in the old town at Roxburgh Street with a widow lady and her bonnie and buxom daughter, little dreaming that I should find a mother in the one and a sister in the other. Punctually as the clock struck eleven, I reported myself at the theatre to Mr. Moore, the stage manager. The morning was dark and gloomy; hence making my way in darkness to the green-room, I became an involuntary listener to a conversation which, to my astonishment, referred to myself.

"The house was so bad," said the speaker, "the audience so cold and apathetic that I really believe I should have 'dried up' altogether if that beardless boy in the stage box, with his head of hair, his turn-down



*From a picture by Margaret Gillies.*

**CHARLOTTE AND SUSAN CUSHMAN AS ROMEO AND JULIET.**



collar, and his insolent airs and graces, hadn't so stung me to the quick that I made up my mind to 'go' for the puppy. For the first two acts I might as well have tried to thaw an iceberg; but in the third I hypnotised the young cub, and, when I went forward at the end, he waved his handkerchief and shrieked and shouted like a maniac!"

"They were not so demonstrative to Mrs. Siddons when she made her *début* here," rejoined the manager.

"She told me she went off in the sleep-walking scene 'without a hand' until a fellow in the pit patronisingly remarked, "Nae sa bad, laddies, nae sa bad!"

This ancient chestnut evoked a feeble attempt at a laugh, amidst which I retired to collect my thoughts. Conscious of my innocence of any intended discourtesy, I resolved to convince Miss Cushman that she was mistaken. Awaiting my opportunity, when she came on the stage, I approached her hat in hand. The moment she caught sight of me she glared and gasped, "You here? You! An actor, too!"

"Not yet, madam," I replied. "But by-and-by I hope to be one."

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast!" she sarcastically rejoined.

Evidently I had arrived at an inopportune moment. Fortunately, however, the call-boy came to the rescue, shouting, "The Witches! Duncan! Malcolm and Donaldbain! Rosse, Bleeding Sergeant, and everybody to begin!"

The next minute I was standing in the prompt

entrance awaiting my cue. When I came to it, there stood Lady Macbeth glaring at me on the one side, while Murray superciliously took stock of me on the other. Always a martyr to stage fright, on this occasion I was a bundle of nerves ; but I pulled myself together, spoke my lines letter perfect, and wasn't even called back. After this I was a speechless nobleman, a witch, and a spectral king.

At this time Miss Cushman was between thirty and forty years of age. The ladies (who are not indisposed to add a year or two to their rivals' records) maintained she would never see forty again. However that might be, and whatever might be said about her face, her figure (though admirers of the hipless Juno and the bustless Venus might presume to carp at its somewhat opulent dimensions) was not only splendidly proportioned, but in splendid preservation, both facts of which abundant evidence was apparent when, a few nights later, she lounged on to the Forest of Arden a veritable Ganymede. In her youth she had been trained as a vocalist, but unfortunately at the completion of her studies her voice broke. She then took to the stage, but found that her homely face and majestic figure debarred her from the youthful and interesting characters, while her lack of experience prevented her from essaying the more important ones. Disappointed and heart-broken, she was about to give up the struggle and tempt fortune as a governess, when by a lucky accident the lady cast for Meg Merrilies was taken ill, and the novice was called upon to leap into the breach at a moment's notice. With sore misgivings



as to the result, she took the plunge, and never looked back. From that moment she was a factor to be reckoned with.

After knocking about here, there, and everywhere, as an actress-of-all-work, she at length found her way to New York, where she was so fortunate as to attract the attention of Macready, who, under date of October 23rd, 1843, states in his diary, "The Miss Cushman who acted with me, interested me much. She has to learn her art, but she showed mind and sympathy," etc.

So vivid was his interest that in the following May he wished her to act with him once more in New York, yet in the very same month he had to reprove her for her levity in the Banquet Scene of *Macbeth*. When, however, she promised amendment, he graciously forgave her.

Soon afterwards she came to England to get the London hall-mark, but, as usual, every door was closed to the stranger. Edwin Forrest, who detested her, told me that Maddox, the Princess's manager, wearied of her persistent importunities, made some insolent remark about her personal appearance. Enraged beyond all bounds, she dropped upon her knees, invoking such awful maledictions on her insulter that the little Israelite, terrified out of his life, gasped out, "Take it back! Take it back! and I'll give you an engagement at once—I will, so help me——!"

She did "take it back," and he gave her an engagement which formed the turning-point in her career.

Our rehearsal progressed rapidly and satisfactorily.

Even the music, with George Honey as Hecate, went without a hitch. I watched and waited till the end of the Banquet Scene, then modestly approaching the great Charlotte, told her all about the Banquo business, and wound up by assuring her that her Bianca had impressed me so much that it had actually cost me a week's salary. Assured of my earnestness and sincerity, she magnanimously forgave me the fault I had not committed, and from that moment we were friends.

Night came, and the players? Well, they struck me as being intelligent and sensible, but they did not touch my heart or stimulate my brain. I thought the witches and the music excellent, and there could be no doubt that the ascent of Hecate with her "little airy spirit" was a very fine scenic effect. Glover was a picturesque but not a powerful Macbeth; Maynard a wretched Macduff. He was shamefully imperfect in the text, and had as much idea of handling a claymore as I had of handling a pitchfork; hence the combat was miserably "mulled." Wyndham was a handsome but wooden Malcolm, and Banquo? Well, Banquo was Bedford; while I, who could (or at any rate *thought* I could) have acted his head off, was condemned to that wretched Bleeding Sergeant!

In referring to the copious notes made for my own delectation on this and other performances, I am amused and amazed at the *naïveté* with which I presumed to criticise *la grande* Charlotte and other distinguished artists of the period, to whom I owed so much in learning my rudiments.

This was how I ventured to summarise Lady Macbeth:

“There is nothing ambiguous about her view of the character, which she presents as a brow-beating, domineering, murderous harridan, in the garb of a Mother Shipton. She has acquired the Macready mannerisms and (like all imitators) she exaggerates the blemishes and ignores the beauties, the exquisite beauties, of her great original. She strides up and down, and grunts and growls till one may close one’s eyes and imagine that one hears the ‘eminent one’ himself. She brow-beats every one she comes across, her wretched husband more especially; and in the Murder Scene she literally drags him off by the scruff of his neck!”

These were but the impressions of a precocious and presuming boy. Here, however, is the opinion of a man—an actor of large experience, and a personal friend of the lady. In his highly interesting note-book Mr. George Vandenhoff states :

“She bullies Macbeth, gets him into a corner of the stage, and, as I heard a man express it with more vigour than elegance, she ‘pitches into him’ to such an extent that, when one sees her great clenched fist and muscular arm in alarming proximity to his *os frontis*, one feels that, if all other arguments fail with her husband, she will punch his head!”

There was a very fine house; but the audience were evidently not favourably impressed by my lady, and were unquestionably highly displeased with our Macduff in the fight. Anyhow, the curtain fell in solemn silence.

They were, however, in a different mood on the following evening, when *Guy Mannering* was presented

with a somewhat remarkable cast. Mackay had emerged from his retirement for *Dominie Sampson*; a Henry Bertram and a Lucy Bertram had been imported from London, to the great grief of Miss St. George, who was relegated to the *Gypsy Girl*; Mrs. Leigh Murray was Julia Mannering; Mrs. Tellett, Flora; Miss Nicoll, Mrs. McCandlish; Wyndham was Colonel Mannering; Ray, Bailie Mucklethorpe; George Honey, Jock Jabos; Eburne, Gilbert Glossin; and Lloyd (of all parts in the world) was Dirk Hatteraick, the Dutch smuggler! Sebastian and the gypsy crew were divided amongst Maynard, Bedford, and Reynolds, while the smaller fry did duty as the mob, except myself, to whom was allotted Franco, the *Gypsy Boy*, the part with which Mr. Robertson had "wiped the floor" with me at Leicester twelve months previous. Dandie Dinmont, the most sympathetic and effective character in the play, was entrusted to Jamie Melrose, who had been a student of the 'Varsity, and was now one of our utilitarians. It was his first chance. Nature had made him for the part, and at one bound he leaped into popularity. Mackay had a great reception; the new vocalists were warmly welcomed; the play had gone splendidly up to the *Gypsy's Camp* in the third scene of the second act. "*The Chough and Crow*" had been magnificently rendered and encored; the gypsies had vanished; Henry Bertram and Dandie were at supper; I was awaiting my cue in the prompt entrance, when, lo! there swept on like a whirlwind a great, gaunt, spectral thing, clad from head to heel in one, and only one, loose flowing garment, compact of shreds

and patches in neutral colours. Its elf-locks were of iron grey ; its face, arms, and neck were those of a mummy new risen from the sepulchre, while its eyes, aflame with living fire, were riveted on the lost heir of Ellangowan, who gasped and remained speechless, while Dandie Dinmont's terror was real, not simulated. The audience were breathless and dumbfounded ; so was I. Always of an imaginative turn of mind, as I stood spellbound at sight of this weird apparition, methought so might the Sybil have looked whom Æneas consulted ere he descended into Hades, or she, that other one of Endor, who brought the dead back face to face with Saul !

The creature spoke, or rather croaked, in a low guttural voice ; then she crooned forth in a voice of infinite tenderness the sweet old melody, " Rest thee, babe, rest thee," and tears, despite myself, rolled down my cheeks. Then came my cue, and upon the instant I was kneeling at her feet. About to rush away to do her bidding, she seized me by the throat, and with a man's strength hurled me to the ground. Who could have thought those withered arms had such strength in them ? Then came her exit with the lines :

Bertram's right, and Bertram's might  
Shall meet on Ellangowan's height !

High falutin stuff this ; yet how—how she electrified the house with it ! It was, however, in the last scene of all that she achieved her triumph. What can I say of this marvellous performance which has not been said a thousand times, and a thousand times again, far better than I can ever say it ?

An eminent literary man of the period said to me, "Ah ! but it was not ' Sir Walter's Meg ' !"

I replied, " So much the worse for him, but so much the better for his play !"

Within a moment of the fall of the curtain an incident occurred which, had she not held the audience in the ball of her hand, might have proved fatal to the success of the play. Dandie Dinmont had to catch her in his arms at the moment of her collapse, and bear her off the stage. Like the immortal Apollo Bajazet, Dandie had an expansive torso ; but, like the illustrious Simon Tappetit, he had the misfortune to have a most insignificant pair of " pins " ; hence, when *la grande* Charlotte tumbled in a heap into his arms, the unfortunate legs gave way, and down he went on his back, valiantly clinging to Meg, with the result that down she fell on his digestive apparatus ! It is impossible to conceive two more grotesque objects—she dead above, he alive, all alive ! below, and vainly striving to extricate himself from a superincumbent weight of thirteen or fourteen stone avoirdupois of palpitating adiposity. The absurdity of the situation was so obvious that even the actors couldn't restrain themselves from joining in the roars which the audience found it impossible to suppress.

There was a dead-lock. In this emergency I think I may claim the credit of leading the way to form a circle around our prostrate friends, which hid them from the audience and enabled them to regain their perpendicular. When we opened out, Meg was reclining peacefully in the arms of Dandie, who with

some difficulty succeeded in drawing her from the stage. When out of sight of the audience, she sprang to her feet with clenched hands, fixed teeth, and glittering eyes ! Thus she stood for a moment erect and terrible. Poor Dandie thought she was about to strangle him.

“And she culd have din it tae, laddie!” said he, recounting the incident afterwards.

Suddenly, at the critical moment, there burst forth a roar of acclamation so loud, so enthusiastic, and so long continued that it seemed as if the mere concussion of sound must have rent the roof from off the building. Then Charlotte Cushman burst into joyous laughter, as she playfully slapped Dandie’s face, and ran off to her dressing-room like a two-year-old, and when, two minutes later, she returned to respond to the call or calls, for there were a great many, the elf-locks had disappeared, and she had removed every trace of pigment from her face and from her arms. Unfortunately nothing could make the one beautiful, but the other, or, rather, the others (*i.e.* the arms), gained additional charm when they burst forth bare and beautiful from the wretched wraps around them.

In the preface to *Ruy Blas*, Victor Hugo thus characterises the great Frederick’s performance of his hapless but heroic lacquey, “It was not a transformation, but a transfiguration !”

This noble tribute to an actor’s genius might, I think, have been applied with even greater felicity to *la grande* Charlotte’s Meg Merrilies, which enabled her to secure such a hold on the Edinburgians that from that time forth they accepted everything she

did, even in parts for which she was physically unfitted.

The feminine charms of this distinguished woman were not particularly obvious in the hideous fashion of the day ; but when the opportunity presented itself, she did not hide their light under a bushel. This was particularly apparent in *Rosalind* and in the Duchess in *The Honeymoon*. In the latter her beautiful arms and her "breasts' superb abundance" did much to reconcile one to the homeliness of her face, while in the former the superb outlines of her somewhat ebullient form were all that sculptor might have modelled or limner painted. Apropos of sculptors, long after, in a moment of confidence, she told me that during her first visit to Rome, Canova, then falling into the vale of years, said to her, "Ah, Signora, if you will only cover your face and let me carve your figure, I will make you the most magnificent goddess of beauty the world has ever seen."

"And did you do so?" I inquired.

"No!" she laughed. "Like Pauline Bonaparte, I was afraid it might be too cold, so you see what a chance I missed of being handed down to posterity as the headless Venus!"

Her comedy was rich and racy. Certain Shakespearian lines, which in this superfine age we have suppressed as indecorous, came lilting off her lips with a sense of enjoyment in which she appeared to revel, and, for the matter of that, so did the modern Athenians. Airy young gentlemen of these days would have said that she was "a deuced good fellow," and so she was!



In her best moods she was the least affected and most genial of *bonnes camarades*. She gave herself no airs, was accessible to everybody, even to one so humbly placed as myself. In this matchless company of comedians, all older and more experienced than I was, I had discovered in this short space of time that I was doomed to be lost like a drop of water in the ocean. Restricted to speechless nobles or flunkeys, an occasional "Charles—his friend," I rarely or ever obtained an opportunity of distinction. The only part which brought me in contact with this gracious lady was Sylvius, in *As You Like It*. Miss St. George, at that time a beautiful young creature, was the Phœbe, and I was (or fancied I was) rather smitten in that quarter, which enabled me to invest the maunderings of the love-sick shepherd with a certain degree of earnestness which attracted the attention of the "star" and earned her commendation. Her Rosalind was the Rosalind of Mrs. Jordan, of Mrs. Nesbitt, the "saucy lackey," the rollicking, ebullient, delightful creature revived in these later days by the accomplished Ada Rehan. But "the greatest was behind," and *my* Rosalind had yet to come.

My lack of advancement and the perpetual mortification of hope deferred prayed upon my health and spirits; I became of Hamlet's mood: "Man delighted not me, no, nor woman neither?" All the same, I never left the wings during a rehearsal or a performance. Noting this, and noting, too, that I appeared very *géné*, Miss Cushman began to take an interest—almost a maternal interest—in me. I was grateful for

her sympathy, and looked forward to the termination of her engagement with regret. She told me she was going to Glasgow, and asked me if I could recommend lodgings there. I wrote and secured some charming rooms for her in Sauchiehall Street. On the last night I went to her dressing-room to give her a handful of flowers and to say good-bye. At that time there were no Sunday trains 'twixt Glasgow and Edinburgh, and I told her so.

"Dear, dear!" she said, "that's awkward. How am I to get over another Scotch Sawboath in auld Reekie? I have it! We'll have a trap to-morrow at two o'clock; you shall drive me to the place where Ben Jonson's friend Fletcher, of Saltoun, lived! You know the man who said, 'Let me write the songs, and I care not who makes the laws.'"

"What's the place?"

"*Hawthornden!*"

"To be sure! There's the famous Roslyn chapel and Wallace's cave, and his sword, and lots of things."

"I see you know all about it."

"I walked there last Sunday."

"Well, you shall ride there to-morrow, and when we've had a look round, we'll come back and dine *tête-à-tête*, and you shall tell me all your troubles! Mind! two o'clock to-morrow at the Windsor! Or, stay, I'll call for you: write the address here. It'll impress the people at your diggin's. Guess they'll think you some pumkins when they see that an old woman has come to take you out for a drive in a carriage and pair. Mind! two o'clock! Good night."

We had a delightful drive—— But this is not a guide-book. We got back to a cosy dinner. Then she drew me out; I was still only a boy, so I told her about mother and sisters, and the monastery, and Macready; about being lost in the wilderness of London, and all its ignoble privations; my ambitious aspirations, and the cruel disillusionment I had experienced in Edinburgh.

“Is that all?” she laughed. “I thought you were gone on that girl you made love to so ardently in Sylvius! Guess you’ve something better to do than go fooling round girls before the mother’s milk is out of your mouth! Now just you listen to words of wisdom! No actor should ever marry till he’s forty; no actress should ever marry at all, or, if she does, she should quit the stage! You don’t smoke, don’t drink, have the torso of a young Hercules, a voice like a trumpet and not seventeen! And yet you grizzle! You are an ass, sir, an ass! You have the opportunity not only of seeing, but of becoming personally acquainted with, all the great actors in the world this season, for old Slyboots tells me they are all coming! There’s a chance for you! If I’d had one like that when I was your age, I should have been the greatest actress living to-day!”

“But you don’t know what it is to submit to these humiliations, these mortifications!”

“Don’t I, though? I went through ’em all while you were at your mother’s apron strings; but I survived them. So will you. Take my advice—don’t go back barn-storming! Stay here, even if old Sleek-

head sends you on every night to say, 'My lord, the carriage waits.' See everything, learn everything. Hammer the words of the great parts into your head, so that when your time comes (as come it will) you will be ready at a moment's notice to leap into the breach. I should never have got my chance, perhaps have been playing second old woman now, if I hadn't been ready with Meg Merrilies when old Mother Shipton 'dried up' at Pittsburg. And lonely, too! lonely in this lovely city, with Hamlet, Othello, Romeo, Macbeth, Brutus, Cassius, Antony, Shylock, Richard, Coriolanus, Orlando, and Benedick to keep you company! Rot, sir, rot! Then the girls, the divine girls!—Ophelia, Desdemona, Julia, Rosalind, Imogen, Cleopatra, Beatrice, and Portia! Bless your lucky stars that you've the pull of the Bard himself, who was condemned to see all those lovely creatures murdered by beastly, scrubby, chubby louts of boys, while you, you villain, you've the pick of creation to make love to! And the beauty of it is, they never worry, never fool you; when you're tired of one, you can declare on to the other without making either of 'em jealous. My God! were I a man, instead of a wretched, miserable woman with a face like an owl! . . ."

"No, no!"

"Oh, don't humbug me! I know, I know! I tell you again, were I a man, you bet your bottom dollar I'd make myself happy with a crowd like that! But there, there! I shall get no beauty sleep to-night; I never did, for that matter! Sister Sue took my

share as well as her own. Ah! if I had her face and she my brains, the pair of us would have made a mighty fine couple. Don't look so down in the mouth: 'Youth the season is for joy.' Were I a boy of your age and inches, guess I wouldn't call the President of the United States my uncle! Remember what I say, and do what I tell you. Work! Yes, sir, work, morning, noon, and night! Good-bye! Kiss your mother! God bless you, my poor boy!"

Fortified by this sagacious advice, from that time forth I began to study the great masters, until at length they became so familiar to me, that I could stand at the wings and follow the great actors word for word in all the great parts.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF SCOTLAND*

Henry Siddons and his Wife—The Murrays of Broughton—Sir Charles of that Ilk and Charles Edward in the "45"—Sir Charles' Son and Father of William Murray—Remarkable Critical Depreciation of John and Charles Kemble—Death of Henry Siddons—Adverse Advent and Ultimate Avatar of William Murray—Sir Walter Scott's Description of Flora and Fergus MacIvor likened to the Resemblance between William and his Sister as Viola and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*—"I am He who must be obeyed!"—Jack Euston's Farewell—Etiquette of the Edinburgh Green-Room—How we learned our Business—Daily and Nightly Routine—Thumb-nail Sketches of the Famous Edinburgh Comedians—They come and go, and "Slip like Shadows into Shade!"

THE National Theatre of Scotland occupied a position so unique and so dignified that nothing like it now remains in existence; hence a biographic retrospect of its principal features may not be altogether without interest. The building itself stood upon an open space on the very spot where now stands the General Post Office, at the foot of the North Bridge, between and equidistant from the old town and the new. Though commodious and convenient, the edifice made no pretence whatever to architectural beauty.

There is before me at this moment a rare proof from the original painting by Hamilton of Mrs. Siddons and her little son in Sothorn's play of *Isabella; or,*

*The Fatal Marriage.* This theatre was originally opened by that little boy—that is to say, when the boy had become a man.

Henry Siddons was married to Miss Murray, daughter of Charles Murray, of Covent Garden, son of Sir Charles Murray of Broughton, who was Secretary to Charles Edward during the “45.” For his share in that abortive rising, Sir Charles was arraigned for high treason, but for some occult reason was pardoned, and lived ever after in England, where his son Charles was born. The boy was educated in France, and intended for the medical profession, but became an actor, and *débüté* at York, under the famous Tate Wilkinson, as Carlos in Colley Cibber’s play of *The Fop’s Fortune*.

Evidently at that time actors were exposed to peculiar indignities, for it is on record (see Mathews’s *Memoirs*) that when “Gentleman Holman” was being carried in his sedan chair to the Leeds Theatre in Court dress for the performance of *Beverley*, a gang of aboriginal savages waylaid and endeavoured to throw him over the bridge into the river, alleging that he was “Nowt but a Laker.” They had reckoned, however, without Holman and his rapier, for he speedily put the scoundrels to flight with hides punctured in various places. A hundred years later, my brother Edward was waylaid on the very identical spot at midnight by a horde of ruffians, and, I am happy to say, not only routed them, but actually broke one fellow’s nose so effectually that he had “nothing left to blow with.” John Kemble, who in York had rescued Mrs. Inchbald from the importunities of some bucolic blackguard, was

called upon to apologise from the stage, but indignantly refused. Similarly this very Charles Murray (afterwards to be related to the Kembles) was called upon in the Wakefield Theatre to beg pardon of some hectoring bully whose insults he had resented, and, refusing compliance, was driven off the stage. The following night, being announced for Archer in *The Beaux Stratagem*, he appeared before the curtain booted and spurred, alleging that, unless he was permitted to represent his part without hindrance, his horse was saddled and waiting at the door, and he would depart at once for Doncaster. Evidently there were some gentlemen in Wakefield even in those days, for the words had scarcely left his mouth before his friends leaped from the boxes on to the stage, guarded the wings at every entrance, while he went through his part without even changing his dress or shifting a scene. Nay, even more, when the play was over, they bore him to the adjacent tavern, and, after supper, escorted him in triumph to Doncaster. At the end of his engagement there, he went to Bath, where he became a great favourite, and ultimately proceeded to Covent Garden, where he obtained considerable celebrity in *The Heavy Fathers*—Old Norval, Lusignan, Alcanor, etc.

In connection with this gentleman I have accidentally exhumed a curiosity in the shape of a so-called criticism in a fashionable metropolitan magazine entitled *The Monthly Visitor*, to the following effect:

“DRURY LANE, NOVEMBER 15TH, 1797.

“Of Mrs. Siddons as Mrs. Beverley it is unnecessary



to speak, for we can speak in no language but that of praise. It is difficult, however, to say anything praiseworthy of her brothers.

“John Kemble is guided by everything but nature. In Beverley (a part of strong feeling and real sympathy) *he does nothing!* His eye is good, but his countenance has little variety: two or three upliftings of the brow, a certain twist of the mouth, and a significant turn of the head are the most he can do in this line.” (See his picture in the National Gallery!)

“Even the simple language of the gamester (which is perfectly colloquial) comes from Kemble with all the bombast of blank verse. He would do better to take example by Murray, who, knowing the true workings of nature, has read the harsh periods of Shylock into *chaste and common intercourse*. Kemble is in the opposite (*sic*). He has a hand for this speech, a knee for that, and a groan for the other; and this kind of acting is by some compared to Garrick’s!

“As to Charles Kemble’s ‘Lewson,’ he is also a brother of Mrs. Siddons! *More’s the pity!* There is no resemblance to be found in their persons, and, certes, there is none in their acting. The sister! What is she? *Everything!* The brother! What is he? Nothing! *verily nothing!*”

This was how the pseudonymunculæ of the period spoke of the Kembles a hundred years ago.

Dying prematurely, Henry Siddons (who, though not a great actor, was a gentleman and a scholar, as is evident from his interesting monograph explanatory of *Le Brun’s Passions*) bequeathed his interests in the

Edinburgh Theatre to his young wife, who was left with two or three children. The Siddons and the Murrays (each after their fashion) helped the widow and orphans. Mrs. Siddons came to Edinburgh to act for the benefit of her grandchildren, and with characteristic generosity exacted £50 for doing so (!), while Mr. Murray sent down his son William to assist his sister in the management. Apropos of which, I remember hearing him (Murray) say to Charles Mathews that upon the occasion of his first appearance in *Auld Reekie*, both press and public were systematically hostile, the principal journal stating in effect, "If Mrs. Siddons thinks to palm this imbecile with his pudding face, insignificant figure, and penny-whistle voice upon the Edinburgh public as an actor, the sooner she is undeceived the better!" (Yet this was the very man of whom Sir Walter wrote thus in *Waverley*: "Flora MacIvor bore a most striking resemblance to her brother Fergus; so much so that they might have played Viola and Sebastian with the same exquisite effect produced by the appearance of Mrs. Henry Siddons and her brother, Mr. William Murray, in these characters.")

Despite the vaticinations of the press-gang, Murray ultimately reigned over the National Theatre with "sole sovereign sway and masterdom," and became the idol of both press and public.

During my apprenticeship the routine of business proceeded with the regularity of clockwork. Our rehearsals commenced daily at ten and terminated at or about two. The list of each week's business was always put up in the green-room on Tuesday morning in a gilt

and glazed frame, carefully locked up, and divided into seven compartments, one being devoted to each night in the following week, containing the full cast of characters in the manager's extremely elegant and legible caligraphy, while the central compartment was devoted to the mere dates and names of the plays and to any special notification which might be deemed requisite. The principal members of the company had been together for years; hence a large and comprehensive *répertoire* of pieces was always ready for representation. The old stagers had few new parts to study, but whether new or old, every play was carefully rehearsed; hence everything was completely and admirably done. Newer works Murray invariably superintended himself, and it was most interesting to see the finesse, the variety, and completeness he imparted to them.

"Stock plays," as they were called, were safe in the hands of Mr. Moore, our stage manager, who presided over them with the precision of a disciplinarian and the exacting rigidity of a martinet. The same remark applies to the band, which was under the direction of that accomplished musician and prince of good fellows, Mr. Mackenzie, whose son (then *répétiteur*) was destined to become ultimately, and is still, President of the Royal Academy of Music.

The season made much more satisfactory progress than I did, yet I was always attentive, industrious, willing, and anxious to do justice to anything entrusted to me. I have frequently heard it maintained that Murray was kind and generous. To me he proved a

hard task-master. At this distance of time, when I am disposed to magnify my own shortcomings, I have nothing to reproach myself with, worse than a proper amount of self-respect, to be by no means confounded with mere bumptiousness. The truth was, our worthy manager had been so surfeited with adulation that he really fancied himself

Jove in his chair,  
Of the sky the Lord Mayor :  
When he nods,  
Men and gods  
Keeps in awe.

When a piece was once cast, it had to be done. I never knew any one refuse a part. There was, indeed, a legend current that some few years before my advent a certain eccentric comedian named Jack Euston, who had been cast the Copper Captain in *Rule a Wife and have a Wife*, having had to kiss the rod on various occasions, made up his mind to terminate his engagement with *éclaircissement*. Strolling into the crowded green-room, he approached Murray, and, returning the part of Cacafogo, blandly remarked, "Respectfully declined."

"Declined! Are you mad? What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean I've had enough of your cheek, so good-bye, old Soapey! Allow me!"

Every one thought he was going to wring the autocrat's hand, but he didn't: he wrung his nose instead, and was out of the room and in the coach on his way to London before any one could stop him. What followed history sayeth not! It was fortunate,

however, for Mr. Euston that there was no electric telegraph in those days, or he would surely never have crossed the Border that night.

Apropos of the scene of this historic escapade, the green-room, which at that time was dedicated to delightful social intercourse, no longer exists in our theatres. Indeed, during my recent management of Drury Lane, I found Garrick's and Macready's famous reception-room converted to a lumber closet! The Edinburgh green-room was a commodious *salon*, elegantly fitted up with rare engravings of Garrick, Barry, Tate Wilkinson, the Siddons, O'Neil, the Kembles, and with spacious mirrors and seats cushioned with green morocco. There, in the morning, we assembled to give each other good-day and to discuss the topics of the hour, while at night hither came the ladies in gorgeous array to monopolise the mirrors. The etiquette observed always impressed us youngsters with the idea that it was essential to be gentlemen first, and actors next. Here we were occasionally privileged to hear the "chief" rallying Lord Jefferies about a certain bloodless duel which was to have come off (but didn't) at Chalk Farm between himself and Tom Moore; here, too, came Liston and Blackie and Lockhart to talk about Sir Walter, Byron, and the Lakers; or perchance hither came that eccentric compound of Hercules and Apollo, Professor Wilson (Christopher North), to have a jaw about the Ettrick Shepherd with the English opium eater. Most delightful of all was it to hear the great actors and actresses "act their young encounters o'er again."

Having always regarded the Edinburgh theatre as my Alma Mater, I venture to introduce my master and my fellow-students in *propria persona*.

Murray himself occupied, and justly occupied, the foremost place among this matchless troupe of comedians. His limited resources of voice, face, and figure did not restrict him to a hard-and-fast line, inasmuch as his perfect art frequently enabled him to break through these narrow bounds. So far from his "nature being subdued to what it worked in," he subdued *it*, and was enabled to assimilate the most opposing and conflicting elements until they became part and parcel of himself. Of course, he had the pick and choice of everything; but he rarely or never abused his opportunities,—*au contraire*, he frequently descended into a third- or fourth-rate part in a new or old piece, beside a metropolitan celebrity, who not infrequently had his eyes opened during the performance, and found his light somewhat eclipsed.

I have seen William Farren in Grandfather Whitehead, Old Goldthumb (*Time Works Wonders*); but in both these characters Murray could stand beside the "Cock Salmon" and "moult no feather," while in Caleb Plummer (*Cricket on the Hearth*) he was absolutely unapproachable. Old Dornton (*Sir Anthony Absolute*), Old Rapid Simpson (*Simpson & Co.*), were among his great parts. His Jaquez in *The Honeymoon* and Dominique the Deserter were inimitable. His Modus was excellent, and his Osric the best I've seen. He made certain small parts stand out, veritable creations—notably Trap (*Diamond Cut Diamond*), Major Galbraith (*Rob Roy*),



EDMUND GLOVER.



R. H. WYNDHAM.



*Photo by Elliott & Fry.*

MRS. WYNDHAM.



BARRY SULLIVAN.



JAMES BENNET.

EDINBURGH COMEDIANS.





Jacob Twig (*Black-Eyed Susan*), and Verges ; but more especially William of the Forest, a lout of a dozen lines, in *As You Like It*. I have never seen anything approach this remarkable *tour-de-force* save Beerbohm Tree's extraordinary sketch of a bucolic yokel in Robert Buchanan's play *Storm-Beaten*, done at the Adelphi, some years ago. The only part I ever saw Murray fail in was Falstaff, which was physically beyond his reach ; but, "take him for all in all," he was indisputably the most accomplished and versatile comedian of his generation.

Our leading man, Edmund Glover (then about thirty years of age), was a lineal descendant of the illustrious Betterton, and son of "The Mother of the Stage," the great Mrs. Glover, whom Macready assured me (when she could disabuse herself of the cherished delusion that she was a tragedian) was, save and except Mrs. Jordan, the greatest comedian of the age ! Through the influence of his mother, while yet a youth, Edmund was engaged at the Haymarket, where he was the original Master Waller in Sheridan Knowles' famous comedy *The Love Chase*. Subsequently he was leading actor at the Surrey, in Bath, Bristol, and Plymouth. When he first came to Edinburgh his figure was so slight and his appearance so youthful that Murray conceived a violent prejudice against him, treated him with great hauteur, and would not allow him the choice of an opening part—a privilege usually conceded to the tragedian of a company. When he insisted upon opening in Hamlet, Murray was so obdurate that the young tragedian resolved to throw up his engagement

and get back to town. But there was a difficulty—the fare! That was, however, obviated by his mother, who (always generous and large-hearted) remitted the requisite sum by return of post. There was no direct railway communication with London in those days, so Edmund had to secure a place in the mail. He had taken his seat, the guard had sounded his horn, “Coachee” had gathered up his reins and was about to start, when, lo! Murray’s stage manager, Charles Melville, came tearing down Leith Walk.

“Stop the coach!” roared he; “stop the coach! The chief concedes you an opening part!”

“What is it?” inquired Glover.

“Shock in *The Shepherd of Derwent Vale*.”

“Shock be d——d! Hamlet or nothing!”

“Well, Hamlet, then!”

“On your honour?”

“Oh, ‘honour bright’!”

That simple circumstance decided Glover’s career. From that time forth he lived and died in Scotland. He was dark-complexioned, short, somewhat stout, with dark hair, and what is called the widow’s peak in the centre of his brow, huge bushy eyebrows, brilliant eyes, rosy cheeks, fine teeth, a well-cut mouth, with what I heard a lady once designate as “a pair of luscious lips”; a massive neck and shoulders, and an ample chest, surmounted a majestic pair of legs (a precious boon bequeathed to every one of his descendants). His son William is not only an admirable painter, but an athlete and an accomplished swordsman, while his daughter Julia was the loveliest girl and the bonniest boy that

ever donned the subligaculæ. All the Glover girls (there were four of them) are beauties, and their mother was the most beautiful of all the family!

Amongst his other accomplishments, Edmund was an artist, and frequently exhibited in the Scottish Academy. A most versatile and accomplished actor, thoroughly familiar with the technique of his art, he could be relied upon for anything from Macbeth to William in *Black-Eyed Susan*, or Robert Macaire. A capital scene-painter, an admirable pantomimist, no man living (not even the renowned T. P. Cooke himself!) could excel my friend Edmund in a sailor's hornpipe or a broadsword combat. Better than all this, he was one of the most kind-hearted and sympathetic creatures that ever breathed, as the poor, friendless utility boy had occasion to know.

Our light comedian, Wyndham, hailed from the Emerald Isle. Nature had been bountiful to him. Voice, face, and figure left nothing to be desired in "Handsome Bob," as we used to call him. Slightly above the middle height, dark-haired, bright-eyed, with the form of Antinous, in mufti he was the beau ideal of a man of fashion, while in costume plays he was a veritable Romeo. Mercutio and Orlando were the two parts he most affected—save, indeed, when, at a later period, Château Renaud and Hawkshaw became his special weakness. If not a great actor, whatever character he represented, he was always a gentleman.

Mr. Lloyd, who divided the comedy with the chief, although born in London, was brought up at Greta Bridge, which, it will be remembered, was held up

to immortal ridicule as Dotheboys Hall in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Apropos of which, Lloyd always stoutly maintained, and has left it on record in his *Memoirs* (published in Glasgow ten or twelve years ago), that Charles Dickens was his schoolmate there, and that in consequence of some financial trouble with the master—a most amiable, inoffensive creature—he (Dickens) labelled him “Squeers” and libelled him into the bargain!

Unlike the typical low comedian, Lloyd was a handsome, stalwart little fellow, built like a duodecimo Hercules. He availed himself of this physical advantage in a little farce called *Hercules, King of Clubs*, in which he impersonated the Grecian statues. His Touchstone and Benjamin Bowbells were capital impersonations; and in some smaller parts—notably Trick to Murray's Trap (*Diamond Cut Diamond*), and Lopez in *The Honeymoon*—he was inimitable. When the railway boom was on, he dabbled largely in shares, and made a pot of money. This induced “the chief” to try his luck, with the ultimate result that both master and man got “stuck,” and severely burnt their fingers.

Though a cockney born and bred, Lloyd could never be induced to act in London; hence his whole artistic life was devoted to Scotland.

Mr. Ray (for a long time a member of the Sadler's Wells company, and well known afterwards throughout the provinces as the famous Eccles of *Caste*) was a grim and crabbed man, but a capital actor of certain marked character parts, such as Grim and Tackleton in *The Cricket on the Hearth*, Dentatus, Doggrass, Crabtree,

and the like. Having by abstinence and economy scraped together some nine or ten thousand pounds, he made a proposal to a lady (a friend of mine), offering to settle all he possessed upon her if she would become Mrs. Ray. Her refusal soured and embittered his life ; he lived and died a lonely, miserable man, leaving behind him neither kith nor kin, and, having unfortunately omitted to make a will, the property reverted to the Crown.

Mr. Maynard, our "heavy man," was a person of fine presence and a well-known London actor, but not distinguished by any remarkable ability.

Mr. Bedford, a *protégé* of Mr. Murray's, came in the same category. Tall, slender, and well proportioned, with regular classic features, he had the most remarkable head of hair that ever decked the brow of a white man. It was of wool, pure wool, in texture like an Ethiopian's, in colour like a rainbow. This hideous drawback was, however, neutralised by the judicious use of wigs, which at night transformed him into an Adonis. Many amusing stories were told of admiring fair ones, struck by his elegant figure and his golden chevelure, being awfully disillusioned at sight of his polychromatic poll. Impressed by his attention and industry, Charles Mathews took him to the Lyceum, where he christened him Mr. Parselle. From the Lyceum he went to the Strand, thence to the States, where he became a great popular favourite and amassed a fortune.

The junior members of the company were : George Honey, who had been call-boy at the Adelphi, and who afterwards, as every one knows, became one of

our most distinguished eccentric actors; Melrose, the Scottish comedian, ruined by an unexpected and phenomenal success in *Dandie Dinmont* and the *Dougal Creature*; Josephs, father of Fanny and Patty; "Lord Nelson," as we used to call Eburne (no one ever knew why); and Joseph Reynolds, for many years after leading actor at the Britannia Theatre. Last, but not least, came the great little Mackay, the original Bailie Nicol Jarvie, Dominic Sampson, Caleb Balderstone, Dumbydykes, Meg Dodds, Jock Howison, etc. His dry, pawky, but artistic, method (highly appreciated in Scotland) was almost unintelligible over the Border, and when he tempted fortune in town, the cockneys refused to receive him as the "Bailie" after Liston.

Mackay frequently revisited the scene of his former triumphs, and invariably met with an enthusiastic reception from crowded houses. The old gentleman lived near my lodgings, and I used to escort him home nightly. He had an inexhaustible budget of humorous stories of early strolling days in the Highlands; but the proudest feather in his cap was his intimacy with his "guid freend" the author of *Waverley*!

Amongst our ladies was Mrs. Leigh Murray, an amiable and charming woman and an eminently reliable actress; Miss Clara Tellet, who was a perfect pocket Venus, and one of the brightest and most vivacious of soubrettes. This fairy-like creature ultimately became Mrs. Sam Emery and mother of the charming Winifred of that ilk (Mrs. Cyril Maude), who has inherited no small share of her mother's beauty and ability. Miss Cleaver, a mature and majestic spinster, with a severely

Roman nose, affected the "heavy" business ; but her claim on public consideration rested more upon her sensible and accurate delivery of the text than upon her ability. Miss Nicoll was another maiden lady of mature years and quaint, precise demeanour. She had never acted out of Edinburgh—never intended to do so ; in point of fact she never did. In certain parts of Mrs. Glover's and Mrs. Clifford's she was inimitable. Miss Macfarlane, one of our utilitarians, was a typical little Scottish lassie with fair hair and dove's eyes, who ultimately became Mrs. Eburne and a popular leading lady at Bath, Bristol, and in London. Miss Julia St. George, then a mere girl ripening into womanly beauty, was our singing lady, and all Edinburgh came to hear her warble two or three popular ballads—notably, "We may be Happy Yet," from Balfe's opera, *The Daughter of St. Mark*. She was also secured by the Mathews' for the Lyceum, where she made a great mark in the Planché burlesques and a still greater one with Phelps at Sadler's Wells, where she *débüté*d as Ariel.

And now let me, having introduced the Edinburgh company, return in the next chapter to the personal experiences of the humblest of its latest recruits.

## CHAPTER XV

### *THE DIVINE HELEN IN HER GOLDEN PRIME*

The Discoverer of Rosalind—Antigone at Covent Garden and in Edinburgh—Romeo in the Boxes—Juliet on the Stage—*The Ballads of Bon Gualtier*—The English Opium Eater on Sophocles—Juliet departs to Dublin—Romeo is left lamenting—Barry Sullivan on the Road—Enter Edwin Forrest—The “Othello of Othellos”—The Moor that Shakespeare drew—Breaking the Scottish Saubath—The Mathews—Charlie and Madame at their Zenith—*The Golden Fleece*—Another check to Proud Ambition

ALTHOUGH I had only seen Helen Faucit on the occasion of my rare visits to Drury Lane, she was the goddess of my idolatry, enthroned in my heart of hearts, and I was in a fever of excitement at the very thought of coming in personal contact with her. Besides, was she not announced for Antigone? And I was to see this divinest of Greek maidens in the flesh—Antigone, of whom I had dreamed so long. She came, she saw, and conquered all hearts by grace and quiet, modest dignity. She had left her girlhood behind, but had arrived at the perfection of all that was bright and beautiful in womanhood. Upon her opening night, a certain gentleman, known to fame only by his collaboration in *The Ballads of Bon Gualtier*, sat in the stage box





*After the picture by Sir F. W. Burton.*

**HELEN FAUCIT (LADY MARTIN) AS "ANTIGONE."**



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to the right, "observed of all observers" by the actors, amongst whom it was rumoured that he was desperately enamoured of our "bright particular star," but that she laughed him to scorn.

Edmund Glover, who was on terms of friendly intimacy with the then Writer to the Signet, alleged that his fair inamorata did not deign to bestow a passing thought upon the gentle Theodore, but our imperial spinstress, Miss Cleaver, smiled benignantly as she responded oracularly, "Bide a wee, Mr. Glover; bide a wee. Faint heart never won lady fair, and we shall see what we shall see."

Miss Faucit enacted, besides, Juliet, Pauline (*Lady of Lyons*), Mabel (*Patrician's Daughter*), Julia (*The Hunchback*), and Beatrice; but the two parts fresh in my mind at this moment as when I first saw them are Rosalind and Antigone. In the first she was Jove's own page; in the last a goddess. Beauty of face and form were combined with those rarer gifts—beauty of mind and purity of soul, which make the owner omnipotent. "More than common tall," and perfectly balanced from head to heel, the short waist and long and superbly moulded lower limbs which go with the Grecian type of beauty, harmonised perfectly with the sloping and majestic shoulders, the virginal bust, and the arms lost to the Venus of Milo. Then her face was the face of Artemis herself, while her eyes of Aphrodisian grey varied in colour and expression with every mood as they glittered through their long dark lashes. Her voice, with its infinite varieties of tremulous minors and full flushed resonant crescendoes,

was "an alarum to love!" I protest, the bare recollection makes music even now in my memory!

As for *Antigone*— But thereby hangs a tale. The elder Vandenhoff, "the last of all the Romans," was said to be the greatest living authority upon the classic drama. It had long been a pet project of his to produce *Antigone*, just as afterwards it became a pet project of mine to produce my adaptation of *Pericles* (a project, by the way, recently realised with conspicuous success at the Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon). For years Vandenhoff had approached managers on the subject, but they wouldn't hear of it. During the season immediately preceding that of which I write, an astute Frenchman, one M. Laurent, had taken Covent Garden Theatre, where the play was produced with Mendelssohn's music, and Vandenhoff as Cleon, with his daughter as the heroine.

Is it Steele (or is it Addison?) who, in speaking of Betterton in *The Spectator*, says that when that great actor moved from spot to spot, each gesture, each attitude recalled or reproduced into life some famous statue of antiquity? The same thing was said in London of Vandenhoff and his daughter. The old gentleman told me Fortune had not been over bountiful to him, and he had anticipated a gold mine in *Antigone*. He was anticipated in a manner which he had never dreamt of.

There was no copyright in those days. Kean had obtained "prompt" copies of *The Lady of Lyons*, *Money*, and *Sardanapalus*, and had acted them in despite of the authors and in defiance of Macready. Douglas Jerrold

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did not receive a cent from the country for *Black-Eyed Susan*, which was acted for hundreds and hundreds of nights here, there, and everywhere, and at this very period Murray himself acted a little comedy of my friend Mr. Tom Higgin's, called *A Capital Joke*, for six or eight weeks without even thanking him for it. Miss Faucit not only anticipated the Vandenhoffs in the play, but in the music and the entire dramatic action.

Everything was done that could be done to ensure success in Edinburgh. The scene, which stands throughout, was superbly constructed and painted, and the costumes were accurate. Glover was excellent in Cleon, Wyndham interesting in Hæmon, and Ray characteristic as Tiresius; while as for the rank and file of the company, we were all pressed into the chorus, the music of which Mackenzie hammered into us night and day till we mastered it, and nightly emitted a volume of sound which might have been heard on the Calton Hill. The new *Antigone* set all hearts on fire, and modern Athens well-nigh went mad over her. De Quincey said, in a fine flow of hyperbole, "He who has seen the Coliseum by moonlight, the Bay of Naples by sunset, the battlefield of Waterloo by daybreak, and Helen Faucit in *Antigone*, has only to thank God and die, since nothing else remains worth living for!"

Speaking of Glover, he went on to make the following critical deduction: "He gave effect to the odious Creontic menaces, and in the final lamentation over the dead body of Hæmon, being a man of considerable intellectual power, Mr. Glover drew the part

into prominence, which it is the fault of Sophocles to have authorised in that situation, for the closing sympathies of the spectator ought not to be diverted for a moment from Antigone."

At the end of her engagement Miss Faucit departed for Dublin "in maiden meditation fancy free," and the Writer to the Signet was left disconsolate.

"Well, what do you think now?" inquired Glover of Miss Cleaver.

"Wait, and you'll see!" replied the Sybil.

We did see, and so did Sir Theodore!

The success of Edinburgh was repeated in Dublin, where the professors of Trinity presented our Antigone with a massive armlet with a Greek inscription, while the wild Irish boys of the University crowned her with laurels, took the horses out of her carriage, and dragged her in triumph to her hotel. The "gods" caught the fever from the Trinity boys. She was called before the curtain over and over again, and pelted with flowers. The excitement culminated in an enthusiastic demand for the Author, and great disappointment was manifested when "Misther Sofokles" did not respond to the invitation.

Apropos, I remember, years later, one night at the Surrey, during a performance of *Macbeth*, after Creswick and Shepherd (*Macbeth* and *Macduff*) and Miss Glyn (*Lady Macbeth*) had been called for, a tremendous call was made for Mead, who was the Banquo. Having finished in the fourth act, Master Tom had removed his beard and "make-up," and resumed his everyday apparel. When at length he came before the curtain

in mufti, he was so metamorphosed from the bronzed and bearded Banquo as to be utterly unrecognisable by his noisy partisans.

“Who is yon chap in the Chesterfield?” demanded an ingenuous Olympian. Whereupon a knowing neighbour responded, “Can’t you see, you bloomin’ idiot? ’Ee’s the hauthor!”

To return to “the fair, the chaste, the unexpressive she,” she was all grace, beauty, and amiability. All hearts went out to her, and we, her humble satellites, adored her as though she were indeed divinity incarnate.

The world was younger then, so were we. But indeed and indeed these things of which I speak are true: hence I recall them, because the younger generation, who only saw the divine Helen in her decline, cannot form even the remotest conception of what she was like at her “golden prime.”

On the last night of her engagement with us the hall porter told me a gentleman wanted to see me, and who should it be but Barry Sullivan! It was a bitter winter’s night, and, though wrapped up in a huge maud, he was shivering with the bleak wind which came shrieking up the Forth. I took him home and thawed him. He told me he was engaged by a committee to manage the Aberdeen Theatre. He was on his way to the “granite city,” and wanted me to accompany him at an increased salary for the juvenile parts. But Murray refused to let me go under six weeks’ notice, and I had to remain grinding my heart out in flunkeys and speechless nobles!

The next great artist who came to Edinburgh was Edwin Forrest, the American tragedian, who at that period was at his meridian. I am pure Pagan, and always have been of opinion that physical beauty in man and woman is a thing to stir the heart and thrill the brain. At that period this distinguished actor presented

A combination and a form indeed,  
Where every God did seem to set his seal  
To give the world assurance of a Man!

As the Gladiator and Damon, he was the Farnese Hercules in the flesh.

It is true that his acting had nothing of psychological subtlety about it, but it was thorough, straight, manly, and convincing. His Othello—well, before presuming to record my opinion on this wonderful impersonation, I premise that I have acted the part more frequently than any living man; I have had the distinguished honour to sustain the noble Moor to the Iago of Macready, of Phelps, and of G. V. Brooke; I have seen not only every man of mark on the English stage, but I have seen Tamberlik and Tamagnio, Rossi and Salvini, and it is my firm conviction that Forrest's Othello was the best, the very best, I have ever witnessed, while even his detractors have been compelled to admit that his Damon and Spartacus were performances of unapproachable excellence. His Lear had fine and majestic moments; so, indeed, had his Richard, Richelieu, and Hamlet, though his robust virility overweighted him for these characters. In the latter, when he exclaimed,



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“My father’s brother—but no more like my father than I to Hercules!”

A matter-of-fact Scotsman in the pit interjected, “Hoot awa’, mon! Dinna talk d——d nonsense! Ye are just Hercules himsel’!”

Unfortunately Forrest’s engagement was not only a commercial failure, but Murray was lacking in his usual Jesuitical finesse—he was polite indeed, but his politeness lacked cordiality and manliness. He scarcely ever condescended to come near the rehearsals. Forrest was notorious for his brusque and imperious temper; but his manliness endeared him to everybody, and our anxious desire to assist him and our sympathy quite won his heart. One of the few decent parts I had to play was that of his younger brother in *The Gladiator*, in which I was so fortunate as to earn his approval; hence, when on his last Sunday he invited Glover, Mackay, Wyndham, and other principals to dinner, he did me the honour to include me among his guests.

He was the most gracious of hosts, the most genial of *raconteurs*, and was full of amusing experiences of his struggling youth. He assured us that at one period the height of his ambition was to be “a clown or a circus rider.” When warm with wine, he was with difficulty dissuaded there and then (Scottish Saubath though it was!) from walking a hundred yards down Princes Street on his hands, declaring positively that one night, in company with Douglas Jerrold and other choice spirits, who had their “cargoes aboard,” he had actually walked down the Haymarket in that fashion for a wager.

When the conversation turned upon Macready and Miss Cushman, it was evident we had alighted on a sore place. That an "epicene thing" (for woman he would not concede her to be) whom he regarded as an impostor, an *intriguante* whom he stigmatised as being "hideous as Sycorax" or worse—a "Macready in petticoats," should succeed where he had failed, he regarded as an outrage upon common sense and his nationality. His aversion to Macready was even more pronounced. It was alleged that he had domestic, as well as artistic, reasons for his hatred of the great tragedian, whose parasites had certainly gone out of their way to insult him.

I fear we created a sensation among the "unco guid" in Princes Street by the uproarious manner in which we roared, "For he's a jolly good fellow!" at the end of the banquet. When we bade our kind host good-bye, he assured us collectively and individually a warm welcome, should we e'er cross the Atlantic.

The Mathews (Charles and Madame Vestris) followed Forrest, and went through all the charming light pieces of their *répertoire*, to the delight of the actors and the public, who, however, did not come in shoals. At this time "Charlie" was approaching maturity, and Vestris, though still in form the ideal of the Medicean Venus, had left the golden time of youth behind. Her many accomplishments, her matchless grace, her vivacity, her admirable vocalisation, her unrivalled taste in dress, and her proficiency in the mystic rites of the toilette, had, however, left her attractions undiminished.

The most idiotic rumours were circulated in reference

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to her "make-up." It was alleged by the ladies, who envied her beautifully moulded arms, her superb neck and shoulders, that she was "enamelled"—yes, "enamelled" regularly at stated intervals! The candid souls were quite prepared at a moment's notice to give the "atrocious particulars." They solemnly averred that madame took daily baths of goat's or asses' milk, sal volatile, and champagne, mixed in equal proportions, and other equally impossible absurdities. The real recipe for her matchless complexion was fresh air, exercise, regular living, and a dexterous application of that death and destruction to our unfortunate dress-coats, *Blanc de Perle*.

The great vogue of *Antigone* at Covent Garden suggested to Planché the classic burlesque of *The Golden Fleece*, in which madame and Mathews distinguished themselves highly in town. This, combined with the existence of the scene prepared for *Antigone* in Edinburgh, naturally suggested to Murray the production of *The Golden Fleece*. It was a delightful surprise and a decided success. Not even Rachel in *Phedre*, Helen Faucit and Miss Vandenhoff in *Antigone*, Ristori in *Medea*, Mary Anderson in *Perdita*, Sara Bernhardt in *Hermione*, or the peerless Dufresne in *Andromaque* ever became the Chiton or Peplum better than madame became them in *Medea*. Mathews represented in his own proper form the entire chorus. His get-up and costume constituted the most delicate caricature of Greek costume. He wore (one of the few occasions on which I ever saw him do so) a black beard, a handsome dark wig parted in the centre,

crowned with a wreath of laurel. Beneath his classic tunic he wore the evening dress of the period, which from sheer force of contrast gave an amusingly incongruous effect.

During his second visit he appeared, for the first time in the provinces, as Sir Charles Coldstream—a delightful and inimitable performance; while, of course, his Captain Patter and Motley (*He Would Be An Actor*) remained, as ever, unapproached and unapproachable. When, however, he tried his hand upon young Rapid and Jack Absolute, one could scarcely doubt that Macready had taken his measure when he cast him for Fag. Young Rapid and young Absolute required more virility than my dear old friend ever possessed.

END OF VOL. I

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