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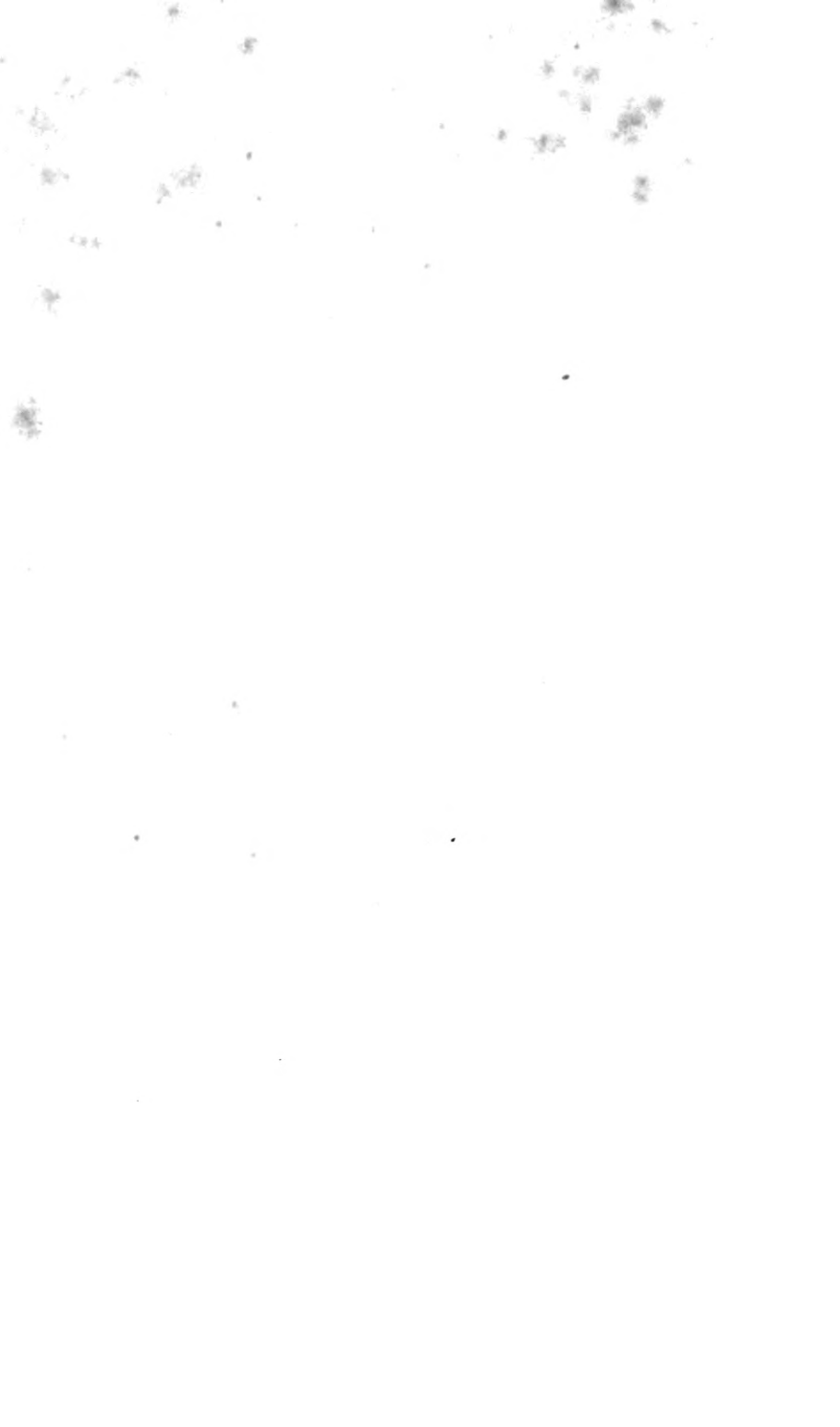
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THE ANNALS OF
COVENT GARDEN THEATRE

VOL. II





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Thomas Harris

*From the painting by John Opie, R. A.
in the possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman*

THE ANNALS OF
COVENT GARDEN THEATRE

FROM 1732 TO 1897

BY

HENRY SAXE WYNDHAM

AUTHOR OF "A MEMOIR OF SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN"



WITH 45 ILLUSTRATIONS

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. II

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CHAPTER XIII

1819-1828

MACREADY points out the disadvantages Covent Garden Theatre laboured under at the opening of the 1819-20 season, as against the prosperity once more being enjoyed by Drury Lane.

Miss O'Neill had gone, Miss Stephens was absent on leave, Liston was ill, and Young had seceded. On the other hand, Elliston was now manager of a magnificent company at Drury Lane, including Edmund Kean, Munden, Mrs. Glover, Miss Kelly, and last, but not least, Madam Vestris, with whom we shall some years later make nearer acquaintance in the course of our history.

The season opened with *Macbeth*, with Charles Kemble as the Thane, a part which his best friends considered him unsuccessful in, and Mrs. Bunn as Lady Macbeth.

On September 8 Macready made his first

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appearance in the character, new to him, of Joseph Surface, which, he informs us, "in after years I made one of my most perfect representations."

A sad falling off in the popularity of the once prosperous house was now manifest. Macready says "a fatality seemed to impend over its fortunes," and its condition suddenly became almost desperate.

"Indeed, there seemed scarcely a chance of keeping it open. The original building debt, with its weight of interest, was still a heavy pressure on the concern, requiring extraordinary receipts . . . to buoy up the credit of the establishment, whilst neither in tragedy, comedy, nor opera did it appear possible for the managers, in the absence of so many attractive performers, to present an entertainment likely to engage public attention."

To make matters worse, Charles Kemble quarrelled with Henry Harris, and also withdrew temporarily from the theatre. Things looked so black that Harris afterwards told Shiel "he did not know in the morning when he rose whether he should not shoot himself before the night."

On December 11 Shakespear's *Comedy of Errors* was brought out as an opera by Bishop, with Miss Stephens and Miss Tree in the cast,



MISS STEPHENS AS SUSANNA IN "THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO."

*From the Painting by Henry Fradelle, engraved by S. W. Reynolds
and S. Cousins.*

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who sang the duet, "Tell me where is fancy bred," with great success. This was, however, but a single success to compensate for many failures.

In these trying circumstances it stands to the credit of Macready and his brother actors that they did their best to aid the embarrassed management by voluntarily foregoing their salaries until Christmas, on condition of receiving the arrears after that date. Consequently for several weeks there was "no treasury" in the largest and hitherto most successful theatre in London.

Something sensational had to be done, and done quickly. Mr. Henry Harris proposed, somewhat diffidently, to Macready that he should appear in *King Richard III*. This was, in other words, that he should play a part universally admitted to be one of Kean's most wonderful successes, and for which his [Macready's] figure was not well adapted. To fail would obviously have been to call down a shower of ridicule upon the actor's head, and to plunge the unlucky theatre still deeper into the mire. It is not, therefore, surprising that Macready shrank from the ordeal, and hesitated to give his assent. The irresistible logic of the box-office receipts, however, backed by the urgent requests of Henry Harris, which finally took

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the more potent form of command, at length prevailed, and Macready found the matter taken out of his hands, and himself billed to play the part of Richard on October 25, 1819.

Not to further prolong the story, we may say at once that the anxieties of actor and management had a happy termination. The bold stroke aroused intense interest on all sides, and before a packed house, Macready scored a great triumph. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that, in the opinion of many of the greatest critics of the day, the young actor—he was only twenty-six—raised himself by his performance on to the plane in which Kemble and Kean, his great predecessor and greater rival, moved in almost undisputed sovereignty.

The play was announced for immediate repetition, at which the house was crammed, and, happiest of all, the treasury was reopened on the following Saturday, the performers freely admitting that they were “indebted to him for their salaries.”

Kean and the Drury Lane management, however, were not going to submit tamely to the challenge, and immediately put the play on with new dresses and scenery, so for several evenings the curious spectacle was presented of the same great tragedy at both theatres.

Macready's triumph naturally emboldened

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him to further attempts, and on November 29 he made a successful effort to rival Kemble in *Coriolanus*.

Fortune now began to turn her fickle face once more in the direction of Covent Garden. One or two more Shakespearian characters were successfully achieved. Adaptations of *Ivanhoe* and *The Antiquary* (as a musical play) appeared, and on May 17, 1820, Sheridan Knowles's famous tragedy of *Virginus* first saw the light at Covent Garden. The story of the acceptance of this play by Macready, to whom it was first sent, is somewhat lengthy as told by him, but a brief recapitulation of the facts is, perhaps, not out of place.

The play had been already produced at Glasgow with success, and through a mutual friend Knowles procured Macready's promise to read it. The latter did so, and in his impulsive way sat down and penned an enthusiastic note to the author, an entire stranger to him, which, on reflection, he tore up and did not send.*

However, he re-read the play that evening, and this time, convinced of its value, again sat down to write his opinion to the author.

Eventually Harris accepted it, on Macready's recommendation, offering £400 for twenty nights'

* An interesting note may be made of the fact that Macready speaks of "the postman's bell sounding up the street as he was sealing the letter."

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performance. The heroine's part was taken by the lovely Maria Foote, and Charles Kemble was also included in the cast. It was a grand success, and has since retained a place as a classic piece in many good *répertoire* companies.

During the Easter week that spring Macready was much gratified by a compliment paid him by old Mr. Thomas Harris, the patentee and chief proprietor of the theatre, who came up to town from his seat, Belmont, near Uxbridge. He sent a message desiring to see him at his hotel, where Macready found "a very old gentleman, with all the ceremonious and graceful manners . . . of his day." He wished to thank him personally for the service rendered to the theatre in its distress, a manifestation, it is easy to believe, greatly appreciated by Macready, who was himself rather more in sympathy with the old school of ceremony and reserve than with the freedom and easy cordiality that prevailed among his Bohemian associates.

On January 29, 1820, the death of George III. involved the closing of the theatre till February 17, a period of nearly three weeks, in itself a serious loss to the proprietors and actors.

Bishop this season directed the "oratorios" as his own speculation, but relinquished the undertaking at the end of the season. They began on

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February 18 with a grand selection from Handel in memory of the late king.

Old Mr. Harris's visit to town at Easter must have been one of the last of his life, for he died, according to Boaden, at Wimbledon on October 2, 1820, in the seventy-eighth year of his age.*

This event was of the highest importance to the fortunes of the theatre. It recalled Kemble to London from his residence at Toulouse, and there can be little doubt that it was the direct cause of the idea, which he later carried into effect, of transferring the responsibility entailed by his share in the property to his brother Charles.

While old Mr. Harris lived, the absolute control was vested in him, and could be deputed to whomsoever he chose. At his death this right did not descend to his son. The

* O'Keeffe, in his reminiscences, speaks of having, in 1781, seen an unfinished portrait of Mr. Harris at the apartments of Mr. (afterwards Sir) William Beechey, R.A., in Macclesfield Street. It was not, he says, very large, but a most excellent likeness of a very handsome man. If, as is not unlikely, this is the portrait which used to hang over the mantel in the green-room of the theatre, it must have shared the general fate of the many even more valuable and interesting works of art, literary and otherwise, that perished in the conflagration of 1808. Harris himself had, it appears, employed Gainsborough Dupont to paint, for himself, the principal performers of Covent Garden Theatre in their most distinguished impersonations. As these were probably intended for the walls of his private residence, it is by no means impossible that many, if not all, of them are in existence at the present time.

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co-proprietors were all entitled to be consulted, a state of affairs which it is easy to believe did not make for smooth working. According to Boaden, the transfer of Kemble's sixth part took place during November, in (apparently) the year 1820. Macready, writing many years later, and probably trusting to memory for dates, places this event in the early spring of 1821. Moreover, he speaks of the share as one-fourth, which the best authorities agree to be an error. He attributes the subsequent disasters that befel the property to Kemble's parting with his entirely unprofitable possession, apparently ignoring the fact that in any event the property would, in the course of nature, have gone partly or wholly to Charles on his brother's death, two years later.

The most that can be said is that it possibly hastened the catastrophe, although there is no guarantee that, without the supreme managerial power, Henry Harris, the chief proprietor, could have made it as successful as his father did.

Fanny Kemble, in her "Record of a Girlhood," says—

"My father received the property my uncle transferred to him with cheerful courage, and not without sanguine hopes of retrieving its fortunes: instead of which, it destroyed his and those of his family, who, had he and they been

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untrammelled by the fatal obligation of working for a hopelessly ruined concern, might have turned their labours to far better personal account. Of the £80,000 my uncle sank in building Covent Garden, and all the years of toil my father, my sister, and myself sank in endeavouring to sustain it, nothing remained to us at my father's death: not even the ownership of the only thing I ever valued the property for, viz. the private box which belonged to us, the yearly rent of which was valued at £300, and the possession of which procured us for several years much enjoyment."

From a letter of Henry Harris, dated July 27, 1820, it seems that he hoped to effect economies at Covent Garden by means of a speculation in a Dublin theatre. If this were so, he must have been grievously disappointed; nor is it easy to comprehend how the feasibility of such an idea ever presented itself to a business man.

"Covent Garden Theatre,
"Thurs., July 27, 1820.

"DEAR SIR,

"Previous to my leaving town, I have looked over the accounts of the theatre for the last season, and as it will appear the receipts have been considerably *less* than any season at the present theatre. The expenditure will likewise be found to have been much less, and a considerable sum has been paid off from the debt

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of former years, so that if a balance were struck, I think, even with the last low receipts, a profit would be found on the season. However, it shows us that we must not, in future, be so sanguine about the receipts, and that it is absolutely necessary to make every possible reduction in the expenditure. I have applied diligently to that effect, and have been able to reduce the expenses for the ensuing season above £200 per week. This I have been able to do principally by the means of the Dublin Theatre; for by keeping a theatrical force there, ready at any time to be transplanted, I can, of course, do with less stationary company at Covent Garden. The bills of the different tradesmen are not yet collected, but they have promised to have everything ready for your inspection by the 7th of August. I fear you will find the whole debt still amount to a large sum: our only consolation is, that it is small in comparison to what it was, and that I don't know any of our creditors who are likely to behave rigidly or ill-naturedly towards us. Hoping for better times.

“ I am, dear sir,

“ Yours very truly,

“ H. HARRIS.

“ J. S. Willett, Esq.”

It is melancholy to think that after the uphill fight they had waged so gallantly since the black days of 1809, after almost paying off the crushing burden of debt remaining on the

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building, the proprietors were not destined to have their reward in seeing their fine property free from encumbrance.

But we are anticipating events a little. For the present we are concerned with the season that commenced September 18, 1820, on which date *Romeo and Juliet* was played, with Charles Kemble and Miss Wensley in the name parts. On October 18 *Cymbeline* was performed, and Macready appeared as Iachimo, with Miss Foote as Imogen. *Twelfth Night*, arranged by Bishop as an opera (!), in which Miss Tree sang "Bid me Discourse," followed, and on December 9 Vandenhoff, a new and valuable addition to the company, first appeared, in *King Lear*. He afterwards performed Sir Giles Overreach and Coriolanus, and some other characters, and then terminated his engagement.

Between the opening of the season in September, and Christmas, when the new pantomime, *Harlequin and Friar Bacon*, was brought out, Grimaldi frequently appeared as Kasrac in *Aladdin*, and although his health was gradually but surely failing, his increasing infirmity did not, it is said, show any effect upon his performances. His son, Young Joe, who had first appeared at Covent Garden five years before (December 26, 1815) as Chitteque in the pantomime of *Harlequin and Fortunio*, was now

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engaged for the first time regularly at the theatre, and bade fair to become a great public favourite, a promise, unfortunately, never destined to be fulfilled. Of his father at this time, Theodore Hook said, "The strength of Grimaldi, the Garrick of clowns, seems, like that of wine, to increase with age; his absurdities are admirable."

Among the successes of the season was Barry Cornwall's tragedy of *Mirandola* produced January 9, 1821, and played for nine nights to overflowing houses. But, says Macready, during the remaining seven nights of the run, "the wind was taken out of our sails by Miss Wilson at Drury Lane, as Mandane in *Artaxerxes*, who drew the town for twenty nights from the report of George IV. having heard and praised the new vocalist."

Later in the season one of the mangled Shakespearian plays, *The Tempest*, was given, "with songs interpolated by Reynolds, among the mutilations and barbarous ingraftings of Dryden and Davenport."

Finally came one of the great tests, if not the greatest of all, for tragedians, when Macready played that character of Shakespear's, which has probably given rise to more discussion and controversy than any single one in the whole literature of the world. *Hamlet* was announced for his benefit on June 8, 1821, and in what is for

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him a singularly brief account of the production, he tells us that "the theatre was crowded and the applause enthusiastic."

On March 20 Miss Dance, a pupil of Mrs. Siddons, made her first appearance on the stage, as Mrs. Haller in *The Stranger*. She afterwards played Juliet, Lady Townly in Cibber's *Provoked Husband*, and other leading parts.

The coronation of George IV., on July 19, 1821, was made an excuse for considerably prolonging the season.

Covent Garden brought forward Shakespear's *Henry IV.*, Part 2, for the sake of the famous pageant of Henry V.'s coronation in the last act. The play had not been seen there since Kemble brought it forward in 1804, without much success. On this occasion we have Macready's testimony "that the play rewarded the managers with houses crowded to the ceiling for many nights." The principal parts were cast as follows: The King, Macready; Shallow, W. Farren; Pistol, Blanchard; The Prince of Wales, C. Kemble; Dame Quickly, Mrs. Davenport.

Madam Vestris, who had lent the power of her many personal charms to Covent Garden during the season, left at its close, and was promptly engaged by the enterprising Mr. Elliston at Drury Lane for the 1821-2 season.

In March, 1821, the last link between Covent

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Garden Theatre and its old and popular playwright, O’Keeffe, appeared, in the shape of a five-act comedy entitled *Olympia*, which he had submitted to the proprietors several years before.

From a letter written by Harris to Mr. Surman, dated December, 1821, which was read at the Harris v. Kemble trial in 1831, we learn that in the eleven seasons after opening the new theatre the receipts (presumably gross) were £991,811, or an average sum of £82,650 per annum.*

The song of “Should he upbraid,” which is a paraphrase of Petruchio’s speech just before the entry of Katharina (*The Taming of the Shrew*, act 2), was composed by Sir Henry Bishop for a revival of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* at Covent Garden Theatre in 1821, and was first sung by Miss Tree in that play.

During the summer of 1821 Macready renewed his engagement for another five years with Harris. His terms were now “the highest salary given in the theatre,” and as it appeared that both Young and Miss Stephens were engaged at £20 a week, Macready claimed a similar sum, and got it, with the verbal stipulation that if any other regular actor should receive more, he also should be raised to the

* *Theatrical Observer*, September, 1831 (see also appendix).

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same amount. To this arrangement Reynolds was a witness.

Before dealing with the plays produced in the 1821-2 season, we are obliged to revert to the unfortunate quarrels between the new proprietor, Charles Kemble, and his co-proprietor, Henry Harris, which eventually led to the latter's resignation of a post he was so very eminently fitted for.

It is perhaps hardly just to Harris to describe the commencement of the affair as a quarrel, which, as we know, needs two in its making, since it appears from two contemporary chroniclers of such diametrically opposite views as Bunn and Macready that Charles Kemble began the battle by the formation of a "cave" among the proprietors, consisting of himself, Mr. Willet, Captain Forbes, R.N., and the representatives of Mrs. Martindale, directed against Henry Harris, who, as we know, held thirteen twenty-fourths of the entire holding himself.*

Bunn mentions an incident (*q.v.*) said to have occurred five years before, but of which I have been unable to find an account, when "Henry Harris was instigated to assault Mr. Charles Kemble on the stage for alleged heartless and

* They especially resented Harris continuing to receive the £1000 per annum payable to his father as manager.

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irritating conduct." What truth there is in this it is not easy to ascertain, but some trivial quarrel may well have rankled in Charles Kemble's mind, and determined him to try and oust his co-proprietor from his position of authority.

He was so far successful that he brought an offer from Harris to withdraw altogether from management upon payment to him of £12,500 per annum. This the other party declined, whereupon Harris offered to take the theatre himself and pay them the £13,500 per annum, an offer which by no means suited their ill-advised ambition. Accordingly, they accepted his first proposition, and became Harris's tenants for seven years, at a rent of £12,000 per annum. The lease itself was not, however, signed, Harris, with somewhat unbusiness-like leniency, allowing possession of the theatre upon signature of an agreement to sign it. Under the new arrangement Charles Kemble, on March 11, 1822, signed the agreement by which he became acting-manager,* Fawcett retaining his old office of stage-manager, probably the only member of the new board with any genuine knowledge of the duties of his position.

About the only productions worthy of notice

* Additional MSS. British Museum (C. Kemble's diary, March-June, 1822).



CHARLES KEMBLE

From the Painting by G. H. Harlow, engraved by T. Lupton.

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were those of *Julius Cæsar* and a benefit given on August 5 for the relatives and seven children of John Emery, a favourite Covent Garden actor, who died in July. On this occasion *The Rivals* was performed with a fine cast, almost the last occasion for many years when such a constellation could be seen there: Sir Anthony, Munden; Captain Absolute, C. Kemble; Faulkland, Young; Acres, Liston; Lydia, Mrs. Edwin; Mrs. Malaprop, Mrs. Davenport.

One other production demands notice, viz. *The Larv of Java*, an opera distinguished by the collaboration of George Colman, junior, and Bishop, and in which the immortal "Mynheer Vandunck" first made his appearance, May 11, 1822.

The pantomime at Christmas was *Harlequin and Mother Bunch; or, The Yellow Dwarf*, in which both Grimaldi and his son, J. S. Grimaldi, played. It had a very fair run until Easter, when another of Grimaldi's former successes, *Cherry's Fair Star*, was revived.

The new committee were not long in proving their striking incapacity for theatre management. They parted with three of their most popular performers at once, says Macready, for "an inconsiderable weekly sum," the trio being Liston, Miss Stephens, and Young. The latter, however, while he had only enjoyed a weekly salary of £20

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at Covent Garden, received that sum nightly from Drury Lane. Elliston had, besides, violated a hitherto sacred agreement between the patent theatres, that no performer should walk from one house to the other without at least a year intervening. Miss Stephens, the second great artist, left a weekly salary of £20 for one of £60, and Liston, the third, sprang from £17 per week to £50 and £60 per week.* It is therefore difficult to agree with Macready's view that only "an inconsiderable amount tempted these popular players from their allegiance." The new management of Covent Garden were only willing to renew their engagements at the old salaries of £20 per week, whereas Elliston was, in fact, inaugurating the era of enormous salaries which has continued without intermission ever since, and which has rendered the task of making a theatrical venture pay so extremely difficult.

Alfred Bunn gives the following interesting particulars of the salaries which had prevailed up to that time, and which may all be regarded as average maximum salaries of the time. There were, however, exceptions, as in the case of the boy Betty, whose friends made a particularly advantageous arrangement, by which he secured fifty guineas per night, and a clear benefit from both the patent theatres. This, however, cannot

* Bunn's "Stage," vol. i. p. 65.

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be regarded as having any real bearing on the point.

“ In the very height of their popularity,” says Bunn, “ such actors as Munden, Fawcett, Quick, Edwin, Irish Johnstone, etc., had £14 a week. Lewis, as actor and manager, had £20 a week, and in January, 1812, Mathews, *the* Mathews, the most extraordinary actor that ever lived, says, in a letter to Mrs. Mathews, of a proposed engagement at Covent Garden Theatre, ‘ Now to my offer, which I think *stupendous* and *magnificent*, £17 a week.’ John Kemble, for acting and managing, had £36 a week. Miss O’Neill’s salary at the beginning of her brilliant career was £15, and never exceeded £25. George Cooke (greatly attractive) had £20 per week. Mrs. Jordan’s salary at the zenith of her popularity was £31 10s. per week. Mr. Charles Kemble, until he became his own manager, never had more than £20 per week.”

Mr. Bunn has plenty more to say on this vexed subject, and many deductions to draw, but space forbids further quotation. A quaint footnote, however, forms the “ tag ” to his discourse, and must find a place.

“ It has been alleged as an excuse for the present exorbitant salaries that money was far more valuable some years ago than it is now (1839), but the existing state of things gives the

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lie direct to any such assertion, and proves that its value is greater than ever, *c.g.*—

“‘Magazines for one penny.’ “‘Locke on the Human Understanding’ for threepence.’ ‘Best hats, seven shillings.’ ‘Six miles on an omnibus for sixpence.’ ‘Steam to Gravesend, ninepence.’ ‘Ditto to France, five shillings, and to the d——l himself for very little more.’”

1822–3. It is not surprising to read that with the magnificent company of performers now enlisted in the Drury Lane company, as against the beggarly array at Covent Garden, the former became the fashion and the latter a desert. The unhappy mistake of the Covent Garden committee was soon brought home to them, and they applied to Harris to resume management, a step in itself which must have caused them no small mortification. Not without reason, he refused, pointing out that they had broken up his powerful company, and were, in fact, asking him to make bricks without straw.

Persisting in his determination to force them to their knees, he brought an action to compel them to sign the lease, a course which, however much legality it contained, certainly appears a mistaken one to us, and one which resulted in the bankruptcy of the concern.

A few lines may here be devoted to the character of Henry Harris, of whom we now virtually

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take leave in our chronicles. In spite of some mistakes, he was without a doubt as much gifted with the art of management as his father had been. Although obliged to contend against great and unexampled difficulties, yet the theatre under his rule was generally prosperous. His friend Bunn said of him—

“He was endowed with a sound understanding, an acute observation, clear judgement, and great decision, together with the sometimes fatal gift of an excellent heart. If his efforts were sometimes frustrated by those causes that will eventually frustrate the efforts of any *entrepreneur*, at others his exertions were crowned with the most brilliant success.”

Parke relates of him that he was never known to invite any of his performers to his table with the exception of Mr. Lewis, who was his deputy manager, and Mr. Shield, his composer. In spite of this, when, in May, 1839, this autocratic yet capable manager died, Bunn confessed that “a man more deservedly respected or more generally beloved never descended into ‘the populous homes of death.’”

The season of 1822–3 did not open until October 1, when *Twelfth Night* was performed. Among the new plays were *Ali Pacha* and *The Soldier's Daughter*, a two-act melodrama by

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Howard Payne, which had already been played at Drury Lane, and in which T. P. Cooke took part. On December 3 *Maid Marian*, a three-act opera by Bishop, was performed, and the name of its author, J. R. Planché, shows us that we have at last entered comparatively modern times.

Macready had made his first appearance for the season on November 13, in *Othello*, with a cast sadly depleted of stars.

Harlequin and the Ogress ; or, The Sleeping Beauty, was the pantomime for the season, and was attended with success. Grimaldi's biographer says—

“Nothing could exceed the liberality displayed by Mr. Harris in getting up this species of entertainment; . . . to which their almost uniform success may be attributed. This spirit was not confined to the stage, but was also extended to the actors. . . . The principal actors were allowed a pint of wine each every night the pantomime was played, and on the evening of its first representation they were invited to a handsome dinner at the Piazza Coffee House, whither they all repaired directly the rehearsal was over.”

On January 28 a dramatic version of Scott's “The Fortunes of Nigel,” entitled *Nigel ; or, The Crown Jewels*, was hurriedly brought out by Charles Kemble in order to forestall a similar

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production at the rival theatre. It was not a success, and, indeed, was so nearly a complete failure that Elliston decided to abandon his own production.

The oratorio season began on February 9, in which Madame Camporese, Mrs. Salmon, Miss Paton, Mr. Braham, and Mr. Sapio took part. At the end of the first part a "concertante" for two harps, by Bochsá and his pupil, Miss Dibdin, was performed. Parke speaks of the incongruous effect produced by "a gigantic sort of a personage like Mr. Bochsá playing on so feminine an instrument."

A revival of *King John* took place on March 3, for which Planché tells us he gratuitously designed the costumes. He did more, he convinced Kemble so thoroughly of the many existing anachronisms in stage costume and management generally, that the entire superintendence of the production was entrusted to him, greatly to the indignation of Messrs. Fawcett and Farley, respectively the stage-manager and "purveyor of spectacle" to the theatre.

"Never," says Planché, "shall I forget the dismay of some of the performers when they looked upon the flat-topped *chapeaux de fer* of the twelfth century, which they irreverently stigmatized as stew-pans. Nothing but the

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fact that the classical features of a Kemble were to be surmounted by a precisely similar abomination would, I think, have induced one of the rebellious barons to have appeared in it. They had no faith in me, and sulkily assumed their new and strange habiliments in the full belief that they should be roared at by the audience. They *were* roared at, but in a much more agreeable way than they had contemplated. . . .

“Receipts of from £400 to £600 nightly soon reimbursed the management for the expense of the production, and a complete reformation of dramatic costume became from that moment inevitable upon the English stage.”

On March 15 there was played, for the first time, the tragedy of *Julian*, by Miss Mitford, which was not a success, but which is said to have been the first play distinguished by the omission * of a prologue and epilogue. For it Miss Mitford received £100 in cash, and £100 by an accepted bill due October 12, 1823. Macready took the title part, and the boy part of Alfonso, King of Sicily, was taken by Miss Foote.

On March 23, 1823, a new melodrama by Farley appeared, entitled *The Vision of the Sun ; or, The Orphan of Peru*, in which Grimaldi played an important part, but even in its first

* Planché also claims credit for this innovation for his play, *A Woman Never Vext*, November 9, 1824.

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nights he was so weak and ill he could scarcely struggle through the evening, every effort he made being followed by cramp and spasms of terrible pain, which, however, he concealed entirely from the audience. On the twenty-fourth night of the piece he at length found himself unable any longer to bear the fearful trial, and he decided to throw up his part, which was thenceforth played by his son. After this occasion, although poor Grimaldi cherished hopes of returning to his profession, he did but very little work, and in the ensuing season he tendered his resignation to the proprietors, who generously allowed him £5 a week for the rest of the season, and, which was yet more gratifying to him, appointed his son principal clown in his stead.

May 8, 1823, is, however, a memorable date in Covent Garden's history. It saw the production of an opera by Howard Payne and Bishop, the bare title of which, *Clari, or The Maid of Milan*, it is safe to say, is totally unknown to ninety-nine per cent. of the inhabitants of Great Britain. But it is almost equally certain that every English-speaking person in the world could hum an air first sung in that opera—the air of “Home, Sweet Home.”*

* It is sad to relate that the original MS. of the opera, formerly in the possession of the late Mr. Julian Marshall, is now in the United States.

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The opera, as a whole, did not meet with very high praise at the hands of contemporary critics. The *Harmonicon* of June, 1823, said—

“We should be surprised were Mr. Bishop to execute any task allotted to him in such a way as to expose himself to censure. His present production . . . is free from blame; but it is also unentitled to praise, for it possesses nothing that is distinguished by originality of conception . . . or elegance of effect. The chief character is assigned to Miss Tree, and it could not have been placed in better hands. To the interest which Miss Tree always excites by her feeling and gentleness, may be ascribed in a great measure the salvation of the piece.”

In a later number of the *Harmonicon* (September, 1823) the critic deals with the opera in more detail, and thus he speaks of the immortal song—

“‘Home, Sweet Home’ is the *cheval de bataille*, the most popular thing in the opera, and that to which much of its success may be attributed. This air is announced as ‘composed and partly founded on a Sicilian air’ by Mr. Bishop. Now, we are led by that spirit which always influences critics . . . to compare these two songs together, and upon bringing them into juxtaposition . . . they appeared as one and the same thing. That, however, which is sung on the stage is a beautiful air, whether it was born



HENRY R. BISHOP.
From the Engraving by B. Holl.

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under the serene sky of classic Sicily or beneath the dense clouds that overhang Covent Garden Theatre.”

It should also not be forgotten that Macready first played *Shylock* on May 13, 1823, and with this season the second period of the tragedian's connection with Covent Garden came to an abrupt termination. That part of his contract with the theatre which was verbal, and which, in effect, guaranteed him a salary equal to the highest in the company, was not ratified by Charles Kemble and his partners, and he decided to quit the company, in which he had served since September, 1816, and which was the scene of all his first great London triumphs.

We shall not hear much of him in our chronicles for a period of nearly thirteen years, not until, in fact, he enters Covent Garden Theatre as its ruler, for a brief, yet notable, reign.

For the present he also became a member of the almost unparalleled constellation of star artists at Drury Lane, which included the names of Kean, Young, Munden, Liston, Dowton, Elliston, Terry, Harley, Knight, Miss Stephens, and Madam Vestris.

The remainder of the 1822-3 season presented nothing of importance.

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We have previously (see p. 347, vol. i.) referred to the dismissal this year of John Brandon, who must certainly have been the oldest servant connected with the theatre. He had been engaged at Covent Garden since 1768, a period of fifty-five years, and had since 1803 filled the highly responsible office of treasurer, to which he had been appointed by Mr. T. Harris, influenced by the advice of Mr. John Kemble. It must have been not the least painful result of the Harris-Kemble dispute that involved the summary *congé* of so well-trying a servant.

The 1823-4 season opened on October 1, with *Much Ado* and *Rosina*, followed on successive nights by *The School for Scandal* (always a good "show" when Charles Kemble played his scape-grace namesake), the *Comedy of Errors*, and *Clari*.

On October 8 a new historical romance called *The Beacon of Liberty* was produced with success, doubtless greatly aided by Bishop's music.

On November 5, *Cortez ; or The Conquest of Mexico*, a three-act drama by Planché, with music by Bishop, in which Miss Love and Miss Paton, two excellent singers, both found congenial parts. Mr. Genest brings his usual trite reproach against the dramatist for "introducing horses and music into the play." But with

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some cutting down the piece was acted some seventeen times in all. It contained an air not quite forgotten even at the present day, 'Yes, 'tis the Indian Drum.'

The *Harmonicon** thus delivers itself upon the production.

"This piece has fallen a good deal under the displeasure of some of our daily and weekly critics; the chief cause of offence seems to be the horses employed in it. But, really, upon this point we cannot help agreeing in what the manager says in a deprecatory advertisement prefixed to the book of songs.

"With regard to the horses, the hope only is expressed that as they have been often applauded when introduced merely for stage effect, they will not be less favourably received when their appearance is sanctioned by history, and is highly important to the interest and probability of the drama.'"

During the 1823-4 season the tenor Sinclair, who was by many thought a serious rival of John Braham, made his reappearance in England at Covent Garden, after an absence of six years, which he had spent studying in Italy.

If we may believe his son's statement, Charles Young returned to Covent Garden during the

* Vol. i. p. 201.

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1823-4 season, at his Drury Lane terms, viz. £50 a night, a figure which I believe to be exaggerated.

On December 12 a tragedy by Mrs. Hemans, *The Vespers of Palermo*, was performed and, unfortunately, damned at the same time.

A note in the 1862 edition of her works tells us the play had been handed over to the managing committee of Covent Garden two years before, in 1821, and her sister writes shortly before the fateful night: "After innumerable delays, uncertainties, and anxieties, the fate of the tragedy, so long in abeyance, is now drawing to a crisis."

On November 27 the authoress herself writes:—

"All is going on as well as I could possibly desire. . . . I received a message yesterday from Mr. Kemble informing me of the unanimous opinion of the green-room conclave in favour of the piece."

Mrs. Hemans herself was at St. Asaph when it was produced, and two days had to elapse before the news of its reception could reach her. Not only Mrs. Hemans's family, but all her more immediate friends and neighbours, were wrought up to a pitch of intense expectation. Various newspapers were ordered expressly for the

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occasion, and the post-office was besieged at twelve o'clock at night by some of the more zealous of her friends, eager to be the first heralds of the triumph so undoubtingly anticipated.

Her boys had worked themselves up into an uncontrollable state of excitement, and were all lying awake "to hear about mamma's play," and perhaps her bitterest moment of mortification was when she went up to their bedsides to announce that all their bright visions were dashed to the ground, and that the performance had ended in all but a failure.

It is, however, more cheering to remember that it was again brought forward not very long after, this time in Edinburgh, where it proved a great success, earning warm commendation from no less a judge than Sir Walter Scott, who wrote a kind letter to the gentle authoress that brought balm to her wounded feelings.

On May 3, 1824, Charles Kemble played Falstaff in *Henry IV.*, Part 1, for the first time in London. By all accounts, it was by no means a part for which he was fitted, either by nature or his art.

On July 9 a piece founded on Mrs. Shelley's famous romance of "Frankenstein" was played, entitled *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein*. It met with partial success only. According to the *Harmonicon*, the receipts of the theatre

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had fallen off very considerably at this time without any corresponding reduction of expenditure.

On July 19 the season ended, and with it the invaluable services of Henry Bishop to the theatre terminated. From the *Harmonicon* of May, 1824, we learn that the managing committee refused to augment his salary, and Mr. Elliston, the lessee of Drury Lane, wisely seized the opportunity of adding so much musical talent to his establishment. From the same source in the following month is the name of Bishop's successor, Carl von Weber, first learnt. He was in his thirty-seventh or thirty-eighth year, in the zenith of his reputation as a composer, and fresh from his triumphs in his native land.

The first production of note in the 1824-5 season was Weber's new opera of *Der Freischütz*, which had already been brought out at the Royal English Opera House on Thursday, July 23, 1824, with immense success. This was repeated at Covent Garden, the piece being played no less than fifty-two times during the season. Besides the production in London three months before that we have mentioned, and in which Braham and T. P. Cooke played, several minor theatres brought it out, and Drury Lane soon followed, and was, according to



CARL MARIA VON WEBER.

From the Painting by John Casse, lithographed by R. J. Lane.

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Genest, the best of the many versions that appeared. The *Harmonicon* of November, 1824, while criticizing the performers, Miss Love, Miss Paton, Pearman, and Isaacs, somewhat severely, gave praise to the production in general, and to the chorus and orchestra in particular.

Among the new productions of the season which failed was a melodrama entitled *Father and Son ; or, The Rock of Charbonnier*, produced on February 28, 1825. This was by Edward Fitzball, an author new to Covent Garden, but who had already met with a good deal of popular appreciation at the Surrey Theatre. Fitzball's own account of his trepidation on being summoned to the theatre by Charles Kemble and invited to write for them is extremely vivid, not to say grotesque. Let those who wish to comprehend fully the grovelling adulation bestowed upon the manager of a great theatre by a successful playwright read "Thirty-Five Years of a Dramatic Author's Life." Fitzball will be best remembered by a later generation as the writer of the famous song, "My Pretty Jane," which, set to music by Bishop, is for us of to-day inseparably associated with the name of Sims Reeves.

The remainder of the season was uneventful. Several of Shakespear's plays, each converted into "a sort of opera," as Genest puts it, were

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produced, notably *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and the *Comedy of Errors*. Other productions included *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado*, *Hamlet* (with Charles Kemble in the rôle), *The School for Scandal*, *Macbeth*, *Venice Preserved*, *King John*, *Merchant of Venice*, *The Belle's Stratagem*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Every Man in his Humour*, *Julius Cæsar*, and many other plays of equal note, besides a large number of new productions since forgotten.

It would appear from Parke's memoirs that this season's oratorios were at the cost of the lessees of the theatre, Charles Kemble and Messrs. Willett and Forbes, and he records that they induced the unfortunate musicians in the orchestra to play at reduced salaries to allow of their being carried on with less risk.

“The return these performers experienced from the lessees was, that the most part of them, and the best, were dismissed at the end of the season to make room for musicians of inferior talent on inferior terms.”

He further comments sardonically on the change in the character of the music from those given fifty years before, when none but strictly sacred music was performed, and “not only the performers who assisted at them, but the public also who attended at them, appeared in mourning dresses.”

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Among the interesting operatic productions of the season was Weber's *Préciosa*, which was not, however, equal to the master's other works.

By way of celebrating the coronation of Charles X. of France on May 29, 1825, a grand representation of the ceremony was arranged for Covent Garden by Kemble, who despatched Planché to Rheims to make sketches of the costumes and ceremony generally. On July 10, *i.e.* towards the end of the season, this was produced with great splendour and accuracy of detail, and completely eclipsed the rival attempt at Drury Lane, which Planché condemns as hasty, slovenly, and inaccurate.

The 1825-6 season was to prove a remarkable one. It opened on September 26 with *Julius Cæsar*, with Charles Kemble in the title rôle. On October 21 a new opera, entitled *Lilla*, was produced, and withdrawn after six representations. On October 28 *No Song no Supper* was revived, with the part of Margareta by Mary Anne Goward (afterwards Mrs. Keeley), of whom we shall have to speak more fully in connection with *Oberon*. On November 10 Madam Vestris* reappeared at Covent Garden as Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera*, and on the 15th of the month as Susanna in *The*

* She had begun her engagement as Mandane in Arne's *Artaxerxes* on Monday, November 7.

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Marriage of Figaro. On December 1 this versatile actress played Lydia Languish, and later in the season the part of Madge in *Love in a Village*, for the only time in her life.

On December 10 there appeared a tragedy by Miss Harriet Lee, entitled *The Three Strangers*, and founded on the same story as Byron's more celebrated tragedy of *Werner*, which it preceded by many years. Byron had, it appeared, openly chosen Miss Lee's plot for his poem, thereby forcing her to offer her play for production or incur the suspicion of plagiarism.

But the climax of the season, and that which, undoubtedly, gives it its chief claim to distinction, was the production on April 12, 1826, of Weber's opera of *Oberon; or, The Elf-King's Oath*. The libretto was dramatized by Planché from a poem by Wieland. The following is the cast: Fairies—Oberon, C. Bland; Puck, Miss H. Cawse; Titania, Miss Smith. Franks—Charlemagne, Austin; Sir Huon, Braham; Sherasmin, Fawcett. Arabians—Haroun al Raschid, Chapman; Baba-Khan, Baker; Reza, Miss Paton; Fatima, Madam Vestris; Namouna, Mrs. Davenport; Almanza, Cooper; Roshano, Miss Lacy. The scenery was by T. and W. Grieve, Mr. Pugh, and Mr. Luppino.

The new musical director of the theatre, Carl

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von Weber, arrived in England on March 5, 1826, and took up his abode at the house of Sir George Smart, now known as 103, Great Portland Street, to superintend the production of what, alas! was to be his first and last English opera. His first public appearance in England was at Covent Garden Theatre on March 8,* when he conducted selections from *Der Freischütz*, amidst universal tokens of enthusiasm from all parts of the theatre.

Fanny Kemble speaks of Sir George Smart as the leader of the Covent Garden orchestra—

“and our excellent old friend. . . . He was a man of very considerable musical knowledge, and had a peculiar talent for teaching and accompanying the vocal compositions of Handel. During the whole of my father’s management at Covent Garden he had the supervision of the musical representations, and conducted the orchestra, and he was principally instrumental in bringing out Weber’s fine operas of *Der Freischütz* and *Oberon*.”

Unless she is referring to this particular period of her father’s management, it is difficult to comprehend her assertion that Smart supervised the music “during the whole of my father’s management,” as Bishop had certainly

* Parke gives this date as March 29 on p. 227 of his “Memoirs,” and as the 8th on p. 223.

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filled that position until the end of the 1824-5 season (*q.v.*).

Reverting to the first appearance of *Oberon*, we learn from Planché that he was greatly hampered in the adaptation of the work to Weber's ideas by the lack of competent actors and singers.

“None of our actors could sing, and but one singer could act—Madam Vestris. At the first general rehearsal with full band, scenery, etc., the effect [of Miss Goward's solo] was not satisfactory, and Fawcett, in his usual brusque manner, exclaimed, ‘That must come out! It won't go!’ Weber, who was standing in the pit, leaning on the back of the orchestra, so feeble that he could scarcely stand without support, shouted, ‘Wherefore shall it not go?’ And leaping over the partition like a boy, snatched the baton from the conductor, and saved from excision one of the most delicious *morceaux* in the opera.”

Oberon proved a great success, and was, according to Genest, performed thirty-one times in the course of the season.

It will have been remarked that the newest *débutante* in the Covent Garden company, Miss Goward, is not mentioned as having a place in the cast. That she took part, however, in the performance is a matter of historical fact, and

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subjoined is a brief account of her career, extracted from the *Musical Times* of April 1, 1899, in which Mr. F. G. Edwards gives a deeply interesting account of the event, taken from her own lips, and written shortly after the death of the famous actress on March 12, 1899, at the venerable age of ninety-three.

Mary Ann Goward (afterwards Keeley) was born at Ipswich on November 22, 1805. She was endowed with a pure soprano voice of remarkable compass. Like many other aspirants to fame, Miss Goward found her opportunity through the failure of another singer, though in her case it was the result of a double failure. One of the most popular and best-known excerpts from *Oberon* is the "Mermaid's Song," of which the history is intimately connected with the famous old actress, then a young and fascinating girl.

Mr. F. G. Edwards visited Mrs. Keeley, then in her eighty-ninth year, at 10, Pelham Crescent, South Kensington, for a talk with her upon *Oberon*. She vividly recalled all the incidents connected with its production. She said that two other singers of repute had tried to sing the "Mermaid's Song," but without success. The Mermaid had to sing at the very back of the stage, where it was extremely difficult to hear the soft accompaniment. There was

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some danger of the air having to be sacrificed, when Sir George Smart, Weber's host, said, "Little Goward will sing it," and she did.

"Weber came up to me afterwards," said Mrs. Keeley, "and placing his *beautiful* hand on my shoulder, said, 'My little girl, you sang that song very nicely; but what for did you put in that note?' Which little note [said the octogenarian mermaid to Mr. Edwards] *I* put in—on my own account."

The sad fate of the distinguished composer is well known. He had been in ill-health from lung disease for a long time past, and little doubt can be felt that the worry and anxiety attendant on the new opera hastened the end of this gifted man.

On the morning of June 5, exactly thirteen weeks after his arrival in England, he was found dead in his bed, and once more the luck of Covent Garden deserted it.

The funeral of the deceased composer took place amid considerable pomp at the recently destroyed Roman Catholic church of St. Mary, Moorfields. Many offers of assistance in a proposed performance of Mozart's "Requiem" were received, among others being "the entire band of Covent Garden."

A committee formed to carry out the arrange-

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ments included the names of Moscheles, Braham, Attwood, Sir George Smart, Collard, Chappell, and others. The funeral was of a very imposing character, and attracted enormous crowds. The procession included "Mutes on horseback in silk dresses," and all the other hideous paraphernalia of the period. As the procession moved down the aisle of the chapel, Mozart's "Requiem" was commenced. The conductor was Mr. Attwood, who presided at the organ. The band was led by Mr. Cramer, and amongst the other instrumentalists were Mori, Ella, Harper (trumpet), Smithies (trombone), and Chipp (double drums).

In 1844, at the instigation of Richard Wagner, the remains of Weber were removed to Dresden, and reinterred.

The remaining events of the season must be briefly related. On May 20 Scott's novel of "Woodstock" was dramatized, with Charles Kemble as Louis Kerneguy, the disguised king. On June 1 Madam Vestris played, for her benefit, the part of Mrs. Page in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, arranged as an opera. Braham also played regularly throughout the season, which ended on June 23.

The 1826-7 season found a very similar company acting, but without Braham, who transferred his services to Drury Lane. Madam Vestris, however, was retained, and, as was her

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wont, played a good many "breeches parts" during the season.

On November 4 Miss Mitford's tragedy of *Foscari*—written, as she asserts, before Byron's poem of a similar name—was performed with some measure of success, and repeated fifteen times.

On January 2, 1827, Boieldieu's opera of *La Dame Blanche*, anglicized into *The White Maid*, was performed at Covent Garden with only moderate success. It had been first produced about a year before in Paris, where it created a perfect *furor*, and its popularity has, indeed, lasted well up to recent times, for it was as frequently played in Paris in the seventies and eighties as it had been half a century before, when it had all the charm and merit of novelty to recommend it. It may be remembered as containing transcriptions of Scotch airs, including that of "Robin Adair." Vestris played the part of George Brown, the disguised hero, on its first production.

On April 16 a play founded on the once-popular romance of "Peter Wilkins; or, The Flying Indians," was produced with great success, and acted fifty times.

During the season Maria Foote made a brief reappearance on four successive nights, and on June 29 the theatre closed.

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The 1827-8 season witnessed an event so important in the history of the theatre that it overshadows the other happenings to a very large extent.

Before we deal, however, with the melancholy career of Edmund Kean, we must glance briefly at the remaining members of the company he was now to reinforce by his prodigious genius. They were headed, of course, by their manager and proprietor, Charles Kemble, who repeated in the autumn and winter many of his favourite parts. Fawcett, Bartley, Keeley, Young, Farley, W. Farren, and Blanchard formed a very strong contingent for comedy and tragedy, while Miss Kelly (who made her first appearance there as Alexis in *The Shepherd Boy*) brought her very great talents to the support of the company, which could hardly boast of many actresses of the highest rank. Mrs. Davenport and Madam Vestris were, it is true, still there, but the other names, Miss Jarman, Miss Goward, Miss Hughes, Miss Henry, and Mrs. Faucit are hardly of the same lustre.

John Reeve, who had lately been playing at the Adelphi, made his first appearance at Covent Garden in the spring, and several fine casts were brought together on benefit nights, notably on May 19, when opera lovers had the rare treat of seeing Madam Vestris play Cherubino.

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On March 17, 1828, Joe Grimaldi took his farewell benefit at Sadler's Wells, the theatre with which, as he told his audience, he had been connected since he was three years old, a period of forty-five years. To the shame of the Covent Garden proprietors be it said, they allowed his request for the loan of the theatre for a benefit there to fall through, apparently out of sheer carelessness; and Charles Kemble had the mortification of seeing the greatest clown of his own or any other time accorded the hospitality of Covent Garden's rival, Drury Lane, by Mr. Price, the lessee and manager, with a generous readiness which will redound evermore to his credit. It is satisfactory to remember that from the Drury Lane fund, to which he had long been a subscriber, he received an annuity of £100 for the too-short remainder of his busy life, which terminated on May 31, 1837.

Ever since the failure of Fitzball's play of *Father and Son* he had been cold-shouldered by Kemble and the other Covent Garden directors. This year, however, he sent in a play entitled *The Devil's Elixir*, founded on the famous German legend of "Peter Schemihl; or, The Shadowless Man." This Fawcett and Morton, the readers to the theatre, accepted. Rodwell wrote music to it, the Grieves and Finley painted the scenery, Miss Goward and Miss Hughes

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sang, and under Farley's direction the piece proved a great success, bringing in the writer a couple of hundred pounds, and establishing him as a successful writer for the theatre.

This, however, is slightly anticipating events, as it was not produced till April 20, 1829, after Miss Fanny Kemble's *début*, to the success of which Fitzball frankly admits he owed the receipt of his money.

Upon the authority of the late E. Laman Blanchard,* who contributed it to the paper, a curious fact is gleaned from the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* of February 2, 1883 :—

“As late as 1826 the writer of these lines well remembers that a special armoury of pistols and blunderbusses was kept at the stage door of Covent Garden Theatre to protect those actors who lived in the suburbs, or were going by private conveyance into the country, from the frequent attacks of highwaymen. One guinea was always left with the stage doorkeeper as a security for the return of the weapon, and the charge was made of two shillings a month.”

But space is limited, and we must turn to the great event of the season, the first appearance at Covent Garden of the extraordinary actor whose genius had literally dragged Drury

* Blanchard's father was a comedian at the theatre.

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Lane from the jaws of ruin to the height of prosperity.

His connection with our subject only begins when, alas! his fatal craving for stimulants had brought his physical powers to the lowest ebb consistent with the daily practice of his profession.

Such as it is, however, it forms so important a portion of our history that it must be reserved for a fresh chapter.

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CHAPTER XIV

1827-1832

IT is not possible here to do more than glance at the meteoric and sorrowful career of Edmund Kean. Few novelists have conceived anything in fiction more romantic and extraordinary than the story of his early years. The illegitimate son of an unnatural mother, herself the daughter of the brilliant George Saville Carey, he was left to the care of strangers when three months old. By his mother he was claimed again, and again abandoned. Brought up amid the necessarily sordid and wretched surroundings of the poorest and humblest members of the profession he eventually reached the top of, fighting against incredible difficulties, and steadfastly pursuing the aims he knew himself capable of achieving, he stands for all time as an example of the reward awaiting those who have the grit to do as he did. And, after all this, the pity and mystery of his terrible fall! To have triumphantly surmounted the obstacles, only to prove how miserably impotent he was to conquer the

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more insidious enemy—drink—and finally to die when he might still have hoped to do even greater things than he had accomplished; to have touched and sat on the throne vacated by Garrick and Kemble, never to reign there as he might so well have reigned—it is a story almost too lurid to write about, and certainly too dark for a novelist to dare to paint.

His connection with Covent Garden was typical of his career. It began only in the short evening of his life. Almost the whole of his stage triumphs are bound up with the history of Drury Lane Theatre.

The reason for his secession in October, 1827, is not clearly related by his biographers, but it is stated that he had a dispute with Price, the manager, and it is not unlikely that this concerned the engagement of his son Charles, who was then about to make his *début* as an actor, to his father's intense sorrow and anger.

On October 15, 1827, he played Shylock at Covent Garden before a crowded and brilliant audience, and it is said that his acting was "as noble, as complete, and as rich as ever;" and in that terrible scene with Tubal, when Shylock discovers his ungrateful daughter's flight, he was as powerful, finished, and impressive as he alone could be. He repeated Shylock on October 17; on the 22nd he appeared as Richard, and on the

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24th as Sir Giles Overreach, one of his most tremendous creations. On December 21 he played Othello to the Iago of Young, the Cassio of Charles Kemble, the Roderigo of Farley, and the Desdemona of Miss Jarman.

There was a terrific crush in the house. Doran relates that he saw strong men clamber from the pit into the lower boxes to escape suffocation, and weak men, in a fainting condition, passed by friendly hands towards the air in the same way. He remembered Charles Kemble—

“in his lofty, bland way, trying to persuade a too-closely packed audience to fancy themselves comfortable, and to be silent, which they would not be till *he* appeared who . . . could subdue them to silence or stir them to ecstasy at his will.”

Kean had announced in the bills that this was to be his last season upon the stage; but the pinch of his exhausted resources was beginning to make itself felt, and, while his years of magnificent receipts were over his equally magnificent expenditure, had, alas! left its mark alike upon his pocket and his health. He had long found it necessary to resort to powerful stimulants in the shape of very hot and strong brandy and water before going on the stage, in order to fit him for the exhausting characters he was called upon to play.

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He had an illness at the close of his season, and could not reappear till January 7, 1828, when he played *Richard III*. Later on he acted Lear, a character which, in his weakened physical condition, he was able to identify even more completely with the infirmities and failing intellect of the old king, than when in good health. Shortly afterwards he went abroad, and then embarked on a provincial tour, his general decay ever increasing and rendering his recourse to the poisonous aid of brandy more frequent and copious than ever. However, he reappeared at his old home of Drury Lane in November, after a dispute with Charles Kemble, who tried, meanly enough, it must be owned, to compel him to play at the rival house. But, after a good deal of haggling, he appeared at Covent Garden on January 5 and 8, 1829, and received £50 a night. It is painful in the extreme either to write or read of these last performances. The flashes of his former self that showed in his acting became rarer and rarer, and it was only the stimulus of the public roars of applause and the breath of the footlights that seemed to bring him to himself. We will anticipate the next few years, and finish at once the unhappy story.

His farewell appearance before a London audience was, however, destined to be made, as Kemble's and Mrs. Siddons's had been, at Covent

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Garden Theatre. His son, with whom he had by this time become reconciled, was engaged by Laporte to play there in February, 1833, as Sir Edward Mortimer, and on March 15 the manager engaged the father and son to play with each other as Othello and Iago for a few nights.

On the 20th and 21st E. Kean played Shylock, a character which did not make such exhaustive demands upon his physical strength, and on March 25 he played, for the last time, as it proved, in Othello, to his son's Iago. The Desdemona on this sadly historical occasion was Miss Ellen Tree. His biographer, Hawkins, describes the event as follows:—

“There had been no rehearsal. He was assisted from his carriage into the dressing-room, where he sank, drooping and nerveless, into a chair. ‘Tell my boy,’ he said to Charles Kemble, ‘that I want to see him.’ When Charles Kean entered the dressing-room he found his father so weak he deemed it advisable to ask Mr. Warde to be in readiness to proceed with the part should the great tragedian become unable to support it throughout the play.

“‘I am very ill,’ Kean murmured, ‘I am afraid I shall not be able to go on.’ Cheered up by Charles Kemble, who stood by his side with a glass of very hot brandy-and-water in his hand, he dressed himself with difficulty. While Charles was playing the first scene with Roderigo, Kean

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prepared to appear, Charles came off, led his father to the wing, and as the scene opened they went on."

The tumultuous enthusiasm that followed is described by a writer in *Fraser's Magazine*, three months after, as unexampled in the history of the stage.

"The performance progressed through the first and second acts, but before the great third act was reached the excitement which had helped to buoy him up was passed, and his strength began to fail rapidly.

" 'Mind, Charley, that you keep before me,' he anxiously enjoined his son. 'I don't know that I shall be able to kneel, but if I do, be sure you lift me up.' But he managed to struggle through, and it was only when he endeavoured to abandon himself to the overwhelming storm of passion that Othello gives way to, that he stopped and trembled, tottered, and reeled insensible into his son's arms. His last words were murmured into Charles's ear, 'I am dying—speak to them for me.' And so amid sympathetic applause he was gently carried away from the sight of the audience.

"However, his once fine constitution enabled him to rally a little afterwards, and he did not die until some weeks later, on May 15, 1833, when he passed away at his cottage at Richmond, and was interred in the old church there. He was forty-six years old."

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Even in this our necessarily brief record of Kean, it would be unjust to omit all mention of his large-minded charity. This, the special and peculiar virtue of the theatrical profession as a whole, was conspicuous in the character of the great tragedian. The reverses he met with, and the loss of income his mania for drink entailed, were never allowed to check or stint his flow of liberality, especially if directed towards the relief of suffering and charity in every and any form. However slender his own banking account, he never hesitated to open it for the benefit of his humbler brethren, and this will surely be accounted unto him for righteousness.

We must now again resume the broken thread of our story dropped at the beginning of the 1827-8 season.

The musician upon whom devolved the duties of musical director at Covent Garden upon the death of Weber was Thomas Simpson Cooke, more familiarly known as Tom Cooke.

This fine old musician and singer, whom until recently there were some living that could remember, had for many years been intimately acquainted with theatres and theatrical work. He began his musical career as a band leader at fifteen in Dublin. Later on he became the principal tenor singer at Drury Lane, where, indeed, he remained for nearly twenty years,

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from 1815 till 1824. On the occasion of one of his benefit nights at the old Theatre Royal, he exhibited his versatility by performing in succession on the violin, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, violoncello, double bass, and pianoforte.

He is now principally remembered as the composer of many popular glees, among them being "Hail, Bounteous Nature," "Come, Spirits of Air," etc.; but he wrote, besides these, some fifteen or sixteen operas, most of which are now forgotten.

The season was not a particularly noticeable one, except for the performances of Edmund Kean.

An unfortunate occurrence soon after the opening of the 1828-9 season compelled the closing of the theatre for a fortnight. This was the explosion, on November 20, of a gasholder in the basement of the theatre, by which two men lost their lives. The accident occurred between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, while the cellars in which the oil-gas apparatus was fixed were being cleaned. In these cellars was an accumulation of putrid oil and dirt, which was floating on the surface of the water in the tanks. This escaped on to the floor, and there became ignited by some workmen's candles. At the same time an escape of gas occurred

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from the gasometer, and an explosion was the natural result, by which an unfortunate store-keeper and the gas-man lost their lives.

In consequence of this calamity, the performances were not again resumed until December 3, 1828.

Such a serious loss as that entailed by a fortnight's closing in the height of the season had a disastrous effect on the finances of the establishment. Later on a dispute with Madam Vestris, over a matter in which the actress showed herself somewhat arbitrary and unreasonable, and which caused her temporary withdrawal, was the occasion of a still further monetary loss. Charles Kemble was, it is to be feared, a very unsuitable person to exercise the command he held in the huge undertaking. According to Alfred Bunn, he allowed himself, as manager, a salary of £30 per week, an increase of £10 over the amount he received under the management of Henry Harris.

Another and a highly important contributory cause for the disasters that were now overtaking the theatre is alluded to in considerable detail by Alfred Bunn. The system of "orders," or free admissions, had reached a truly extraordinary height during the reign of Charles Kemble, Willett, and Forbes.

Bunn's observations on this subject are so

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pertinent and so true, even at the present day, that they deserve repetition.

“I come now to another alarming difficulty with which a director of these [the patent] theatres has to contend, which, despite the resolution and the prudence every novice is bent upon adopting, will never be got rid of, and which is of more vital detriment than may at first be imagined. I allude to the free admissions, commonly called orders, the bane of the profession.

“Contend as you may against the issue of such privileges, there are so many to whom, in the mutual exchange of courtesies, they must be given, that it is almost hopeless to draw the line of distinction. Performers, for the most part, stipulate for them—limit the issue to a few members, and you sour the rest of the company. The press claim them on the score of reciprocity . . . and although by such argument they should naturally be extended only to those journals whose circulation can render a correspondent advantage, yet, if you omit a paper or periodical of the vilest description, your reputation is assailed by it, and your exertions misrepresented in the most shameless and mendacious manner.”

It is probable that the law of libel has been amended since these words were penned, to an extent that would render the terrors that assailed Mr. Bunn comparatively innocuous to

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the modern theatre managers. He follows the paragraph just quoted by a truly extraordinary statement, from which it appears that from May 17 to July 12, 1824, Mr. Robertson, treasurer to the theatre, wrote 11,003 orders, which, calculated at the rate of seven shillings each (the price of admission to the boxes), amounts to the sum of £3,851 1s.

Then follows a tabular statement, showing in detail the number of orders given each night on which Charles Kemble played many of his favourite characters, and proving that the greater portion of the orders were given for his support. Such a truly reckless exercise of managerial power could only have one result. That result came in the course of the season we are now dealing with, the disastrous one that began in October, 1829.

Before finally quitting the season of 1828-9, place must be found for notice of a sufficiently remarkable occurrence which took place on June 3. This was the representation of *Der Freischütz*, a German opera, by German singers and in German words. Parke tells us that, in spite of the performers' ability, the audience was thin.

On Tuesday, April 7, 1829, a dramatic and musical performance took place at Covent Garden Theatre under the title of *The Feast of Neptune*. The receipts from a crowded

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audience amounted to £335 13s. taken at the doors, and £264 19s. tickets sold, a total of £600 12s.* After expenses were deducted, including £200 for use of the theatre, the surplus was paid to Mr. Sievier† for a life-size bust of Dibdin, placed in the Veterans' Library, Greenwich Hospital.

From the August newspapers it appears that the rates and taxes due to the parish church of St. Paul, Covent Garden, from the previous half-year were long overdue. Accordingly, the signal disgrace of a distraint under a Bow Street magistrate's warrant was inflicted upon the fine old theatre for the sum of £896, while in addition to this the King's tax-gatherer put a man in possession for assessed taxes due, to the amount of above £600.

But the miserable calamity of a forced sale was averted by the generous exertions of the many and influential lovers of the drama and music, who doubtless carried fresh in their recollections the innumerable artistic triumphs in the past *quorum pars magna fuerunt*. A subscription was started to reopen the theatre free of debt. Laporte, the then manager of the Opera House, or King's Theatre, generously

* *Musical World*, 1838.

† Robert William Sievier, engraver and sculptor (1794—1865), eventually abandoned art and took to science. Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

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granted the use of it free of all expenses for one night, the result of which was the magnificent addition to the fund of £750. Furthermore, many of the principal players of the day volunteered to perform gratuitously for several nights to help tide over the crisis. Let their names be preserved. Edmund Kean promised, but, alas! never gave, three nights; Miss Kelly and Miss Foote gave ten nights, and T. P. Cooke six nights, free of charge; and on October 5 the theatre reopened with *Romeo and Juliet*, with the added attraction of a long-expected *début*, that of Fanny Kemble,—daughter of Charles and Mrs. Kemble (who had left the stage, as Miss De Camp, upwards of twenty years),—in the tremendous character of Juliet, to the Romeo of Abbott, who had not acted there for five years, her father playing Mercutio, Mrs. Davenport as the Nurse, and Mrs. Charles Kemble as Lady Capulet.

On October 6 Miss Ellen Tree made her first appearance at Covent Garden as Lady Townly in *The Provoked Husband*, and played regularly throughout the season. On February 4 *Ninnetta*, an opera adapted by Bishop from Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra*, to a libretto by Fitzball, in three acts, was first performed, and was acted twelve times during the season. The "oratorios," directed by William Hawes, were

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performed as usual during the Lent season, and were well attended.

On April 13, 1830, Rossini's *Cenerentola* was brought out under its English title of *Cinderella*, beloved of the pantomime librettist of to-day. Rossini's music was adapted by Lacy, who, we learn, "made copious additions from other works of Rossini"!

An adaptation of Boieldieu's *Les Deux Nuits*, by Bishop and Fitzball, produced on November 17, 1829, failed.

On May 20, 1830, John Fawcett, the faithful friend and stage-manager to Covent Garden and its succession of owners for so many years, took his farewell of the stage, followed a few nights later by Mrs. Davenport. Fawcett had been connected with the theatre since 1791, a period of close upon forty years. There are various references to him in the Bunn, Fitzball, Macready, and other memoirs, which all combine to show him as the typical stage-manager, a somewhat sour, crabby, but withal kind-hearted man, whose very bluntness of speech probably had no small effect in adding to the weight his opinions undoubtedly possessed with the theatre's directors.*

Among the successes of the year was *The*

* Fawcett's most celebrated original part was that of Dr. Pangloss in *The Heir-at-Law*, first played at the Haymarket.



FAWCETT AND KEMBLE AS CAPTAIN COPP AND THE KING IN
THE COMEDY OF "CHARLES THE SECOND, OR THE MERRY
MONARCH."

From the Painting by G. Clint, engraved by T. Lupton.

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Pilot, a nautical opera, in which T. P. Cooke scored immensely in the part of Long Tom.

The immense success of Fanny Kemble as a popular draw sufficed to raise the ebbing fortunes of the great playhouse once again to comparative prosperity ; a debt of £13,000 for rent, etc., was cleared off, and a fresh start enabled to be made. In Mrs. Butler's (Fanny Kemble's) charming "Record of a Girlhood" a vivid description is given of her agitation and nervousness attendant on her *début*, and the *furor* her acting and charm of person created. It is curious that, with all her family's strong dramatic tendencies seething within her, she freely confesses her great personal distaste for her profession (a distaste she shared with Macready, who never made any secret of his contempt for the means by which he achieved fame and fortune). She acted Juliet 120 times running, "with all the unevenness and immature inequality . . . which were never corrected in my performance." Her salary was fixed at thirty guineas a week, and the Saturday after she came out she presented herself, for the first and last time, at the treasury of the theatre to receive it, and carried it, clinking, with great triumph to her mother, the first money she ever earned. It is not difficult to picture the delight of a young girl thus suddenly promoted to affluence from the "twenty pounds a year

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which my poor father squeezed out of his hard-earned income for my allowance.”

Among the persons Fanny Kemble used to see behind the scenes was a young clergyman, who obtained Charles Kemble's permission to go there on the strength of his parentage. He was a natural son of William IV. and Mrs. Jordan, and had been given the vicarage of Mapledurham, a position he was wholly unfitted for either by training or inclination. He had been brought up as a sailor, and, as was frequently the custom in those days, on the death of a brother he had been taken from on board ship and compelled to go into the Church, nilly willy, a barbarous proceeding which one is glad to think has been virtually impossible for fifty years past. The season closed at the end of May, 1830, with the benefit night of Fanny Kemble, and her own first appearance in the character of Lady Townley in Vanbrugh's play of *The Provoked Husband*. In one of the most interesting pages of her diary she tells of a memorable event occurring to her that summer. This was a journey, sitting by the side of George Stephenson, on the experimental line he had built between Liverpool and Manchester.

The 1830-1 season opened on October 4 with *Romeo and Juliet*, with Fanny Kemble as Juliet. An unfortunate event somewhat marred

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the first nights. This was the thrashing, well-deserved and deliberately provoked, administered by Charles Kemble to Westmacott, editor of the *Age*, a scurrilous publication long since forgotten, for the abominable libels printed in his paper in the guise of criticisms upon Fanny Kemble's acting.

Before Christmas the King and Queen honoured the theatre with a visit to see *The Provoked Husband*, on which occasion the house was crammed from floor to ceiling. Other plays produced were *The Stranger*, and *The King's Wager*, by Tom Taylor and Charles Reade, a play dealing with Charles II. and Nell Gwyn. In *The Fair Penitent*, an adaptation of an old play by Massinger, Miss Kemble tells us she was a failure.

During January, 1831, a casual reference in her autobiography is made to the fact of the validity of the theatre's patents being then under the consideration of Lord Brougham, a matter which she airily disposes of by writing, "I am afraid they are not worth a farthing." In the next month she lifts a corner of the curtain veiling the deplorable condition of the theatre by mentioning that it was involved in no less than six lawsuits! One of these at least was the result of the attack being made by Mr. S. J. Arnold, of the then English Opera House, upon

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the rights to their monopoly of the two great houses of Drury Lane and Covent Garden.

A committee of the House of Commons was appointed to deal with the subject, and many eminent actors and managers, including Charles Kemble, were examined and gave their opinions upon it. No prophet was needed to foretell Kemble's opinion. It was asking the lamb whether the wolf had a right to devour him. He predicted many disasters if the patents were abolished. The great companies of good sterling actors would be broken up and dispersed, since there would no longer exist establishments sufficiently important to maintain any large body of them. The best plays would no longer find adequate representatives of any but a few of the principal parts; the school of fine acting would be lost, no play of Shakespear's would be decorously put on the stage, and all would be the worse for the change. Says Miss Kemble—

“The cause went against us, and every item of his prophecy concerning the stage has undoubtedly come to pass . . . the profession was decidedly the worse for the change;” but she adds dryly, “I am not aware, however, that the public has suffered much by it.”

An interesting proof of the intense respect paid to his illustrious sister by Charles Kemble is found in Fanny Kemble's mention of—

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“ a little box or recess opposite the prompter’s box and of much the same proportions, that my father had fitted up for the especial convenience of my Aunt Siddons whenever she chose to honour my performances with her presence. She came to it several times, but the draughts in crossing the stage were bad, and her life was not prolonged much after my coming upon the stage. She died, in fact, on June 8 [1831] following.”

Among the noteworthy pieces performed during March was *Bonaparte*, a play dealing with the fortunes of Napoleon from his first exploits as a young artillery officer to the last dreary agony of his exile in St. Helena.

According to the *Theatrical Observer* of August 20, 1831, Kemble and Harris had now arranged their differences amicably, and the management of the theatre was to remain in the same hands as last season.

Fanny Kemble’s diary during the early months of 1832 makes but melancholy reading for the historian of Covent Garden. Much of it concerns, as is but natural, the production of her own play of *Francis I.*, a play she herself considered unsuitable for stage production. There are, however, some references to more interesting matters. Among these was the Covent Garden production of Meyerbeer’s opera of *Robert le*

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Diable. This famous opera had been first produced in Paris the year before, on November 21, 1831. Grove gives the date and place of the first London production as February 20, 1832, at Drury Lane, under the title of *The Demon*; or, *The Mystic Branch*, and of the Covent Garden version on the day following, under the title of *The Fiend Father*; or, *Robert of Normandy*. Mr. Edwards, in his "History of the Opera," speaks of a third London version at 'The King's, or His Majesty's, in June, as meeting with scant success, a result which the Covent Garden production could hardly improve upon. Mr. Edwards tells us that Meyerbeer's music was performed with such alterations as will be easily conceived by those who remember how the works of Rossini, and, indeed, all foreign composers, were treated at this time on the English stage. Lord Mount-Edgumbe* appears to have been terribly shocked at the various incidents of the plot.

"Never," he says, "did I see a more disagreeable and disgusting performance. The sight of the resurrection of a whole convent of nuns, who rise from their graves and begin dancing like so many bacchantes, was revolting, and a sacred service in a church accompanied by an organ on the stage not very decorous."

* "Musical Reminiscences," by the Earl of Mount-Edgumbe. London, 1834.

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Fanny Kemble herself thus refers to it—

“Tuesday, [February] 21. Went to the theatre to see the new opera, our version of *Robert the Devil*. The house was very full. Henry Greville was there with the Mitfords. What an extraordinary piece, to be sure! I could not help looking at the full house and wondering how so many decent English men and women could sit thus such a spectacle.”

On February 24, 1832, she writes to a friend as follows:—

“That luckless concern in which you are a luckless shareholder [Covent Garden] is going to the dogs faster every day, and in spite of the Garrick Club [then recently opened with a great flourish of trumpets], I think the end of it, and that no distant one, will be utter ruin.”

Later she refers to the enormous cost of producing *Robert le Diable* as forbidding a heavy outlay upon anything else. Affairs were now black indeed for Charles Kemble and his co-proprietors. He was obliged, it seems, to dispense with many of the luxuries in his daily life he had hitherto been accustomed to. His large house, horse and carriage, had to be dispensed with, and yet, says Fanny—

“It is pitiful to see how my father clings to that theatre. Is it because the art he loves once

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had its noblest dwelling there? Is it because his own name, and the names of his brother and sister are graven as it were on its very stones? Does he think he could not act in a smaller theatre? What can . . . make him so loth to leave that ponderous ruin? Even to-day, after summing up all the care and toil and waste of life and fortune which that concern has cost his brother, himself, and all of us, he exclaimed, 'Oh, if I had but £10,000, I could set it all right again, even now!' My mother and I actually stared at this infatuation. If I had twenty or a hundred thousand pounds, not one farthing would I give to the redeeming of that fatal millstone."

Later on, pleasanter matters appear in the "Records." Sheridan Knowles could not agree with the Drury Lane managers, to whom he had offered the production of his new play, *The Hunchback*, and brought it to Covent Garden, meaning to act Master Walter himself.

In March one of the many Chancery suits in which C. Kemble's mismanagement had involved the theatre came to an end, but brought no relief to Kemble, who continued, his daughter records, to be in deplorable spirits, and bowed down with care. After March 12 she writes, "My friend, Miss S——, came and paid me a long visit, during which my play of *Francis I.* and *The Hunchback* were produced." The latter appeared

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on April 5, 1832, with both Charles Kemble and Fanny in it. She writes of it, "Knowles' delightful play had a success as great and genuine as it was well deserved, and will not fail to be a lasting favourite alike with audiences and actors."

On Friday, March 22, 1832, Fanny Kemble acted for the last time in the theatre her great-uncle had built. At the end Mr. Bartley made a speech, mentioning the Kembles' impending departure, and bespeaking the goodwill of the audience for the new management. There were calls for Knowles, and then for the Kembles, who appeared to a great outburst of affection. Fanny threw her nosegay of flowers into the pit, and her father led her off, crying, to her dressing-room. Laporte, the new manager, ran after them to be introduced to her, and she wished him success amid her tears. Affectionate farewells followed—of Rye, the old property-man, Louis, his boy, and all the humble servants and workpeople, who all regretted the departure from their old home of these bearers of the historic name that had in the past brought such imperishable fame and lustre to the walls of Covent Garden.*

* Bunn ("The Stage," vol. i. p. 17) says: "It is a general impression that Mr. C. Kemble's management would have been accompanied by far greater success had he been satisfied with confining himself to that range of business allotted him by his predecessor, in which he never had an equal."

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We now leave Fanny Kemble, and continue in a new chapter our retrospect of Covent Garden's fortunes under the management of Laporte, to whom, at the end of the 1832 season, it was determined to let the theatre for a season.

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CHAPTER XV

1832-1837

A HUNDRED years of Covent Garden Theatre's history has now been unfolded to the reader, and it seems a not unsuitable opportunity to review briefly the relative position of the huge enterprise at the beginning and the close of its century.

Since its opening in December, 1732, it had known no less than seven principal patentees, as distinct from others holding only a minor interest in the theatre. These were, (1) John Rich, the first and last to hold the entire patent, and to manage his property himself; (2) John Beard, his son-in-law, who shared the property with others, although retaining the managership; (3) George Colman, the elder, who for about seven years exercised managerial control, although but a joint holder of shares with (4) Thomas Harris, senior, who eventually became the owner of more than half the entire property, and retained for many years the sole control in a wise autocracy; following him came, as responsible manager and part proprietor, (5) John Philip

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Kemble, who retained the position alone until 1809, when he was joined by (6) Henry Harris, the son of the old manager; together they held office until, in 1822, John Kemble made over his interests to (7) his brother Charles, whose ruinous mismanagement of the magnificent property eventually brought the entire concern to a bankrupt condition in 1829. From this deplorable state it was only rescued by charitable donations, and the gift of their services by popular actors and singers. From then until 1832 it had struggled on in a sort of hand-to-mouth existence, until, in the autumn season of that year, it was taken by M. Laporte, of whom we are shortly about to treat. In dealing with its associations with masters of music, we find that during the century of its existence, its history has been indestructibly linked with many of those whose careers give to the history of English music its brightest lustre. The giant name of Handel overshadows all his contemporaries, but Thomas Augustine Arne, Jonathan Battishill, Samuel Arnold, and Charles Dibdin, are no mean compeers of even Handel's fame, while William Shield, Mazzinghi, Reeve, Attwood, William Russell, Henry Bishop, Carl Weber, Braham, and Tom Cooke, form a brilliant constellation of musicians any theatre might be proud to count among its musical memories.

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It is impossible to mention even a tithe of the names of famous actors and actresses who had graced its boards during the period under review. David Garrick, Peg Woffington, the Cibbers, father and son, Mrs. Cibber, John Beard, James Quin, Macklin, Shuter, Woodward, Sheridan, Mrs. Clive, Barry, the Kembles, Mrs. Siddons, Edmund Kean, and a hundred others claim equal mention.

When it was built, there were but five other theatres in London worthy of being counted as serious rivals. These were, Drury Lane, Covent Garden's elder sister; The King's Theatre in the Haymarket, opened in 1705; the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, Rich's first theatrical speculation, which was converted from theatrical purposes after 1756; the "Little Theatre in the Haymarket" (so-called to distinguish it from the King's Theatre across the way), first erected in 1720; and The Goodmans Field's Theatre, whose brief yet brilliant career came to an end 1742. At the close of Covent Garden's tenth decade, bold and successful rivals were springing up in many directions. Of its old competitors, Drury Lane was still the most formidable, having at this particular time an especially powerful combination wherewith to oppose the sadly depleted and disorganized company at the other patent theatre. The King's Theatre, soon to

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be known as His Majesty's, had an established reputation for opera, German, French, and Italian, while its opposite neighbour had for some years been known as *The Haymarket*, and held a warm place in the affections of London playgoers. Added to these were some serious rivals still nearer to the classic ground of Bow Street.

A building in the Strand, formerly occupied by the Royal Academy of Arts, and subsequently opened about 1790, as a theatre, had been, in 1809, reopened by Samuel James Arnold, son of Dr. Arnold, as "The English Opera-house," with a season from June 3 to October 3 in each year. Here Charles Mathews the elder gave his famous "At Homes," and here Weber's *Der Freischütz* had been first produced on July 22, 1824.

Then there were Astley's Amphitheatre, opened in 1780; Sadler's Wells; The Surrey, or Royal Circus, first opened in 1782 by C. Dibdin; the Royal Cobourg; the Brunswick, opened in 1828; the Olympic in Wych Street, opened in 1806; the West London (turned into a theatre about 1800) in Tottenham Street; and the Sanspareil, or Adelphi, in the Strand, forming altogether a serious menace to the hitherto inviolable position assumed and successfully maintained by the patentees of the venerable Theatres Royal. At all these theatres the prices

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were considerably lower than those of the senior establishments, which not unnaturally induced the ever-practical playgoer to give them the preference in bestowing his patronage, recognizing, as he soon did, that if not so magnificent as to the surroundings, he very often got better value for his money in the less pretentious houses.

1832-3 proved to be, in many respects, an artistically successful season for Covent Garden, if not financially so for the lessee. For the first time in its history a foreigner was found in command. This was the enterprising French comedian Monsieur Pierre François Laporte, previously known to the London public as an energetic and liberal-minded operatic *entrepreneur* at the King's Theatre. Laporte had first come to England some eight years before, and appeared at the theatre in Tottenham Street.

In 1826-7 he became successively a member of the Drury Lane company and of the Haymarket company, and in 1828 he became manager of the King's Theatre, which he ran with some success until 1831, when his evil genius tempted him to try his luck in the huge venture of Covent Garden, still further complicating his position by acting as well as managing.

The commencement of the autumn season was preceded by a short season of French plays

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in July and August, during which the famous French actress Mlle. Mars and the danseuse Taglioni made a brief appearance at Covent Garden.

The previous year had been rendered noticeable by the first English appearances of the celebrated violinist Paganini at a series of concerts at the King's Theatre in June, 1831. This extraordinary man was then at the height of his fame. It is curious, however, that, not until four years before had he ever performed outside his native land. His first appearance in Paris had been made on March 9 in the same year (1831). In connection with this the following letter * is of great interest, addressed as it is to Henry Robertson by Rophino Lacy, who was then staying in Paris.

“ Paris,
“ Hotel du Luxembourg,
“ Rue de Vaugirard,
“ Thursday, March 10, 1831.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I was last night present at the most extraordinary exhibition I ever witnessed: it was Paganini's first appearance in public in this country. Much as Fame has trumpeted about his name, no idea can be formed of what he really is until seen. He is a grotesque wonder, and that in the true sense of the word; you can

* It was kindly lent me by Dr. H. T. Scott, of 31, Buckingham Palace Road, S.W.

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draw no comparison between him and anybody else ; he stands unique in his kind, and to say all in a short phrase, his performance verges as close upon impossibility as it's possible. Were it my intention to enter into a critique upon this phenomenon, I could quickly fill up four or five sheets, and perhaps could entertain you by a relation of his awkward manners, his ungraceful motions exciting loudest shouts of laughter, his mad mountebank tricks, his amazing [power], etc., etc. But you naturally ask me why the deuce I write to *you* about Paganini ? And my answer is at once, because I advise you to engage him *if you yet can*. Engage him on liberal terms for as many nights as you can get him—that is before he's heard anywhere else. Let his performance be as here upon the stage, with a sort of concert, and after it either an acting piece or little Ballet. If his Fame do not cram your house at any prices the first night, rest assured your walls will be filled to bursting the 2^d. There are musicians, fiddle players, amateurs, youths, and ambitious Fathers in London who themselves alone will suffice. Such a thing never was before, and perhaps never again will be. He played at the Grand Opera House (on the Stage). The price paid him by the managers was 10,000 francs, £400 sterling for the one night. They doubled the prices, and it was extremely difficult to get into the house. The receipts were 25,000 francs (£1000). As your desire is doubtless to make money, my first thought was to give you such immediate notice and advice as I considered

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serviceable to your interests, and if again unsuccessful, I shall only again regret it for your sakes.

“ I remain, Dear Sir,

“ Very truly yours,

“ M. ROPH^o LACY.

“ Henry Robertson, Esq.,

“ Box Office,

“ Theatre Royal, Covent Garden,

“ London.

“ Delivered immediately.”

Unfortunately for Covent Garden, the astute Mr. Lacy's advice was not acted upon by the managers until the summer of 1832, and the great prize was snapped up by the King's Theatre, where, in June and July, he appeared at Mr. Hawes's concerts before enormous crowds. The value of the great violinist as a draw being fully demonstrated, the cautious management of Covent Garden engaged him for his series of “farewell appearances,” which began on August 3, 1832, and continued till August 17, 1832. Besides the Paganini concerts, the ballet of *Masaniello* was produced with great success.

There are several interesting events during the 1832-3 season, each claiming some attention at our hands. These we will take, as usual, in chronological order, and so preserve, as far as possible, the historical sequence of our story.

In January, 1833, appeared *Nell Gwynne*, the first of that brilliant writer Douglas Jerrold's

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productions to court public favour at Covent Garden. In this, one of the earliest modern plays dealing with the ever-fascinating courtesan, Mrs. Keeley, as Orange Moll, and Miss Taylor, afterwards Mrs. Lacy, made great hits.

In February, 1833, the famous production of the *Israelites in Egypt*, in costume, took place, under the auspices of Rophino Lacy. In February also Charles Kean's *début* * at the great theatre was made before a keenly interested and appreciative audience, in the character of Sir Edward Mortimer.

The former of these performances was a curious mixture, consisting of Rossini's *Mosé*, interspersed with choruses from Handel's *Israel in Egypt*. In spite of its doubtfully artistic qualities, it met with great success, and was honoured by the presence of the Duchess of Kent and Princess Victoria.

It will be remembered that during the month of March, 1833, the final performances took place in which the last flicker of Edmund Kean's genius was seen, and in which he, for the first and last time, appeared on the same boards as his son Charles. Of this we have already spoken in some detail, and need not, therefore, refer to again.

* He had first appeared as an actor six years before, at Drury Lane, with but scant success.

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On April 24 another play, by S. Knowles, *The Wife*, was produced. It is distinguished by the fact that Charles Lamb wrote both a prologue and an epilogue for it.

It was impossible, however, that even such powerful attractions as these, when merely occurring occasionally, should suffice to bolster up Laporte's disastrous speculation, and the end of the season came very shortly afterwards, the unfortunate lessee retiring, a sadder and a wiser man, to resume his position at His Majesty's Theatre for a few short years, prior to his premature death from heart disease, in 1841.

The reins of management were no sooner dropped from the hands of the unfortunate Laporte, than we find a still more ambitious attempt on the part of Mr. Alfred Bunn, at this time directing the fortunes of Drury Lane. In his occasionally entertaining memoirs of "The Stage" he thus refers to the preliminary negotiations opened shortly after the collapse of Kean's engagement at Covent Garden—

"The prospect of the two theatres (the one closed and the other undone in the midst of victory) led to a renewal of the question previously agitated, of uniting their interests. . . . In the opinions of the most experienced men attached to the profession, there seemed to be no other means of saving them [Covent Garden and Drury

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Lane] from impending annihilation than by uniting them under one management. . . . In such opinion I heartily joined, and accordingly devoted myself to the accomplishment of so desirable an end. . . . How it worked and how it terminated it will be our province to inquire into. At all events, it gave rise to an excitement (the vital spark of theatrical existence), and to a degree of amusement—fun if you will—not likely to occur again.”

Bunn accordingly, in May, 1833, became joint lessee of the two theatres, and issued a long address to the public, for part of which space must be found.

“All parties will admit that the theatrical times have long been out ‘of joint;’ for within a recent period Covent Garden Theatre was not only prematurely closed, but the scenery, dresses, and properties were actually advertised for sale; and although the theatre was afterwards reopened, it was effected by public subscription, and by the creditors’ consent to take a composition for their claims. It will also be recollected that, during the whole of the previous ten years’ management, it had but one profitable season.”

Bunn goes on to say that Drury Lane had been equally unfortunate, three lessees having failed, only Captain Polhill’s great wealth saving him from a similar fate.

He further reminds the public that Henry

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Harris, during his management, had succeeded in making Covent Garden pay, the salary list being less then than it was later; while the receipts had, on the contrary, in Harris's day, been larger. It is worth noting, too, that Henry Harris, who was still proprietor of no less than seven-twelfths of the theatre, thoroughly and entirely approved of Bunn's policy.

Bunn's enterprise did not, however, obviously, meet with the approval of those members of the profession who had been in the habit of playing off one theatre against the other, and who now saw a lever which had proved very useful as a means of forcing up their salaries to an alarming extent, suddenly deprived of the fulcrum from which it derived its power.

Another and a more powerful opponent of the patent theatres and their manager now arose in the person of Mr. Edward Lytton Bulwer, afterwards Lord Lytton, who on July 25 induced the House of Commons to pass an Act of Parliament which, in Bunn's opinion, "would have had the effect of annihilating the two patent theatres." Bunn, never lacking in courage, accordingly petitioned the King and the House of Lords against the Act, and with complete success.

His double season opened first at Drury Lane on Saturday, October 5, 1833, Covent

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Garden following suit on the Monday after with *Pizarro* and a farce. He had also undertaken the unpleasant and delicate work of revising the free list, which gave mortal offence to the persons through whose names the managerial pencil was drawn. The production of *Gustavus the Third* on November 16, with a representation of a masked ball in the last act, set all London agog with excitement. "To such a pitch of fashion did this opera reach, that I have seen on the stage during the masquerade between thirty and forty peers of an evening."* On the fiftieth night a grand supper was given by Bunn on the stage to the united forces of the two houses.

Inspired by the success his predecessor Laporte had scored with the remarkable dramatic representation, under Rophino Lacy, of Handel's *Israelites in Egypt*, Bunn now set about the preparation of another sacred subject—Handel's *Jephtha*—in the same manner. Rophino Lacy, who had arranged the *Israelites*, was again entrusted with the task, and everything portended success. Suddenly, on the day preceding the performance, it was withdrawn by Bunn. He explains his action by stating that a repetition of the *Israelites*, which had been so popular the year before, had been prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain, and that although, not to appear too

* Bunn, "The Stage," vol. i. p. 141.

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inconsistent, the authorities had nominally granted the new licence, he felt that he would be acting in consonance with their wishes by abandoning the idea. As a matter of fact, Dr. Blomfield, then Bishop of London, was opposed to the idea, and had induced Queen Adelaide to set the Lord Chamberlain's department into motion. Perhaps by way of consolation, Bunn was informed that his two theatres were to be honoured by a royal visit—Drury Lane on April 24, and Covent Garden on May 1. For the latter *The Duenna*, *My Neighbour's Wife*, and *Turning the Tables* were commanded.

With a good deal of natural indignation, Bunn relates how Liston, who was to play in the third piece, declined to do so unless it were put earlier in the bill, a request which the manager was obliged to comply with, or risk the loss of brilliancy consequent on his chief comedian's defection. A pleasanter anecdote is that he relates of Lord Frederick Fitzclarence, son, it will be remembered, of the King, when Duke of Clarence, and Mrs. Jordan. He visited the theatre on this occasion with his father, and calling Bunn out of the green room—

“with a considerable degree of excitement, said, ‘Bunn, I have not been behind the scenes of this theatre since the last evening my dear mother performed here, and’ (here his lordship took me

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by the arm, walked down the long passage on that side of the house, and kicked open the dressing-room door at the end of it) ‘that is the room in which she used to dress. I came with her almost every night, long, long before I wore any of these gew-gews’ (pointing to his uniform and its decorations). ‘Excuse my emotion’ (passing his hand over his eyes); ‘I could not help—and, to tell you the truth, I could not resist—being here this evening, but I never mean to come again. I was happier then than, with all the enjoyments of life, I have ever been since.’”

This really charming and touching anecdote does no less honour to Bunn’s appreciation of the finer feelings of titled humanity than to the honest manliness of the son of William the Fourth and his lovely mistress, Dorothy Jordan.

But there is a most curious coincidence in connection with the story which has quite defied all efforts at elucidation on the part of the present writer. George Vandenhoff, in his “Dramatic Reminiscences,” relates an almost exactly similar occurrence as having taken place under the Vestris management six years later. The only difference between the two stories is that the monarch who was visiting the theatre when Vestris was manager was the late Queen Victoria, while the son of Mrs. Jordan and

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William the Fourth who goes into the dressing-room was Lord Adolphus Fitzclarence. Vandenhoff asserts that he was told the anecdote by Vestris herself, who conducted the royal visitor to the dressing-room on that occasion. Now, there are three possible solutions. Either Vestris had heard the story about Bunn, and told it of herself; or Bunn heard it of Vestris, and told it of himself;* or perhaps both the royal brothers did actually, on separate occasions, what was related of them.

To continue Bunn's story of his enormous enterprise, he next made arrangements with some of the most eminent French dancers for the production of a new ballet at Covent Garden Theatre, which, unfortunately, did not prove a financial success. His attention was at this time again diverted from the theatres under his control by a renewal of the parliamentary attack upon them—this time in the House of Lords, and led by the Marquis of Clanricarde. Again Mr. Bunn protested energetically, both in person and by petition, to the Duke of Devonshire, the Lord Chamberlain of the day. He also sought the support of the Duke of Wellington, who, it is satisfactory to relate, took Mr. Bunn's side of the case; and with the powerful aid thus invoked the bill was again—and, as far as Mr.

* His memoirs of "The Stage" were not published till 1840.

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Bunn was concerned, finally — defeated: . . . The season terminated with the one hundredth representation of *Gustavus*.

Before the end of the summer, however, a very remarkable benefit was organized on November 16, 1834, for the popular old stage-manager, George Bartley. On this occasion he was able to announce a truly extraordinary combination of choregraphic talent. The performances commenced, as the play-bill sets forth, with the—

“celebrated last scene of the Grand Italian opera of *Anna Bolena*, the Part of Anna Bolena by Mademoiselle Giulietta Grisi (Her First Appearance in a Dramatic Character on the English Stage; Smeaton, Miss H. Cawse; Hervay, Signor Galli; Rochford, Signor D’Angeli. The Chorus from the Italian Opera House. Previous to the Act of the Opera the Original Overture to *Anna Bolena*, and Mr. Mori has obligingly consented to Lead the Band.

“After which (First Time in this Theatre) the favourite new Comedy of the *Wedding Gown!* Matthew Lubeski, Mr. Cooper; Clarendon, Mr. King; Effingham, Mr. Duruset; Beeswing, Mr. W. Farren; Valise, Mr. Baker; Creamly, Mr. S. Russell; Junket, Mr. Meadows; Dowager Lady Mowbray, Mrs. Faucit; Margaret, Miss Taylor; Mrs. Fossil, Mrs. C. Jones; Augusta, Miss Phillips.”

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There then followed an air by Signor Ivanhoff, and a ballad by Mr. H. Phillips entitled "Woman," by G. Withers, 1650. After this (by special desire) came the celebrated farce of *My Neighbour's Wife*; and the evening's entertainment concluded with the grand ballet (in one act), "as now performed at the King's Theatre," called *La Sylphide*, the principal characters by Mademoiselle Taglioni, and Monsieur Theodore Guerinot, and including a grand *pas de trois* by Mesdemoiselles Noblet and Dupont, and Monsieur Albert.

The last-named artist took his benefit the following Friday, when many of the same artists appeared, reinforced by the presence of Signors Rubini and Tamburini in *Gustavus*.

Planché tells a story of Mrs. Bartley that is too good to be lost. She and her husband visited the United States, and shortly after they set sail, one of the crew became mutinous and received a very severe cut on the head from the captain in the presence of the passengers. Mrs. Bartley, who was beginning to suffer from *mal de mer*, was much shocked and alarmed, became very ill, and retreated to her cabin, from which she did not emerge till they were almost in sight of port. The first day she ventured on deck, the man she had seen cut down was at the wheel. Approaching him with kindly interest she inquired, "How is your head now?"

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and received for answer, "West and by north, ma'am."

During the summer of 1834, Bunn made an abortive attempt to engage Charles Kemble at £10 a night for Covent Garden, which the latter declined. Bunn, thereupon, wrote protesting his inability to pay more, and hoping Kemble "would not oppose his tenant by playing in any other London theatre than his [Covent Garden]." In this also he was doomed to disappointment, for in the ensuing June, Kemble engaged at the Haymarket.

Principally, it appears, owing to the instigation of Captain Polhill, a return was made at the commencement of the 1834-5 season, to the much-debated popular prices, and a circular was issued to the public, announcing that the terms of admission would be as follows: stalls, 7*s.*; dress circle, first price, 7*s.*; second price, 3*s.* 6*d.*; upper circles, first price, 5*s.*; second price, 3*s.*; pit, first price, 3*s.* 6*d.*; second price, 2*s.*; lower gallery, 2*s.*; second price, 1*s.*; upper gallery, 1*s.*; second price, 6*d.*

Henry Harris was, as he always had been, convinced of the futility of the innovation, an opinion which Bunn shared. Harris's opinion was sufficiently incisive.

"The fatal step of lowering the prices was

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in itself enough to put an extinguisher on all fashion. Who buys cheap and stinking fish? And who wanted any additional proof, that when there is an attraction in the theatres, they will come without regard to the prices, and when there is none, they will not come at any price?"

However, as we shall see, the proprietors soon recognized the error into which they had been led, and at Christmas, 1834, the old prices were restored.

This was probably brought about partly by the secession of Captain Polhill from the Drury Lane board, and as this gentleman had largely borne the financial burden alone, his departure was a serious blow, happening as it did three weeks before Christmas. Planché states that Polhill told him, "with his own lips," that he had lost £50,000 during his four years' connection with the theatre. It is interesting to read of an effort made by Bunn at this time to induce Sir Robert Peel to lend his support to a proposal to subsidize the two patent theatres. A petition was presented, the usual arguments were brought forward, the meritorious example of France quoted, and—the proposal quashed.

In a letter of exactly six lines, Peel regretted "he was wholly unable to hold out to Mr. Bunn any prospect of pecuniary aid for the support of the theatre from the public funds."

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Accordingly, Bunn was left entirely to himself, and as Planché points out, having nothing to lose, went recklessly on with the two theatres, although experience had so lamentably proved the total failure of the scheme professionally and financially.

Bunn's dual control at this time led to some strange scenes, referred to by Planché in his "Recollections," and by Raymond in his "Memoirs of Elliston."

"The audience was sometimes kept waiting a quarter of an hour and upwards at one house while a performer was finishing his part at the other . . . and the whole *corps de ballet* was frequently extracted from the last scene of a piece at Drury Lane, and hurried over for the commencement of one at Covent Garden. . . . Broad Court and Martlett Buildings from about half-past nine at night to a quarter from ten exhibited a most extraordinary scene. Actors, half attired, with enamelled faces, and loaded with the paraphernalia of their art, were passing and repassing as busy as pismires. . . . At the season of Christmas, when this state of alternation was at its height, the female figure-dancers pattered from one house to another six times during the evening, and underwent the operation of dressing and undressing no less than eight."*

* "Life of Robert Elliston," Routledge, London, 1857.

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We now come to the incident of Malibran's engagement, of which Mr. Bunn remained so justifiably proud that he quotes the entire text of the contract, and which saw the apex set upon the ever-growing pyramid of extravagant salaries paid to great artists.

The articles of the contract are not without interest at the present day, but space forbids our quoting them in their entirety. They provided that the great singer should sing for nineteen nights at Covent Garden, between May 18, 1835, and July 1 following, for the sum of £2375, or at the rate of £125 per night, the singer giving her services for a twentieth night. She undertook to sing in *La Sonnambula*, by Bellini, and *Le Mariage de Figaro*; and she further undertook to sing elsewhere only at concerts, and not at any other theatres. The regular season having expired, certain of the artists, notably John Templeton, a Scotch tenor, took occasion to demand enormously increased salaries for the renewed engagement with Malibran. Bunn relates a funny story of this gentleman, who fancied the beautiful singer had been rude to him one evening, and demanded Bunn's advice in the matter. He recommended him to call upon her, and ask how or if he had offended her?

Her reply, half serious, half laughing, was,

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“I thought you wanted, sir, to kiss me.” It must be borne in mind that at this time half the nobility of Europe would have cheerfully blacked her boots if she had wished it. But all the canny Scot said was, “Gude God! is that all? Mak your mind easy. I would na kiss you for ony consideration;” and shaking hands with the *prima donna*, left the room.

Templeton had, it appears, been chosen by the beautiful singer herself to sing with her in *La Sonnambula*, and although Templeton’s engagement with Bunn required him to give his services at either theatre, this did not carry with it that he should perform at more than one of them on any given night. Yet arrangements were so made that Templeton had to sing in opera at both theatres on the same night.

The course pursued was to leave, as rapidly as possible, the Covent Garden Theatre, wrapped up in a *roquelaure*, and to rush to the other house. On one occasion a delay occurred in his arrival, and John Cooper, stage-manager of Drury Lane Theatre, addressed the very impatient audience with the announcement that Mr. Templeton was at that instant completing his performance at Covent Garden Theatre with Madame Malibran, and if the audience would kindly permit the orchestra to repeat the overture, no doubt shortly Mr. Templeton

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would be in attendance. When Templeton arrived he was bathed in perspiration, and Cooper attempted to convey in his person the impatience he himself had suffered from in the house, but this was more than Templeton could endure quietly. "Do you see the exhausted state I am in? I must have time." Urged again, his reply was, "My whiskers won't stick, and until *they* are on *I* cannot go on." His character of Masaniello required him to have moustaches and whiskers, and as soon as he was prepared for the stage, he promptly appeared. Alas! in the midst of his pathetic song, "My sister dear," the unstable moustache worked into his mouth and interrupted his singing; when, with an impetuosity in keeping with the character of Masaniello, he tore from his lips the hairy covering and flung it before him. Like an octopus, the hirsute offering clung to the strings of the violin of Tom Cooke, leader of the orchestra, and the dramatic effort was so magnificent that the house rose *en masse* and cheered.

Malibrán's method of inspiring Templeton with a knowledge of dramatic effects was ingenious, if unpleasant; when she wished him to depict rage, if she could not otherwise obtain her object, she would give him a hearty pinch on the arm, while to the audience she simply

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appeared to be bestowing caresses, which her jealous lover *naturally* repulsed. On one occasion, not appreciating her hidden motive, he stamped with rage, from actual pain ; this stamp produced a most electric effect upon the audience, and upon the hint, so painfully acquired, he ever after acted.

Maria Felicita Malibran-Garcia was at this time at the greatest height of her phenomenal career. Born in 1808, and therefore about twenty-seven years of age, she was the daughter of Manuel Garcia, himself an operatic tenor artist of great eminence. First appearing on the stage as a child of five, she was brought up in the most intensely musical atmosphere it was possible to conceive, first in Naples and later on in London, under her father's own tuition. Her operatic *début* appears to have been made at the King's Theatre as a substitute for Ronzi, another singer, in June, 1825 ; but her real first experience was gained in New York, where she rapidly improved, "acquiring confidence, experience, and the habit of the stage." Here also her father gave her in marriage to M. Malibran, an elderly French merchant, an error she soon realized and took an early opportunity of correcting. In 1827 she returned to Paris, and from that time onward her reputation increased by leaps and bounds, till in 1835

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we find her the undisputed queen of operatic artists. According to Grove, the

“charm of her voice seems to have consisted chiefly in the peculiarity of timbre, unusual extent, in her excitable temperament, which prompted her to improvise passages of strange audacity upon the stage, and on her strong musical feeling, which kept those improvisations nearly always within the bounds of good taste. Her voice was a contralto, having much of the super-register added, and with an interval of ‘dead notes’ intervening, to conceal which she used great ingenuity, with almost perfect success.”

According to a tabular statement given by Bunn, the nightly average receipt of Malibran’s sixteen performances of *La Sonnambula* was £311, that of ten representations of *Fidelio** being £330.

At the termination of her engagement, Bunn re-engaged her for seven nights at Drury Lane, at the end of which she embarked for the Continent. Those who wish for further details of the short but incomparably brilliant career of this gifted member of a gifted family, must seek them in Bunn’s and other contemporary memoirs. A few lines only must suffice here. She fulfilled one more engagement with Bunn, in the succeeding year, 1836, this time at Drury Lane. Her

* *Fidelio* was first produced on the English Stage at Covent Garden Theatre, June 12, 1835.

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last appearance there was on July 1, subsequent to which she returned to Belgium. Early in September she again left for England, intending to sing at Manchester, where she arrived on the 10th. Here she fell ill, and after partially fulfilling her engagement took to her bed at the Moseley Arms, where she remained until her death, which occurred on Friday, September 23, 1836, at the age of twenty-eight years.

It is with a mental gasp of astonishment that one recalls the fact that the gifted singer's elder brother, Mr. Manuel Garcia, who was already thirty-one years of age at the date of his sister's untimely death, should be to-day alive and well in the year of grace 1905, having attained the patriarchal age of one hundred years. Nor is he the only one of his generation still with us, his sister, Madame Pauline Viardot-Garcia, a name scarcely less illustrious than that of Malibran, being also hale and hearty in a green old age in her Paris home.

With the end of the 1835 season, Mr. Alfred Bunn's resources also came to the end of their tether. "The responsibility of two stupendous concerns on the shoulders of a man without capital, the joint rental of which amounted to £16,865,* with the addition of £2000 for taxes, was

* In a footnote on p. 209, vol. iii., Bunn says he paid £17,370 for rent in two years, £2000 for taxes, to the proprietors of Covent Garden alone!

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too great to continue." It consequently became necessary to seek release, either by resigning the entire undertaking, or by reducing its financial burden.

Bunn therefore approached the proprietors of the two houses with the very fair offer of a reduced rent to each of £1500. This was accepted by the Drury Lane Committee, but fatuously declined by Charles Kemble and his friends on the Covent Garden board. One can but share Bunn's amazement at the blundering stupidity which, almost throughout, characterised their entire management of their property. Henry Harris was, it is only fair to state, willing to see the concession made, and as he owned more than half the entire property, his wishes should have ruled the day, but he was out-voted, and as Bunn forcibly puts it, "The very gentlemen who, in ten years of their own management paid no rent at all, and in two years of mine were paid close upon £17,000, refused their tenant a diminution of £1500 in a rental of £8685!" On this Bunn very naturally threw up the affair, and the theatre was advertised to be let. As a faithful chronicle of facts it should not be omitted from our account of the Bunn era that Planché asserts the failure was due to the fact of Bunn's own mismanagement. For instance, instead of giving tragedy and comedy at Drury

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Lane and opera and spectacle at Covent Garden, "he actually put up tragedy against tragedy, dividing instead of combining his forces, and opposing himself more fatally than any rival could have done." As, however, Bunn himself, on p. 273, vol. i., of his work, "The Stage," expressly states that it was his aim to avoid this, there is little doubt that whenever it was possible to carry out the correct policy it was done.

The manner of D. W. Osbaldiston becoming tenant of Covent Garden Theatre affords one more illustration of the hackneyed saw that "fools will rush in where angels fear to tread." This is the pith of the story as related by Mr. Fitzball* himself. This gentleman came down to breakfast one morning, and seeing that the day was a fine one, and that, moreover, Covent Garden Theatre was advertised in the *Times* to let, went and took it. At that time the committee still consisted of Mr. Moore, Captain Forbes, Charles Kemble, and some others, including their right-hand man and treasurer, Mr. Robertson. There was, it seems, a trifling formality in the shape of £1000 deposit, which Mr. Fitzball did not happen to have upon him at the moment. Amazing to relate, "Mr. C. Kemble, who was one of the best friends I (Fitzball) ever possessed, made a fine speech in my favour, and the £1000

* "Thirty-five Years of a Dramatic Author's Life" (1859).

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deposit was waived. I became, in fact, by mutual consent, lessee of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden."

This was all very fine, but to the worthy Mr. Fitzball's dismay, he found that he had plunged into a very vortex of troubles. Every one foreboded a failure. "I began to be of the same opinion—in fact, I had not the slightest idea what care, what toil, what anxiety working a theatre absolutely required, especially such a theatre as Covent Garden." Finally, illness attacked him, and this proved the last straw. He received a letter from Osbaldiston, his old manager, congratulating him upon taking the theatre, and wishing for a *slice* in the speculation.

"I wrote him word to come to me, which he did the moment he arrived in town, and, instead of a slice, I offered him the whole theatre, securing to myself the position of emergency author at a good salary, for two years! He agreed willingly to my proposal. I introduced him to the proprietors, who saw that I was exceedingly ill, although they unanimously led me to believe that I should have recovered my nervous equilibrium had I been fairly launched, and expressed their regrets at my resolution.

"I believe they were sincere, but I believe, also, that I wanted bodily strength, nerve, and experience to have carried out so vast a design.

"Osbaldiston became lessee in my stead, and

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a splendid* company he engaged for the campaign, consisting of G. Bennet, Collins, Haines, J. Webster, Tilbury, Manvers, C. Hill, Morley, Vale, Rogers, Collet, Mrs. West, Miss Taylor, Miss Turpin, Mrs. Battersby, Mrs. Vincent, and many others, with George Rodwell as musical director.

“On October 19, 1835, we opened with *Hamlet*. Mr. Charles Kemble, who had just returned from America, as Hamlet, and Henry Wallack as stage manager.”

Fitzball then refers very briefly to a most important event: “the prices had been considerably reduced to meet the emergencies of the times.” †

This bold stroke on the part of the new lessee, it is needless to say, caused a tremendous fluttering in the theatrical dovecotes of London. It was, according to Mrs. Mathews, the direct cause of the closing of the Adelphi Theatre, which had been opened by Charles J. Mathews and Frederick H. Yates, on September 28, 1835. Poor Mr. Bunn was nearly driven frantic by the ill-luck which brought about this ruinous competition with Drury Lane.

“Could any reasonable man suppose that a body of people, owning the theatre in which

* We shall see further on that their splendour was purely a matter of opinion.

† The reduced prices were 4s., 2s., and 1s.

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the taste of the Kemble family had so long astonished and delighted the town, would have so far lost sight of the reputation their property had so long enjoyed as to consent to its being converted from the first theatre in the world into a mere minor one? Could it be contemplated that, after being offered £7165 yearly to conduct Covent Garden Theatre as nearly as possible in the manner it had been conducted, the owners should let it for something more than this . . . on the express understanding that he, Osbaldiston, was at liberty to reduce the prices to those of the Adelphi and Olympic? Could the commission of such a sacrilege as this have been deemed within the scope of possibility? . . . But so it was. This splendid building was leased to Mr. Osbaldiston, and the extraordinary experiment referred to was accordingly tried by him."

Mr. Bunn goes on to complain bitterly of the effect this bolt from the blue had upon the receipts of Drury Lane, and that, in spite of the almost unprecedented list of artists he had on his books. People flocked to Covent Garden, he says, out of sheer curiosity to participate in an event so uncommon as the reduction of prices to nearly one-half, in one of the national theatres. In spite, too, of the fact that, excepting Charles Kemble, the Covent Garden company were "as totally unknown as if they had just arrived from

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Greenland," the receipts at the Drury Lane *Macbeth* fell from £360 15s. to £129 15s., while that to *Hamlet* fell from £249 8s to £99 6s. *Othello* was played at Drury Lane to a house of £162 6s., and, says the indignant Drury Lane manager, "I have not a doubt that the receipt at Covent Garden the same evening was half as much again to see *Paul Clifford*, or some such disgusting trash."

Apart from the reduction in prices, which (*pace* Mr. Bunn) was a perfectly justifiable experiment, apparently Osbaldiston's initial mistake was the putting forward a melodrama entitled *Jonathan Bradford*, which had proved a great success during his management of the Surrey Theatre, but which the quidnuncs and critics of the day were not slow in condemning as entirely unsuitable to the genius of Covent Garden.

The receipts from this cause fell off, until Fitzball, on October 28, produced a "musical burletta entitled *Paul Clifford*, founded on Bulwer Lytton's popular novel, and introducing a real stage-coach and six horses." This proved a success, and the receipts began to rise again.

Later on another of Fitzball's productions, a comedy entitled the *Inheritance*, founded on a novel by Miss Ferrier, met with a chorus of faint praise from the reviewers.

Osbaldiston then brought out an adaptation of *The Bronze Horse*, from Scribe and Auber's

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opera, with music not only by Auber, but by Rodwell. This created a tremendous *furore*, and completely took the wind out of the Drury Lane production of the genuine article by Bunn,* which appeared at the same time. Apparently Fitzball at this time remonstrated very seriously with Osbaldiston against his being obliged to write all the pieces. The manager, however, only laughed at this, and, having former successes of Fitzball's in his mind, determined to exact his pound of flesh. Consequently poor Fitzball was turned on to a burlesque, with the quasi facetious title of *Za-za-ze-zi-zo-zu*, left unfinished by a talented young writer named Milner, who had died suddenly before its completion. This was a job Fitzball detested, but he had no alternative than to obey, and the burlesque duly came out and met with success. It is only of interest to us now as having probably seen the first reference to a railway in a theatre, since they were then "not only new to the stage, but to the world," as Fitzball points out.

Among successive productions were *Sigismund Augustus*, by Captain Addison; *Robert Macaire*, by Selby, and most interesting of all, the first appearance of Helen Faucit, a lady whose name is familiar, even to the younger generation of to-day, as Lady Martin. She made her *début*

* It is only fair to state that Bunn denies this.

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on Tuesday, January 5, 1836, as Julia in *The Hunchback*, by Knowles, a part which Miss Fanny Kemble had originally created. Miss Faucit made an immediate hit, and is even said to have revived memories of the wonderful Miss O'Neill, especially in *Venice Preserved*. Helen Faucit was at this time a young girl of nineteen, somewhat frail of health, and certainly none too well equipped for the long and arduous life she had in front of her. Her mother was the daughter of the Mr. Diddear whose name is familiar to students of the theatrical world of the later eighteenth century. Her father and mother were from early years closely associated with the stage, Mr. Faucit being a member of Diddear's company when he married his manager's daughter. Mrs. Faucit, as we know, had first appeared at a London Theatre on October 7, 1813, in the character of Desdemona on the same classic boards her lovely daughter was now to grace. The latter was first announced to come out as Juliet, and, to her bitter disappointment, the play was changed, owing to the fact that no actor young enough to play Romeo could be found. The terrible ordeal was triumphantly passed through, and in her husband's words, "the inspiration of genius was recognized by an enthusiastic audience."*

* "Helena Faucit, Lady Martin," by Sir T. Martin (1900).

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intensely interesting letter to Mrs. S. C. Hall, written nearly half a century later, in 1881, she tells the story of her first appearance, the terrific nervousness, the misery of anticipated failure, the encouragement by the audience, her deaf old grandfather seated in the orchestra, and the final triumph, ending with Osbaldiston's giving her a three years' engagement as leading actress at £30 a week.

Charles Kemble played his original part of Sir Thomas Clifford for the occasion, and won her enthusiastic admiration and respect, both for his superb acting and his unfailing kindness to her. The *Times* and other papers wrote the most flattering and gratifying notices of her success, comparing her most favourably with Fanny Kemble as Julia, and foretelling the brilliant career that lay before her.

She repeated her success as Belvidera in *Venice Preserved*, as Lady Margaret in Joanna Baillie's tragedy of *Separation*, and on March 10 as Juliet.

Macready's engagement was announced to open on May 8, 1836, and on the 18th she appeared with him as Mrs. Haller. On May 26 she acted the part of Clemanthe with him in Talfourd's play of *Ion*, in which she bore comparison with Ellen Tree, who also played the part. The play was a great success, and the run

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only terminated when Macready, owing to previous engagements, had to leave the theatre. The season closed on June 20 with her benefit, as Mrs. Beverley in *The Gamester*, and as Katharine to C. Kemble's *Petruchio*.

In the spring of 1837 Osbaldiston had enlisted under his banner no less than eight actors and actresses of the first rank—Charles Kemble, who was playing a farewell round of his favourite characters, Macready, Vandenhoff, B. Webster, Farren, Mrs. West, Mrs. Glover, and Helen Faucit. Kemble's appearances were made in such great masterpieces of acting and writing as *The School for Scandal*, *King John*, *Julius Cæsar*, and, on the great farewell night itself, *Much Ado about Nothing*. Eyewitnesses tell us that he played that night better than ever; and be it remembered that here was the ideal Benedick as he was the ideal Romeo.

When the curtain fell, the spectacle, familiar to those walls, was presented of a tremendous scene of enthusiasm, having a Kemble for its object. Again it rose, and he was seen surrounded by the entire company, as well as by every member of the profession in London, including Edwin Forrest, the great American tragedian, Bartley, Farley, and many others. Kemble broke down completely in addressing his enthusiastic friends, and the curtain finally fell on a saddened

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audience. We shall, however, find the great actor playing for short periods for several years after his official farewell performance.

Osbaldiston, following the example of more illustrious predecessors, put forward a piece in order to introduce the attraction of live animals on the stage: this was called *Thalaba the Destroyer*, from Southey's poem; and its production was attended by an incident which might have had serious results. Among the animals, engaged from the Surrey Zoological Gardens, were some Burmah bulls, who, probably excited by their strange surroundings, butted down their stable doors, and let loose their fellow-performers, the elephants. The animals rushed helter-skelter upon the stage, driving before them the terrified performers, who were fortunately able to escape up a steep stone staircase, leaving their four-footed comrades to "take the stage," so to speak, by storm.

Before the close of the 1836-7 season Macready played in several other new pieces with Miss Faucit. These included Bulwer's play, *The Duchesse de la Vallière*, which, in spite of his and her fine acting, was a failure, and quickly withdrawn. Two other new productions must be referred to: Knowles's *Brian Boroihme* and Browning's *Strafford*, the latter of which was produced on May 1, 1837. Between this date

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and the end of the month Helen Faucit appeared as two more of Shakespear's heroines—Imogen in *Cymbeline*, and Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*. Although it will necessitate travelling over some of the same ground, yet, for the sake of presenting the period of Macready's connection with Osbaldiston and his own reign as manager with some continuity, we will defer further notices of Helen Faucit's other performances until the succeeding chapter, where they will be interpolated among those extracts from Macready's Diary, from which the overmastering egotism of the diarist sometimes omitted them.

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CHAPTER XVI

1837-1839

It is necessary to retrace our steps a little at this point, in order that the story of Macready's management, as told in his Diary, may be clearly brought before the reader.

In April of 1836 Macready* records the fact of Osbaldiston's refusal to engage him upon certain terms he had proposed. He adds, "I feel no regret at it; for it is money purchased at a heavy cost of feeling to go into that theatre."

Soon after this occurred the famous assault upon Bunn by Macready at Drury Lane, which terminated in an action at law and Macready's paying £150 damages.

On May 5 we again read of an offer to Macready from Osbaldiston of £200 for twelve nights. Thereupon Macready offered to play for £200 for ten nights, or £120 for six. Finally, the tragedian accepted the engagement very much on these terms, beginning on Wednesday,

* Vol. ii. p. 18.



WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY.

From the Miniature by Thorburn, engraved by Posseltchite.

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May 11, and ending on Saturday, June 11. He also promised to act two nights gratuitously.

On May 7 he notes, "In the Covent Garden playbills my name was blazing in large red letters at the head of the announcement."

On May 9 Macready called at Covent Garden Theatre and saw Osbaldiston, to settle the date of production of Talfourd's tragedy *Ion* for the 26th. He notes, "Spoke about orders, dressing-room, etc., in all of which Mr. O. seemed desirous of accommodating me. Was introduced to Mr. Fitz-ball (!), the Victor Hugo, as he terms himself, of England."

On May 11 he writes, "On my entrance in *Macbeth*, the pit—indeed, the house—rose and waved hats and handkerchiefs, cheering in the most fervent and enthusiastic manner. It lasted so long it rather overcame me; but I entered on my own task, determined to do my best, and I think I never acted *Macbeth* more really, or altogether better."

At the fall of the curtain Macready made a speech, thanking his audience for their kindness and apologizing for his own hastiness of temper in the Bunn incident.

On the 13th he notes, "Went to the theatre and acted *Virginius* in a splendid manner, quite bearing the house along with me."

On May 18 he writes, "Rehearsed *Stranger*."

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Talfourd read *Ion* in the green room. . . . I was called for by the audience, but would not go on without Miss Faucit, whom I led forward."

On May 19 he says, "Spoke about my name being put in the bills by Mr. Osbaldiston after Mr. [Charles] Kemble's."

On May 26 he writes, "Went to the theatre and acted the character [Ion] as well as I have ever played any previous one." There was the usual speech from Macready at the fall of the curtain (all duly "reported" by himself in his Diary), and a grand supper afterwards at Talfourd's, graced by the presence of Wordsworth, Landor, Browning, Miss Mitford, and many other celebrities.

Chorley speaks of this production in his autobiography—

"When Talfourd's *Ion* was published, it appeared to myself (and still appears) to be the most noble, highly finished, and picturesque modern classical tragedy existing on the English stage. It was not its large private distribution, not merely the great reputation of its author, but the vital, pathetic excellence of the drama, and the rich poetry of the diction, which, on the night of the production of the play at Covent Garden, filled that great theatre with an audience the like of which, in point of distinction, I have never seen

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in any English theatre. There were the flower of our poets, the best of our lawyers, artists of every world, and of every quality. There was a poor actor of some enterprise and promise, Mr. Cathcart, who, in the fulness of zeal and expectation, absolutely walked up to London from Brighton to be present at the first performance."

On May 28 Macready notes, "I acted the Stranger, but indifferently, still was called for by the audience, and led on Miss Faucit."

On May 31 Macready was approached by Fitzball, presumably on behalf of Osbaldiston, with an offer of a renewal of the engagement in the autumn. He asked £40 per week as a minimum. On June 3 a further interview with Fitzball took place, and an offer of £35 per week, and then £40 per week, and half a clear benefit with six weeks vacation. "I said I would think about it," records Mr. Macready.

On June 8 Macready accepted the last-mentioned terms from Osbaldiston for twenty-two weeks. After a provincial tour he records, under date July 14, "At Covent Garden Theatre met Mr. Osbaldiston, and after urging him to engage Mr. Vandenhoff and Miss E. Tree, read my article of agreement to him, to which he assented, and also to my claim of flesh-coloured stockings, and to the announcement of my name as first."

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On August 3 he notes, "Forster told me Browning had fixed on *Strafford* for the subject of a tragedy." On August 12, "Received letters from Osbaldiston, who declines engaging Miss Huddart; he is a man of no forethought." On October 3 he appears to have opened against Covent Garden with *Macbeth*.

On October 21 he notes, "Oh, what a change has taken place in this theatre! I remember it offering accommodation to the actor in every particular, and now it is a dirty desert, except before the curtain, which, perhaps, may be looked upon as reproof to my complaint."

"October 25.—At the theatre there was a violent disturbance from the overcrowded state of the pit; the audience demanded that the money should be returned; the play could not be heard. Charles Kemble went forward, and addressed the audience, but effected nothing. Mr. H. Wallack went forward in the next scene. But the audience would not allow the play to proceed, and at last . . . I went forward. I said, 'Under the circumstances, . . . if the ladies and gentlemen who could not obtain room would require their money from the box-keeper, and tell him to charge it to my account, I should be most happy to be responsible for it.' The whole house cheered very enthusiastically, and like the sea under the word of Neptune, the waves were instantly stilled."

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Macready makes no mention of the fact that on November 2, 1836, Charles Kemble was appointed Examiner of Plays in place of the younger Colman, just deceased.

“London, November 2.—Read Bulwer’s play of the *Duchesse of La Vallière* in Mr. Osbaldiston’s room. The actors and actresses were, or seemed to be, very much pleased with the play, but I cannot put much confidence in them.

“November 18.—Acted Brutus with more self-possession than on the first night, and learned some things in the performance. . . . I am pleased to hear that every paper noticed the Senate Scene which I induced Mr. Osbaldiston to have.

“December 1.—Acted Virginius as well as my temper and the state of the play would let me. Mr. Osbaldiston would not suffer the supernumeraries to be rehearsed on account of the expense, fifteen shillings! . . . Dow came into my room, and told me my orders were stopped. I had over-written myself.

“1837, January 2.—Acted Lord Hastings very, very ill indeed.

“January 3.—Rehearsed *Bragelone*. . . . Bulwer and Forster were there. . . .

“January 4.—Acted *Bragelone* well. . . . Being called for, I did not choose to go on without Miss Faucit, whom I led forward. . . . The play . . . did not end until eleven o’clock. Bulwer drove me home. . . .

“On January 22 Macready was ill, and could not play on 23rd.

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“March 30.—I went to the theatre, . . . and read to Mr. Osbaldiston [Browning’s] play of *Strafford*; he caught at it with avidity, agreed to produce it without delay, and to give the author £12 per night for twenty-five nights. £10 per night for ten nights beyond.

“May 1.—Rehearsed *Strafford* [presumably in morning] . . . and acted it as well as I could under the nervous sensations I experienced.”

It is necessary here to break off for a while from Macready’s rather egotistic self-communings and to revert to the other personages of the company. These were reinforced by T. P. Cooke, in the famous part of William in Jerrold’s nautical drama of *Black-ey’d Susan*. Osbaldiston, probably worried by the poor prospect before him of making his venture a success, was growing irritable, and his friend Fitzball records that he had a quarrel with several of the actors, among them being H. Wallack, the stage-manager. To such a length did he carry his resentment that he actually gave orders Wallack should be refused admittance, an order which the worthy stage-manager entirely declined to obey, and presented himself at night as usual dressed for his part. Pushing past the substitute, he played his character in spite of the orders of the manager, who, we learn, had the good sense to be struck with the humour of the situation,

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and was obliged to laugh at his subordinate's disobedience.

Later on, however, Wallack did quit his post, and Fitzball recommended Benjamin Webster, afterwards lessee of the Haymarket, for the vacancy. For Fitzball's benefits he had the invaluable assistance of Madame Grisi, Balfe, and Ivanhoffe on one occasion, and on another Balfe and his wife, Giubeli, and Templeton came and sang in Balfe's then extremely popular opera, *The Siege of Rochelle*, for the first time of its production at Covent Garden. An extraordinary and romantic circumstance is related by Mr. Fitzball of this occasion, connecting Covent Garden Theatre with one of the most remarkable and beautiful women known to history. This was none other than the famous adventuress, Lola Montez, then only at the beginning of her career, and barely twenty years of age. Her beauty must have been of that kind known as *beauté du diable*. The daughter of an Irish ensign and a Spanish mother, she was educated in Paris and at Bath. To escape an unpleasant marriage, she eloped with an army captain. The marriage proved unhappy. She afterwards became famous as a dancer in half the capitals of Europe, was for a year mistress of the mad King of Bavaria, Louis I., and directed the fortunes of that kingdom the while, then

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turned lecturer, and finally died, still young, a penitent.

This, then, was the romantic individual who made a brief appearance at the theatre on the occasion of the excellent Mr. Fitzball's benefit. Needless to remark, her manner of doing so was in accordance with her eccentric habits.

She had, it appears, shortly before been dancing at His Majesty's Theatre, but, owing to a disturbance into the particulars of which we need not now enter, had abruptly terminated the engagement. A friend of Fitzball's, more in jest than in earnest, suggested that he should endeavour to obtain the lady's consent to dance for him for one night, and thus secure an unparalleled attraction for his benefit. Here we will let Fitzball tell his own story.

“I repaired at once to her apartments, and simply by sending up my card was graciously admitted. She was sitting for her portrait—a charming likeness, but far less charming than the original. I explained my errand, and was at once . . . left without hope. It was, perhaps, that a look of disappointment, if not something of distress, crossed my features; but in an instant her look changed, her voice also. ‘I will, however,’ she continued blandly, ‘ask my mamma’ (I think she said ‘mamma’) ‘what she thinks

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of it. Give me your address; I will write to you.' ”

Fitzball then goes back to the theatre for a rehearsal, and then home. To his surprise, he finds the lovely Lola—

“seated on the sofa, chatting with my wife as if they had known each other for years. She had already made up her mind to dance for me. When I mentioned terms, she refused to hear me, and, in fact, intended and did dance for me for *nothing*. When the announcement appeared, everybody was astonished, and was calculating the enormous sum I had consented to give for the attraction.

“Lola Montez arrived on the evening in a splendid carriage, accompanied by her maid, and, without the slightest affectation, entered the dressing-room prepared for her reception.

“When she was dressed to appear on the stage, she sent for me, to inquire whether I thought the costume she had chosen would be approved of. I have seen sylphs appear, and female forms of the most dazzling beauty, in ballets and fairy dreams, but the most dazzling and perfect form I ever did gaze upon was Lola Montez, in her splendid white-and-gold attire studded with diamonds, that night. . . . Her dancing was quite unlike anything the public had ever seen—so original, so flexible, so graceful, so indescribable.

“At the conclusion of her performance, after

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a rapturous and universal call for her reappearance, when I advanced with delighted thanks, again holding up her hand in graceful remonstrance, she refused to hear me, and in half an hour, in the same carriage, had quitted the theatre. From that time I never again had the exceeding pleasure of seeing the generous, the beautiful Madame Lola Montez."

In a gracefully worded footnote Fitzball adds that, in spite of her singular reputation, on this occasion she was, as every one must allow, all that was generous, ladylike, and gentle. We have no space to pursue the subject further, but the incident is suggestive of the charming and delightful book that might be written upon the kind deeds and generous actions of those whose names are often the synonyms of characters very different.

Among the other productions of the Osbaldiston management was *Esmeralda*, turned into an opera, with music from Weber's "Preciosa," and Miss Romer as Esmeralda. Her entrance, attended by the gipsies, dancing, with numbers of coins glittering and jingling on wide, flowing skirts, under a canopy of tapestry of all colours, created quite a sensation.

The end of the Osbaldiston régime was now fast approaching. It says something indeed for his ability and energy that he was

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able to continue his management during two seasons.

Vandenhoff, the tragedian, left the theatre suddenly, justly disgusted, says Fitzball, with Osbaldiston for placing him in a half-price piece. Elton was engaged as his substitute; and with Helen Faucit, Webster, and Miss Vincent, and the aid of Charles Marshall's* beautiful scenery, the season drew near its conclusion.

Osbaldiston, at nearly the end of the season, listened to everybody, and taking every one's advice, with unceasing losses, seemed to lose all mastery over himself. At this time he engaged Mr. Rophino Lacy as adviser and acting-manager. This gentleman had in the time of Kemble held a position in the theatre, and had besides been employed by Bunn and Laporte. Osbaldiston soon fell out with him, however, and refused him the privilege of a private box, thereby incurring an action for compensation, which Lacy lost, in spite of calling Kemble and many other famous actors to testify on his behalf. Fitzball asserts that a ludicrous accident in court prevented Charles Kemble from rising to speak. This was nothing less than the sudden splitting of his nether garments, which, it will be remembered, were worn very tight in the

* C. Marshall (1806-1890), one of the most prominent and successful scene painters of his day.

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then prevailing fashion. Happily, an old lady in a neighbouring inn was able to repair the alarming breach in time for Kemble to appear and testify at a later stage in the proceedings.

We will now resume the story of the theatre as told in Macready's diary.

“May 18, [1837].—Acted *Posthumus* in a most discreditable manner. . . .

“June 3.—Acted *Othello* pretty well. . . . Was called for at the end of the play, and well received. Thus ended my Covent Garden engagement, which, thank God, has been profitable and agreeable to me. God be praised.”

After this Macready fulfilled an engagement during the summer months at the Haymarket under Webster. While still there, on June 17 we read in his diary—

“Called on Mr. Robertson and spoke with him on the subject of his note to me on the subject of entering into the management of Covent Garden Theatre; promising that I would not venture any part of my little property, nor make any venture beyond that of my own talent. He was to lay Mr. Osbaldiston's refusal to continue in the management before the proprietors, to sound them upon the reopening of the theatre, and give me notice of their views.

“June 22.—Called on Mr. Robertson and learned from him that the proprietors, with

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whom he had spoken, were very favourable to the plan . . . of my conducting the theatre. Stated to him my views that the necessary expenses of the proprietors should be the very first appropriated portion of the receipts; that an additional sum should be on the contingent footing of the performers' salaries, and that the remainder should be taken from the surplus, if any; urged the indispensable necessity of the renovation of the theatre wardrobe and scenery. Deputed Bartley to get a statement of the highest average weekly expenses of the theatre last season, its salary list, etc. Learned that, at the last year's rent, the nightly expense was £154. . . . This startled me, and made me pause.

“June 27.—Explained to Robertson my complete views as to the proprietors, viz. to take my chance of payment for my acting talent with the chance of £7000 rent to them, out of a surplus of £1800 to take £300 and any surplus that might be over that sum.

“June 29.—Went to Covent Garden. In my interview with Robertson and Bartley, it was mentioned that the proprietors . . . thought that I ought to incur part of the risk. To this I instantly observed, that I did not covet the office; that, in risking my name, time, peace of mind, salary as performer, balance of loss, and increased expenses, I did more than enough, and that I adhered to what I started with, viz. that I would not lay out one single shilling nor risk one farthing beyond a night's expenses. I gave my reasons for this, which were considered not

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only fair, but liberal, both by R[obertson] and B[artley]. They were both very sanguine as to the experiment, and I remained doubtful, but holding to what seemed to me duty.

“July 6.—My health, thank God, much better. At the theatre I received a note from Robertson appointing a meeting to-morrow at ten, to mention to me a proposed deviation from my offer by the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, also a note from the Literary Fund.

“July 7.—Proceeded to Robertson. He laid before me the modification of what was termed my proposal, which amounted to the addition of £720, the cost, as they calculated, of their outlay in repairs, etc., to the ground-rent, etc., to be paid in nightly instalments out of the first receipts, and a retention of two private boxes. I gave no direct answer, but, not seeing any strong cause of objection, talked over with Robertson and Bartley sundry measures to be pursued in the event of my undertaking the conduct of the theatre. Called on H. Smith, and consulted with him on the proposed plan; he thought it advisable to make the effort, observing that, as in everything, there was risk. There was not more here than in ordinary circumstances.

“July 8.—Went down to Covent Garden, and at Robertson’s met Bartley; told him of my objections to the proprietors’ plan and of my emendations, which he thought very fair and not likely to meet with opposition. Sent him to Wilmott, the Drury Lane prompter, to sound

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him, and if he found him well disposed, to open to him confidentially my wish to engage him. Whilst he was gone, I made out the draft of a letter to Robertson, and, upon the calculations I made, gave in my amended proposal, which I think most fair. Bartley, returning, related to me his conversation with Wilmott, who expressed himself delighted on hearing that I had undertaken the conduct of the theatre, and then, having imparted to him as much as was necessary, he desired to call on me. In a little time he came, and at first seemed in high spirits at the prospect before him, which subsided as he gained time to reflect. I offered him £5 under the idea that he had £6, but he admitted he had only £5; on which I counselled him to offer himself for £4—a very unpalatable proposition.”

Eventually Macready settled with Wilmott as prompter at £4 10s. for thirty-six weeks. On July 11 he offered to engage Miss Faucit at £15 per week. On the 12th he received a letter from Vandenhoff demanding £21 per week, and narrates further negotiations with Robertson and Bartley. On the 14th he had Miss Faucit's answer, “expressing the best spirit as far as she was concerned.” The troubles of his new position were now crowding thick and fast on him. He had apparently much difficulty in getting decided answers from the other members of the company. In all probability his offers were all made on the

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basis of reduced terms all round, and the actors and singers not unnaturally hesitated to accept before making sure they could not get better terms elsewhere. Eventually he found himself without the services of Vandenhoff and Miss Romer, and consequently decided to reduce his offer to £40 per night rent for one hundred and eighty nights, paying himself £30 a week, and dividing any surplus at the rate of three-fifths to the proprietors and two-fifths to himself.

On July 19 he notes that the occupation of his mind on other matters was beginning to have a bad effect on his acting. On the 20th he settled with various persons for their salaries: Mrs. Glover and Mr. F. Vining, £9 10s. each; T. Matthews, £3; and wrote to Kenney* offering him the post of reader at £3 per week. On the 21st he saw Mr. Marshall, painter to the theatre, and other persons, and arranged various matters, among others to exclude women of the town from the two lowest tiers of boxes. At length, on the 22nd, he writes—

“My mind is quite made up to enter upon the direction of Covent Garden Theatre, and I fervently and with humility invoke the blessing of Almighty God upon my efforts and labours.”

* Charles Lamb Kenney (1821-1881), son of James Kenney, dramatist, and a godson of “Elia,” dramatic critic to the *Times*, secretary to Sir J. Paxton and M. de Lesseps, author of the libretti of a great many operas.

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On the 24th he writes, "Went into the theatre to take possession of it." Both G. H. Rodwell, the music director, and Marshall, the scene painter, had accepted reduced terms. Mr. Harris, the principal proprietor, called, and, he says, gave him some very valuable hints. On July 27 Macready records: "Received a letter, in very kind strain, from Calcraft, lamenting my undertaking," and to this he appears to have subsequently added, "his lamentation was a prophecy."

He then engaged Elton at ten guineas, and heard from Kenney, accepting his offer of £3. On August 5 he purchased an opera by Rooke for £100 down, £10 per night for ten nights, £15 for ten nights, and £10 for fifteen nights. On August 7 he decided to make certain structural alterations, and to remove the statues from the closed saloon to the entrance hall. He was anxious, it appears, to get the special patronage of the young Queen Victoria, and had interviews with Lord Dudley, Lord Conyngham (the then Lord Chamberlain), and others for the purpose of getting her permission to call the Covent Garden players "Her Majesty's Company of Performers."

On August 26 he writes: "Left my dear, my blessed home, its quiet and its joys, to enter on a task for which nature and taste have disqualified me."

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During 1837 the death occurred of John Fawcett, who as actor, author, stage-manager, or treasurer, was connected with Covent Garden very nearly forty years.

On September 30, 1837, the theatre opened under Macready's management with *A Winter's Tale*, and *A Roland for an Oliver*. Boxes, 5s. ; second price, 2s. 6d. ; pit, 2s. 6d. ; second price, 1s. 6d. ; lower gallery, 1s. 6d. ; second price, 1s. ; upper gallery, 1s. ; second price, 6d. The second price at the end of the third act of plays, and the second of operas. Stage director, Mr. Willmott ; musical director, Mr. G. H. Rodwell ; acting-manager, Mr. Bartley. On this occasion J. Anderson made his first appearance at Covent Garden as Florizel.

On October 2 Macready played Hamlet, and notes that the audience appreciated several of the improvements in the theatre. One of the features of Macready's management was his practice of sending free admissions to persons distinguished in science, art, and literature.

On October 19 there is already an ominous entry in the "Diary."

"Saw Bartley, and asked him his opinion of our prospect ; he said he began to be afraid of it. I told him, as I afterwards repeated to Mr. Robertson, that it was necessary the proprietors should be prepared to meet the approaching

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crisis ; that I would pay to the amount of £1000, restore the salary I had received, and work it on for the actors and proprietors as long as I could without any remuneration."

On October 22 Macready found that he had only a balance of £481 5s. 9d. left at Ransom's, his bankers, after paying away the promised £1000, returning £90 for his salary.

Later on things became more cheerful. Clarkson Stanfield undertook to paint some scenery in the shape of "a diorama for the pantomime," and the Queen promised to come to the theatre in November.

On Friday, October 27, 1837, a famous name first appears in the Covent Garden play-bill, its owner, then a man thirty-three years of age, being Samuel Phelps, who on this occasion played Jaffier in *Venice Preserved*. Macready and Helen Faucit were also in the cast, and the play was followed by *No Song no Supper*, and a farce called *The Spitfire*. Phelps' success as Jaffier was so conspicuous that he unfortunately incurred Macready's jealousy, and the latter would not act with him again in the same piece, but cast Mr. Warden for Pierre on the repetition of the tragedy.*

A few days later he still further compromised his position by a splendid performance of *Othello*

* "Phelps' Life," p. 47.

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to Macready's Iago. The manager made no concealment of the fact that he intended to shelve him during the run of his contract, or make him play only second-rate characters.

“*Your time must come,*” he told him, “but I am not going to try and hasten it. I was kept back by Young and Kean, and you will have to wait for me.”

Consequently we only find Phelps playing such characters as Macduff, Cassius in *Julius Cæsar*, Antonio in the *Tempest*, etc., etc., although he did once or twice play Rob Roy, one of Macready's characters.

Miss Faucit had amiably consented to waive her right, under the agreement with Osbaldiston, to choice of parts and a salary of £30 a week. This she agreed to reduce to £15, although, as we shall see, Macready honourably preferred at the end of the season to pay her and the other actors and actresses who had made similar concessions, their full salaries.

On November 11 a comic opera by the well-known musical writer, John Hullah, was produced, entitled *The Barbers of Bassora*, with libretto by Maddison Morton.

From November 15 to 17, 1837, the date fixed for the royal visit, Macready was incessantly occupied with the multifarious details of

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the theatre. Scene-room, wardrobe, armoury, property-room, contriving effects for the stage, ordering refreshments, revising the plays and cutting them, rehearsals, answering applications for admission, and a thousand and one other things occupied his attention, and with all this during the day, he was acting such emotional and exhausting parts as Hamlet at night. The Queen had commanded the first act of *Fra Diavolo* for the State performance.

Unfortunately, in spite of all poor Macready's care and worry, something very like a fiasco occurred. He had decided on not increasing the prices, and this doubtless attracted an enormous crowd to the pit and cheaper parts of the house. Consequently a tumult arose, and women began to scream and faint—

“a great number being lifted over the boxes in an exhausted condition. Mr. Bartley had leave from the Queen to address the audience, which he did, tendering the price of admission to those who, not having room, might wish to return. When order was restored, the play proceeded.

“I acted, not to please myself: I could not recover my self-possession. The Queen sent to say she expected to see me . . . I dressed myself in full dress, and went with Bartley to wait on her as she retired. The ladies-in-waiting and the officers, etc., passed through the room, and at length the Queen—a very pretty little girl—

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came. Lord Conyngham told her who I was. She smiled and bowed, and said, 'I am very much obliged to you.' Pointed me out to the Duchess of Kent and bowed repeatedly to me."

"November 28.—*Joan of Arc* succeeded entirely.

"December 2.—Went to theatre, where I sat for some time revolving the hopeless condition of the concern. I strove to calm my spirits. . . . I could not rally, my heart had quite sunk within me.

"Saw the new opera, *Amélie*, which, silly as the words are, and over-weighed as it is with music, was quite successful."

"December 16.—Went to the theatre, . . . and found myself about £2200 to make up. . . . Profit, therefore, is beyond all hope."

On December 18 the Queen visited the theatre again, and on December 26 was produced the grand pantomime *Harlequin, and Peeping Tom of Coventry*, for which Clarkson Stanfield had painted his famous moving diorama of scenes from the north of Italy, the Alps, Germany, and France, including the Col du Bon Homme by moonlight, and concluding with the British Channel. In the play-bills Macready expressed his thanks to Stanfield for having, "in a manner the most liberal and kind, . . . laid aside his easel to present the manager with his last work, in a department of art so conspicuously advanced by him."

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Happily the last entry, on December 26, reads: "The pantomime succeeded completely, for which I feel most grateful."

During the early part of January, 1838, *King Lear* was in rehearsal, and Macready was much exercised about the inclusion or otherwise of the Fool, which he could not find a suitable actor for. Finally, on Bartley's suggestion, Miss P. Horton, known in our days as Mrs. German Reed, was cast for the part!

Macready sent Stanfield £300 for the diorama, which the latter generously returned, asking for £150 only. "God bless him," says the Diary.

On January 15 a name appears that was afterwards to loom large in the annals of Covent Garden: "Went to the theatre, was detained long by Mr. Gye, who wanted to argue with me that I ought to retain his light through the run of the pantomime, which he charged at £1 10s. per night, with no stipulation as to the expense!" Frederick Gye had invented a new limelight which was used on Stanfield's diorama with great effect. Macready thought it too costly, and cut it out, greatly damaging his effects thereby.

On January 20 Macready gave Clarkson Stanfield a handsome piece of silver plate, in recognition of his generosity in the matter of the scenery.

On February 3 Macready received a new play

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from Bulwer Lytton, or at all events he records : “ Received a letter from Bulwer with the title of the *Adventurer*, but when I saw it written down I would not consent to it.” This was the celebrated play afterwards known as *The Lady of Lyons*, produced anonymously February 15, 1838.

“ It was composed,” says Lytton in the preface, “ with a twofold object. In the first place, sympathizing with the enterprise of Mr. Macready as manager of Covent Garden, and believing that many of the higher interests of the drama were involved in the success or failure of an enterprise equally hazardous and disinterested, I felt, if I may so presume to express myself, something of the Brotherhood of Art, and it was only for Mr. Macready to think it possible that I might serve him in order to induce me to make the attempt.

“ Secondly, I was anxious to see whether or not, after the comparative failure on the stage of *The Duchesse de la Vallière*, certain critics had truly declared that it was not in my power to attain the art of dramatic construction and theatrical effect.”

The play was a great success. It was the prime cause of Helen Faucit’s immense popularity, in the part of Pauline, and after having been in the bills several weeks proved a great draw. The authorship was acknowledged after a fortnight’s run.

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Macready does not devote much space in his Diary to its reception, the whole of his thoughts being occupied by the production of *Coriolanus*, which took place on March 12, and was well received, although the enormous popularity of *The Lady of Lyons* quite swamped it, greatly to Macready's mortification.

He records the following list of pieces as being performed in Easter week: *Sinbad the Sailor*, an after-piece, *Macbeth*, *The Lady of Lyons*, *The Two Foscari*, *Coriolanus*, *The Hypocrite*, *High Life Below Stairs*, and the opera of *Amélie*, in four of which he was playing.

On April 21 Macready "was startled at learning that there was only just enough cash to meet the day's demands."

There is little else of interest during the remainder of the spring and early summer of 1838. Macready had, in May, virtually made up his mind to retire from his position as manager. One or two new plays* were produced, but the principal attraction seems to have been still *The Lady of Lyons*. On May 31 the company, headed by Bartley, made a presentation to Macready in the green-room, in reply to which, "as nearly as I can remember, I said," and here

* *Marina Faliero*, by Byron, with Miss Faucit as Marina, which only ran three nights; *The Athenian Captive*, by Talfourd; and *Woman's Wit*, by Knowles, which had a run of thirty-one nights.

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the Diary prints a page and three-quarters of close print containing the entire speech.

In June an offer was made on Macready's behalf to take the theatre for the ensuing season (1838-9) at a rental of £6800, which, with a stipulation regarding a possible surplus, they agreed to.

Macready reckoned that his own pecuniary loss by management during the season amounted to £1800.

Undaunted, however, by his losses, he set to work to cut down expenses in all directions, and early in September issued a bill announcing the reopening for Monday, September 24. His company was undoubtedly a strong one, including Vandenhoff, Anderson, Helen Faucit, Miss Horton, Phelps, Elton, Serle, Vining, and many others, the musical director being, as before, Tom Cooke.

Among the opening productions were *Hamlet* and the *Tempest*, with a "flying part" for Miss Horton as Ariel. The remainder of the cast was as follows: Alonzo, Mr. Warde; Sebastian, Mr. Diddear; Prospero, Mr. Macready; Antonio, Mr. Phelps; Ferdinand, Mr. Anderson; Caliban, Mr. G. Bennett; Trinculo, Mr. Harley; Stephano, Mr. Bartley; Miranda, Miss Faucit; Iris, Mrs. Serle; Juno, Miss Rainforth. The music was selected from the works of Purcell, Linley, and

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Dr. Arne. The *Tempest* ran fifty-five nights during the season, to an average of £230 nightly. In October, 1838, *The Musical World* remarks—

“Operatic events have not as yet been abundant. *Fra Diavolo* is given once a week under the baton of Mr. T. Cooke, the director. . . . Miss P. Horton—Lady Allcaster. So far as the *Musical World* can judge, the tide of popular favour has fairly set in to Covent Garden. The houses are filled every night, and at Drury Lane there has been a very beggarly show of empty boxes.”

The preparation for the pantomime of Christmas, 1838, seems to have absorbed Macready's attention to an enormous extent throughout the early part of the season. One of the effects consisted of a diorama of the events in the years 1837–8, including the interior of the Duomo at Milan during the coronation of the Emperor of Austria, and a view of the ruins of the Royal Exchange—destroyed by fire, January 10, 1838.

On December 26, poor Macready records the unfortunate pantomime's complete failure, in spite of the £1500 which it had cost him, and which about represents the sum spent on a single effect by the pantomime kings of to-day.

On January 5 Bulwer Lytton's new play of *Richelieu* was read to the company, and

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Macready "was agreeably surprised to find it excite them in a very extraordinary manner."

On February 1, 1839, Queen Victoria again visited the theatre to see the *Lady of Lyons*. After the play, Macready, dressed in full court costume, preceded her Majesty downstairs, carrying two wax candles, in pursuance of the custom then prevailing.

On March 7, *Richelieu* was produced with the following cast: Louis XIII., Mr. Elton; Gaston, Mr. Diddear; Richelieu, Mr. Macready; Baradas, Mr. Warde; Mauprat, Mr. Anderson; De Beringhen, Mr. Vining; Father Joseph, Mr. Phelps; Huguet, Mr. George Bennett; François, Mr. Howe; Julie de Mortemar, Miss Helen Faucit; Marion de Lorme, Miss Charles.

The play made a hit at once. Macready says, "the success of the play seemed to be unequivocal."

On June 10 appeared the last of Macready's Shakespearian revivals, *Henry V.*, with Vandenhoff as Chorus, Bedford and Harley as Bardolph and Pistol, Miss P. Horton as their Boy, and scenery painted by Clarkson Stanfield. Of this there is an excellent and unprejudiced description in N. P. Willis's "Pencillings by the Way," a book which, we fancy, is not much read nowadays.

"A shilling procured us the notice of the

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box-keeper, who seated us near the stage, and I had just time to point out Mr. Babbidge (*sic*) the calculator, who happened to be three seats from us, when the curtain rose and discovered 'Time the chorus' in beard, scythe, and russet. Vandenhoff delivered the succeeding speeches of Time . . . with good emphasis and discretion. 'As he went on, the clouds, which the lifting of the curtain had dissolved, rolled up and away and superb tableaux glided past, representing the scene and personages of the act that was to follow. This was Stanfield's work and nothing could possibly be more admirable and magnificent. The King's embarkation at Southampton, the passage of the fleet, its arrival in France, the siege of Harfleur . . . etc., were all pictures done in the highest style of art. It was wonderful how this double representation, this scenic presentment to the eye, added to the interest and meaning of the play. Light as the mere dramatic interest of *Henry V.* is, it kept us on the stretch of excitement to the close. There was no chance for Macready's acting . . . but he . . . walked through his part with propriety, failing only in the love scene with Katherine at the close, which he made, I thought, unnecessarily coarse and rude. Miss Vandenhoff looked extremely handsome in the character, besides playing it capitally well. . . . Altogether the play, as all London has acknowledged, was exceedingly creditable to Macready's taste, as well as his liberality and enterprise. A night or two after, I was at Covent Garden again to see Bulwer's new play

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of *Richelieu*. It was gorgeously got up and . . . the action of the piece kept up an unbroken and intense interest in the house."

Anderson, in his "Actor's Life," speaks of the annoyance caused to the actors during the rehearsals of this piece by the presence on the stage of the manager's numerous friends. Morning after morning there sat, close to the prompter's table, Messrs. Browning, Bulwer, Dickens, Mac-lise, Forster, and others, to our great horror and disgust. Mrs. Humby was especially annoyed at Forster's, "roaring out, when I miss a word, 'Put her through it again, Mac, put her through it again,' as if I were a piebald mare at Astleys!"

On May 12, 1839, Henry Harris, the son of the theatre's old manager and proprietor, Thomas Harris, died at Brighton.*

On July 16 Macready's tenure of the theatre ended with a final performance of *Henry V.*, and on the twenty-fifth a grand banquet in his honour was held at Freemason's Tavern, with the Queen's uncle, the Duke of Sussex, in the chair, and half a hundred peers, members of Parliament, literary and artistic celebrities assembled to support him. It is interesting to recall

* Of him Bunn says: "The records of Covent Garden Theatre furnish ample testimony of his industry, his talent, and his liberality. The last thought in his mind was the aggrandisement of himself, the first was the advancement of the profession he swayed, and he has left no one behind fit to succeed him."

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the fact that the toast of the health of the late company of Covent Garden Theatre on this occasion was proposed by Charles Dickens and acknowledged by Mr. Serle.

A somewhat enigmatical entry in the "Diary" closes Macready's connection with our subject.

"One thing is quite certain, I could not have closed the theatre (had I continued) with one shilling surplus (vice £1200); I should not have been placed as the present tenant is, for the Olympic would have been open; I might have been ill, which would be ruin; I should never have seen my children; a calamity nearly equal."

What rendered Macready's splendid failure so particularly galling, was the knowledge that his hatred rival Bunn at Drury Lane was doing huge business with Charles Kean in the same Shakespearian plays Macready had to withdraw on account of their meagre drawing powers. With Macready's management the connection of Miss Faucit with Covent Garden Theatre also apparently ends, for she accompanied him first to the Haymarket, and afterwards to Drury Lane, and although there may have been some isolated appearances of the great actress there in after years, no mention of them is made in her life by Sir T. Martin, nor would their importance be sufficient to merit any special record.

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CHAPTER XVII

1839-1846

THE end of Macready's venture had been so disastrous to almost all concerned, that it needed a bold man indeed to embark on the almost fatal enterprise of trying to make Covent Garden Theatre a paying concern. Doubtless, however, the proprietors were prepared to make fairly considerable reductions to a likely tenant, and that they did so is evident from C. J. Mathews' own account of the negotiations, brief as it is. He and his wife, Madam Vestris, were at the time managing the Olympic with considerable success, although—

“the fact soon stared us in the face that there was no chance in so small a theatre of ever recouping the heavy loss that had been incurred during our absence [in America], and Covent Garden being offered to us on most advantageous terms, we determined to transfer ourselves and our company, with scenery, dresses, and properties, to that house. The expenses of embellishment and previous preparation were enormous,



CHARLES J. MATHEWS.

After the Painting by R. Jones, by permission of Messrs. Macmillan.

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but we were buoyed up with the most sanguine hopes of success."

And so Charles James Mathews entered upon a speculation which he never ceased to regret to the last days of his life.

George Vandenhoff, in his "Dramatic Reminiscences," gives a vivid and racy description of his entering himself in—

"Madam Vestris' *corps dramatique*, then being organized for active service at Covent Garden Theatre, London. Charles was brought up as an architect, but . . . took to the stage, and yoked his fortunes, in a lover's knot, with those of 'the widow' (Vestris was the widow of Vestris, the French dancer—Vestris fils, of course—her father was an old Italian, Bartolozzi, a sculptor). . . . In New York, 'from a variety of causes, they (Vestris and Mathews), failed, returned to England in a huff, and became lessees of Covent Garden Theatre, that is, Charles Mathews, lessee, Madam Vestris, manager, for in management Charley was a cipher by the side of 'her humorous ladyship,' whose temper was none of the sweetest, but whose taste, tact, and judgment were almost equal to her fickleness, luxury, and extravagance.

"She was, when Mathews married her,* already in the 'sere,' with a good deal of the 'yellow leaf' visible. . . . She had commenced her

* July 18, 1838.

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theatrical career with *éclat*, as an Italian opera singer; had afterwards played in Paris in French comedy; and had latterly, for many years, been a standing favourite in the English theatres, in characters requiring a certain *espièglerie*, nearly allied to effrontery, together with fair musical capabilities—the *soubrette chantante* in fine. . . . Now Vestris was admirably gifted, cut out, and framed to shine *en petit maître*; she was remarkable for the symmetry of her limbs, especially of those principally called on to fill these parts; she had a fearless off-hand manner, and a fine mezzo-soprano voice, the full contralto (*sic*) notes of which did her good service in Don Giovanni [(?) Little Don Giovanni], Captain Macheath, etc., etc. . . . She was the best *soubrette chantante* of her day; self-possession, archness, grace, *coquetterie*, seemed natural to her; these, with her charming voice, excellent taste in music, fine eyes, and exquisite form, made her the most fascinating . . . actress of her time.

“Believe it, reader, no actress that we have now (1860) can give you an idea of the attractions, the fascinations, the witcheries of Madam Vestris in the heyday of her charms.”

At this time C. Mathews was about thirty-five, she about forty-three years of age.

George Vandenhoff, junr., at that time practising in the legal profession at Liverpool, was engaged by Vestris, somewhat to his own astonishment, at £8 a week, partly, no doubt,



MADAME VESTRIS AS DON GIOVANNI IN THE EXTRAVAGANZA
"GIOVANNI IN LONDON."

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on the strength of his name, and given the part of Leon in Beaumont and Fletcher's comedy of *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, produced on Monday, October 14, 1839. There was a fine cast, and the papers all spoke favourably of the new performer and the *mise-en-scène* generally. But this is anticipating a little.

The season commenced on Monday, September 30, 1839, with an elaborate production of *Love's Labour Lost*, a play which not even the oldest actor in the company had ever seen performed. The cast included Robert Keeley, Bartley, Meadows, Granby, Cooper, Vining, Anderson (at £16 a week, or double what Macready paid him), Mesdames Vestris, Nisbett, Humby, Lee, and Rainforth, with some others of less note. The scenery, painted by Grieve and Sons,

“was beautiful in the extreme, the dresses splendid and appropriate, sketched by Planché, the materials and harmony of colour selected and arranged by Madam Vestris herself. The comedy must have been an immense success, but for one untoward circumstance—an awful mistake in theatrical policy—viz. that of shutting up the shilling gallery and excluding ‘the gods’ from their time-honoured benches on high Olympus.”

And so once more Covent Garden Theatre

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presented the spectacle of an enraged mob of brutal galleryites, yelling their brazen indignation at an inoffensive company of talented men and beautiful women enlisted under the banner of two popular favourites who asked nothing more exorbitant than a fair price and a little justice. No apologies were listened to, and not until a placard promising the reopening of the shilling gallery was exhibited on the stage was the play allowed to proceed. It was too late, however, and an ill-omened start had been made, for the labours of love were, indeed, lost, and the play very soon withdrawn.

The first original production of importance was Sheridan Knowles's play of *Love*, in which Ellen Tree appeared.

Ellen Tree had just returned from the United States, where she had made herself a universal favourite; and this new play of Knowles's was produced to display her talents worthily in the Countess. The part was admirably suited to her, and she did it full justice. She was well supported by J. R. Anderson in Huon, the first original part of importance which had been entrusted to him on the London stage. He acted it with great spirit, and with Madam Vestris in Catherine and Cooper as the Duke, the play ran ten successive weeks, and, although it put money into the theatre's treasury, it was

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not in sufficient quantities to render the enterprise a financial success, and to poor Mathews' horror, ruin at once seemed to stare him in the face. The enormous responsibilities so appalled him that in his extremity he was obliged to have recourse to the fatal remedies of the professional money-lender. "Duns, brokers, and sheriff's officers soon entered upon the scene, and Mathews, who had never known what pecuniary difficulty meant, was gradually drawn into an inextricable vortex of involvement." Light broke in upon the darkness, however, in an unexpected way! Somebody [possibly Bishop, who was reappointed musical director by Madam Vestris] had the happy inspiration of reviving the *Beggar's Opera*, dressed for the first time since its first production in the original costume, and it achieved an instantaneous success. The cast was a fine one: Captain Macheath, Mr. W. Harrison; Peachum, Mr. W. Farren; Lockit, Mr. Bartley; Filch, Mr. Harley; Polly Peachum, Miss Rainforth; Lucy Lockit, Madam Vestris.

To every one's surprise, the receipts went up, and a long and remunerative run was entered upon. This was followed by a successful pantomime, and by a memorable production of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, in which Mathews played Slender, and Bartley, Falstaff; while Mrs.

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Ford, Mrs. Page, and Ann Page were played respectively by Mrs. Nisbett, Madam Vestris, and Miss Rainforth.

Anderson speaks of the most interesting event of the first season being the reappearance of C. Kemble for six nights by "her Majesty's command." On March 24, 1840, he played Don Felix in *The Wonder*. His reception was most enthusiastic, and the audiences enormous. Although he was at this time considerably over seventy, he is said to have acted Mercutio like a man of forty!

The following list of plays, performed during Mathew's management, drawn up by himself, was found among his papers :—

SEASON 1839-40.

Tragedies.

	No. of times	No. of times
Hamlet	3	Romeo and Juliet 5
Ion	2	

Comedies.

Love's Labour Lost	9	Merry Wives	11
School for Scandal	16	'Twelfth Night	4
Rule a Wife	5	Belle's Stratagem	1
Country Squire	2	Faint Heart	2
Rivals	15	Secret Service	4
John Bull	6	Dr. Dillworth	4
Clandestine Marriage	3	Scapegoat	2
Double Gallant	12	Queen's Horse	3
Wonder	2	Ask No Questions	5
Baronet	1	Why did You Die?	1
Much Ado	1	Don't be Frightened	2
Know Your Own Mind	3	My Neighbour's Wife	4
As You Like It	2	High Life Below Stairs	1

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Pantomimes and Melodramas.

	No. of times		No. of times
Great Bed of Ware ...	48	Champs Elysées (ballet) ...	14
Fortunate Isles (masque) ...	20	Sleeping Beauty ...	35

Also 3 plays, 7 interludes, 13 farces and musical after-pieces, and 6 operas, including Artaxerxes and The Duenna.

Vandenhoff speaks of the revival of Milton's *Comus*—

“as the most brilliant production of the season, presenting the most classical and perfectly artistic *ensemble* of all the spectacle-pieces brought out under the Vestris-Mathews management. It was an honour to the theatre, the representation of this beautiful masque, . . . with all the luxury of scenic display, with the accompaniments of music sung by syren lips, and every aid that art could bring to delight the senses, and to realize the great poet's picture—a dream of Paradise, broken in upon by Comus and his satyr rout, and rebuked by the chaste lady, ‘pure, spotless, and serene,’ in the midst of their midnight orgies and incantations. The groupings and arrangements of the tableaux were admirable, and some of the mechanical effects were almost magical, especially that exquisite scene in which Madam Vestris, as Sabrina, appeared at the head of the waterfall, immersed in the cup of a lily up to the shoulders, and in this fairy skiff floated over the fall and descended to the stage. . . . Miss Rainforth sang the spirit-music charmingly, while Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert, and an immense *corps de ballet*, gave effect to the revels of Comus and his crew. There were forest scenes of the

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greatest pictorial beauty, filled with mythological and fabulous beings, bacchanals and satyrs, . . . intermingled with wood-nymphs and strange and grotesque monsters, forming a wild medley, . . . with the super-added intoxication of a maddening dance. . . . Yet, successful as it was, I have been informed that it did little more than repay its outlay !”

All the receipts, therefore, were certainly not sufficient to satisfy the insatiable maw of the money-lenders, and the unlucky manager complains that all was sunshine for every one but himself. While he paid nobody, no one seemed to care ; but when he began to pay a few, they all clamoured at once for their money.

The next season, 1840-1, was again a good one, and would be noticeable if only for the first production, on March 4, 1841, of Boucicault's celebrated comedy,* *London Assurance*, with the following splendid cast : Sir Harcourt Courtley, Mr. W. Farren ; Charles Courtley, Mr. J. Anderson ; Max Harkaway, Mr. G. Bartley ; Dolly Spanker, Mr. Keeley ; Dazzle, Mr. C. J. Mathews ; Mark Meddle, Mr. Harley ; Grace Harkaway, Madam Vestris ; Lady Gay Spanker, Mrs. Nisbett ; Pert, Mrs. Humby.

* Fanny Kemble says, in her “Records,” that she heard, but cannot vouch for the truth of the report, that Boucicault's remuneration was £300 for the piece. On the strength of it he was also said to have bought two horses, a cab, and seven new coats !

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When the comedy was first put into rehearsal, John Brougham and Dion Boucicault appeared as the joint authors. The original Dazzle was written for an Irishman, and John Brougham was to have played the part. Then it was discovered there would be nothing for Charles Mathews to do in the comedy. The consequence was, the part had to be rewritten for the manager. This led to a dispute, and an arrangement was finally made that Brougham should relinquish his share in the authorship, and resign the part of Dazzle to Mathews. On the twentieth night the comedy was announced in the bills as having been written by D. L. Bourcicault, as he then spelt his name. The last night of the season, June 3, *London Assurance* was played for the sixty-ninth time, and with it ended James Anderson's connection with Covent Garden Theatre, for he transferred his services to Macready at Drury Lane for the two ensuing years.

During the year 1841 Bishop's last dramatic composition, *The Fortunate Isles*, written in honour of Queen Victoria's marriage, was produced at Covent Garden.

Among the galaxy of beautiful and talented women gathered under the banner of Madam Vestris, two at least must be singled out for special mention, if only for the halo of romance which surrounds their names and careers. The

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first of these was a fair young girl who, according to Vandenhoff's account, figured annually in the Christmas pantomimes as Columbine — Miss Fairbrother. This lady, not long after, withdrew from the stage, and became the wife, morganatic, *bien entendu*, of H.R.H. the late Duke of Cambridge, by whom, and by whose august cousin, the late Queen Victoria, she was for many long and happy years sincerely loved and respected until her death, as Mrs. Fitz-George, in 1889, at a very advanced age.

The other member of a company that may almost be termed illustrious in its combination of talent, wit, beauty, and rank, and whose career was especially interesting, was Mrs. Nisbett, or, as she was when she made her *début*, Miss Mordaunt. She had made her *début* at Covent Garden Theatre in 1828, in the character of the Widow Cheerly in *The Soldier's Daughter*. Her success was instantaneous, and from among the host of admirers who soon encircled her she fell in love with Captain Nisbett of the Guards, a gentleman of good family and fortune, and a fine fellow into the bargain. He, on his part, adored his beautiful young wife, and for a time they lived together in the most complete happiness. By a heart-breaking accident the gallant young husband lost his life, just when everything in their lives

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seemed at its brightest, and, naturally enough, the unhappy young widow, partly to seek distraction and partly to supplement her scanty income, returned to the stage. Here she soon attained the position of one of the first *comédiennes* on the English stage, and at the time (1835) Vandenhoff writes, she was at the summit of her powers and beauty.

“ She was at that time slight and fragile yet graceful in figure, all life, sparkle, and animation. Her laugh was a peal of music ; it came from her heart, and went direct to yours ; nothing could resist it ; it was contagious as a fever, catching as a fire, flashing as the lightning.

“ ‘ As if Joy itself
Were made a living thing, and wore her shape.’

I have seen her set a whole theatre, when the audience seemed unusually immovable, in a delirium of gaiety by the mere contagion of her ringing laugh . . . running through the whole diatonic scale of ha-ha-ha's, till every soul in the house felt the spell, gave themselves up to its influence, and joined in a universal laughing chorus ! ”

The part of Lady Gay Spanker in *London Assurance* was written for her, and in it she was *facile princeps*. Madam Vestris, although she had engaged her at a large salary, and was not openly hostile, was jealous of her both on account of her youth, her good fortune and superior

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position in life. To complete the picture of this lady, the idol of our grandfathers, she supported her mother and sisters and educated her brothers out of her earnings. Eventually she married again—Sir William Boothby, an aged baronet, who only enjoyed his felicity a few months. After his death she returned a second time to the stage, under her old name of Mrs. Nisbett, until her retirement and death at the early age of forty-eight at St. Leonards.

The great revival of *Midsummer Night's Dream* this season was also a feather in the cap of Vestris and Mathews. Planché* asserts that it was the first time the play was done with the ever-delightful, inspired music of Mendelssohn. When it was first suggested, a great effect was required for the last scene, and Planché pointed out Shakespeare's own words as a hint for the producers to act upon—

“Through the house give glimmering light.

* * * * *

Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from briar,
And this ditty, after me,
Sing, and dance it trippingly.”

This was accordingly carried out by Grieve, the scenic artist, and the exquisite scene realized with such lovely effect that it ran for eight or nine weeks, and produced a veritable sensation.

* Vol. ii. p. 51.

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LIST OF PLAYS PRODUCED BY CHARLES J. MATHEWS, 1840-1.

		<i>Comedies.</i>			
		No. of times		No. of times	
Merry Wives	... ..	28	John Bull	... ..	1
Twelfth Night	... ..	1	Fashionable Arrivals	... ..	20
School for Scandal	... ..	3	White Milliner *	... ..	10
Rivals	... ..	4	London Assurance	... ..	69
Spanish Curate	... ..	21	Critic	... ..	14

Plays.

Love	2	Midsummer Night's Dream	59
Bride of Messina	18		

Operas.

Beggars' Opera	12	Fra Diavolo	5
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Musical After-pieces.

Sleeping Beauty	15	Patter v. Clatter	1
Greek Boy	17	Waterman	1
He would be an Actor	... ..	1	Beauty and the Beast	... ..	45

Farces.

Twice Killed	... ..	4	Brother Ben	... ..	19
Shocking Events	... ..	2	Captain of the Watch	... ..	6
Ringdoves	... ..	2	Two in the Morning	... ..	43
Simpson & Co.	... ..	5	A Quiet Day	... ..	3
First Floor	... ..	5	Secret Service	... ..	1

Pantomimes and Melodramas.

Castle of Otranto	... ..	55	Auld Robin Gray (ballet)	1
Embassy	... ..	12	(to Thursday, June 3, 1841, last night of season.)	

Mathews' third season, 1841-2, was as great a success artistically and financially as the first two had been, and it was, doubtless, immensely assisted by the splendid success of Miss Adelaide Kemble, daughter of Charles Kemble, who, in

* By D. Jerrold (a failure).

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almost exactly the same way as her talented elder sister Fanny had done eleven or twelve years before, proved the veritable *dea ex machinâ*, who brought lustre and fortune to gild the declining glories of her family. From a letter from Fanny Kemble to one of her friends, which is printed in her memoirs, we learn that Adelaide, who had but shortly before returned from a long sojourn abroad, in July, 1841, concluded

“an extremely agreeable and advantageous engagement with Covent Garden—*i.e.* Madame Vestris and Charles Mathews—for a certain number of nights at a very handsome salary. This is every way delightful to me, . . . and it places her where she will meet with respect and kindness, both from the public and the members of the profession with whom she will associate. Covent Garden is in some measure our vantage ground, and I am glad that she should thence make her first appeal to an English audience.”

Fanny Kemble was present to witness the *début*, which took place on Tuesday, November 2, 1841, in Bellini's opera of *Norma*, which she sang in English, retaining the whole of the recitative. Her success was triumphant, and the fortunes of the unfortunate theatre, which again were at the lowest ebb, revived under the influence of her great and immediate

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popularity, and the overflowing houses that, night after night, crowded to hear her.

In January, 1842, Fanny Kemble writes—

“ My father, I am sorry to say, gets no rent from the theatre. The nights on which my sister does not sing the house is literally empty. Alas! it is the old story over and over again, that whole ruinous concern is propped only by her. That property is like some fate to which our whole family are subject, by which we are, every one of us, destined to be borne down by turn, after vainly dedicating ourselves to its rescue.”

Fanny's statement regarding the rent is difficult to credit. Probably Charles Kemble's share of the rent paid by the Mathews was swallowed up by creditors and legal expenses long before it could reach his pocket or those of his family.

In April, 1842, Adelaide was singing the part of Susanna in the *Nozze di Figaro* to very fine houses, her acting of the part being very highly praised.

Among the novelties—unsuccessful, alas!—brought out this season was a new play by Sheridan Knowles, entitled *Old Maids*.

“ My part,” says Vandenhoff, “ was the serious character in the comedy, a young Claude

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Melnotte-y kind of London apprentice, who falls in love with one of the old maids. Lady Blanche (Vestris) fights a duel with Sir Philip Brilliant (Mathews), who takes him with him to the army, and brings him back a colonel and a hero, to wed, of course, the lady of his love. The point most applauded was the duel. . . . It never missed fire. Angelo, the great *maître d'armes*, was present at our last rehearsal, and we had the advantage of his suggestions and approval."

After a run of thirteen nights the play was withdrawn. Vandenhoff ascribes it to the fact that Knowles had outwritten himself. At any rate, he only wrote once more, *The Rose of Aragon*, which was also a failure, and "then took to preaching against acting and the drama!"

The following was the disposition of the various members of the company in the 1841-2 season, as related by Vandenhoff:—

Gentlemen: acting and stage-manager, Mr. George Bartley, with a great variety of business—the bluff, hearty old man, *pères*, nobles, Falstaff, etc.; light comedy and eccentrics—Charles Mathews (lessœ), Walter Lacy, F. Vining; leading business—George Vandenhoff, John Cooper; low comedy—J. P. Harley, D. Meadows; Irish character—John Brougham; heavy business—C. Diddear, J. Bland; walking

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gentlemen—C. Selby, A. Wigan, H. Bland ; pantomime and general business—Messrs. Payne, Honner, Ridgway, Morelli, and J. Ridgway. Ladies: Mrs. Nisbett, Madame Vestris, Mrs. Glover, Mrs. Lacy, Mrs. Bland, Mrs. Brougham, Miss Cooper, Miss Lea, Mrs. S. C. Jones, Mrs. Selby, Mrs. West. Columbine : Miss Fairbrother, two Misses Kendalls, and large *corps de ballet*. Operas: Miss A. Kemble and Messrs. W. Harrison, Binge, and Horn-castle, tenors ; Mr. Stretton, baritone ; Messrs. Borroni and Leffler, bass ; and a fine chorus.

This, of course, takes none of the enormous working staff into consideration at all.*

On the whole, then, it is hardly surprising to read that, in spite of Adelaide and Charles Kemble, who were getting £20 a night, the other members of the company were only getting half-salaries at the latter portion of the season.

There is little doubt that had Mathews been assisted in his financial matters by an able man of business he would have “pulled through” his troubles safely, and the course of Covent Garden’s history might have been substantially different. Such, however, was not his good fortune, and the more astute among his associates speedily took advantage of his easy-going habits

* See Appendix.

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where money was concerned. It has been our painful duty, as a faithful chronicler of things that were, to record several actions of the bland and gracious Mr. Charles Kemble that can hardly redound to his credit. Among them there is nothing meaner than the action of himself and his co-proprietors in stepping in at the end of the Vestris-Mathews third season, and coolly appropriating to themselves the entire property and wardrobe of the unlucky lessees, on the ground of the arrears of rent, amounting, as they alleged, to £14,000. Mathews was probably too light-hearted and good-natured a man to bear malice for long, but he complains bitterly of the treatment to which he was subjected.

“ Little did that amiable lady [Miss Adelaide Kemble] imagine that her triumph would be my ruin, but so it turned out. The proprietors of Covent Garden, who had previously been content to be, as it were, sharers in our speculation by making the rent easy to us, now saw that they could do without us. The theatre was well stocked, and in perfect order. Miss ‘Kemble’s father was one of the proprietors, and under his management, with the brilliant attraction of his talented daughter, they could get on very well without us. The blow was soon announced. The theatre was taken out of our hands, after three years of outlay and labour to establish it, in order that others might reap the expected

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harvest; our property was all confiscated to meet the alleged arrears of £14,000, the scenery, wardrobe, and properties we had brought from the Olympic included—and we found ourselves adrift with nothing left but a piece of plate (presented by the company) and the debts of the concern.”

According to Planché, the actual outstanding arrears of rent amounted to £600 in a rental of as many thousands.

Thus ended what the entire company of the theatre found the most capable, competent, and admirable period of management they had ever known. A note by Mr. J. R. Anderson, in C. J. Mathews' "Life," says—

“Madame was an admirable manager, and Charles an amiable assistant. The arrangements behind the scenes were perfect, the dressing-rooms good, the attendants well-chosen, the ‘wings’ kept clear of all intruders—no strangers, or crutch and toothpick loafers allowed behind to flirt with the ballet-girls, only a very few private friends were allowed the privilege of visiting the green-room, which was as handsomely furnished as any nobleman's drawing-room, and those friends appeared always in evening dress. Dear old Charles Young (the tragedian), Planché, Sheridan Knowles, Leigh Hunt, Edwin Landseer and his brother, and a few intimate friends of Charles Mathews, were about all I ever saw

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there. There was great propriety and decorum observed in every part of the establishment, great harmony, general content prevailed in every department of the theatre, and universal regret was felt when the admirable managers were compelled to resign their government."

Vandenhoff also bears testimony to the fact that—

"to Vestris's honour, she was not only scrupulously careful not to offend propriety by word or action, but she knew very well how to repress any attempt at *double-entendre*, or doubtful insinuation, in others. The green-room in Covent Garden was a most agreeable lounging place, . . . from which was banished every word or allusion that would not be tolerated in a drawing-room. . . . It must be understood that in Covent Garden and Drury Lane Theatres there were a first and second green-room; the first, exclusively set apart for the *corps dramatique* proper—the actors and actresses of a certain position; the second, belonging to the *corps de ballet*, the pantomimists, and all engaged in that line of business (who are called the 'little people'), except the principal male and female dancers (at that time Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert), who had the privilege of the first green-room."

The term "green-room" arose originally from the fact of its being carpeted in green (baize probably), and the covering of the divans a

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similar colour. The first green-room was a withdrawing-room, carpeted and papered elegantly, with a handsome chandelier in the centre, several globe lights at the sides, a comfortable divan, covered in figured damask, running round the whole room, large pier and mantel-glasses on the walls, and a full-length, movable swing-glass, so that, on entering, an actor could see himself from head to foot at one view.

Mr. Vandenhoff goes on to describe at length the system by which the various characters were summoned by the prompter, who instructed the call-boy, who, unless the character was enacted by a "star," proceeded to the green-room to make the call. Only "stars" were allowed to be called in their dressing-rooms, and at Covent Garden the calls were made by the name of the actor or actresses, and not by the name of the character they represented. He further joins in the encomiums bestowed upon Vestris and Mathews as ideal managers—

"the courtesy of their behaviour to the actors, and consideration for their comforts, formed an example well worthy to be followed by managers in general. . . . On special occasions—the opening night of the season, or a 'Queen's Visit'—tea and coffee were served in the green-room; in fact, the reign of Vestris and her husband might be described as the drawing-room management."

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The following is the list of plays produced during the third season—

<i>Comedies.</i>			
	No. of times		No. of times
London Assurance ...	7	School for Scandal ...	4
Rivals	6	Court and City	15
Merry Wives	6	Wives as they Were ...	7
She Would and She Would Not	8	Irish Heiress	2
What Will the World Say?	18	Bubbles of the Day (by D. Jerrold)	15
Old Maids	16	Midsummer Night's Dream	11
<i>Operas.</i>			
Beggar's Opera	2	Elena Uberti	15
Fra Diavolo	7	Marriage of Figaro	10
Norma	42	Sonnambula	3
<i>Musical After-pieces.</i>			
Beauty and the Beast ...	6	White Cat	18
Poor Soldier	6	Charles XII.	10
Comus	18		
<i>Farces.</i>			
Patter v. Clatter	7	Irish Tutor	2
Brother Ben	8	Omnibus	6
Caught Napping	1	Free and Easy	12
Animal Magnetism	5	United Service	7
Critic	10	Simpson & Co.	1
Popping the Question ...	7	Ringdoves	2
Wrong Man	10	My Wife's Mother	1
<i>Pantomimes, Ballets, etc.</i>			
Hans of Iceland	22	Guy Earl of Warwick ...	48
Wooden Leg	15	(to Saturday, April 16, last night of season.)	

Alfred Bunn, in the preface to his entertaining account of "The Stage," writes with much good humour of the "luck" enjoyed by Madam Vestris in her management at Covent Garden. She began



MADAME VESTRIS.

From a Contemporary Lithograph.

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well by opening early in September, and by obtaining special leave of the Lord Chamberlain to perform on certain evenings in Lent, by which she was able to close so much earlier, and thereby to escape the fearful odds against a patent manager as the London season approaches its height. Then, according to Mr. Bunn, Charles Kemble, when he appeared for the six nights in March, 1840, "on each of which he filled most of the crevices in Covent Garden Theatre," would not accept one farthing for his six performances, although his reappearances must have contributed at least £1500 to the treasury of the theatre, which, without that aid, it never would have seen, and as that contribution arrived at so ticklish a period of the season as Lent, it must have been doubly acceptable. . . . Bunn adds that Madam Vestris received £10,000 more than was taken in the best of Mr. Macready's two seasons, but that, notwithstanding such great receipts, she lost considerably, as she confessed in her parting address, and if, with her acknowledged attainments, admirable tact and taste, her labours, popularity, and the all-powerful charm of her sex, she was not able to put money in her house, Mr. Bunn naturally concludes that nobody would be able to do so.

Evidently Bishop had resigned his position of musical director to Mathews and Madam Vestris

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after their second season, for, according to the writer of the memoir of Madam Vestris in "Grove's Dictionary," the director of the music during the last year of her tenure was Julius Benedict, who appears to have owed his appointment there to a letter of recommendation, dated July 23, 1841, from Adelaide Kemble* to Mathews. Benedict was at this time about thirty-five years of age, and had been more or less intimately associated with all the greatest musicians of the day, from Beethoven himself, whom he only saw once, to Weber, whose favourite pupil he was. We shall come across him several times in the later days of Covent Garden, when his *Lily of Killarney* had established his reputation as one of the most popular composers and conductors of his day.

It is not inappropriate here to notice an event which was indirectly to exercise a considerable influence upon the future of Covent Garden Theatre. This was the premature death from heart disease, in the summer of 1841, of the unfortunate M. Laporte, who had sought repose in his French country house from the incessant worry and anxieties consequent on his position as manager of His Majesty's Theatre. There was already in active operation at this establishment the internal cabal against the directorate which

* See vol. ii. p. 104, "Life of Charles J. Mathews."

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brought about the famous Tamburini row, and was doubtless indirectly responsible for the early death of the honourable and gifted artiste who held the unenviable position of manager. The gentleman who was to succeed him was one of a very different temperament. Educated as a lawyer, and accustomed to the intricacies of finance, Benjamin Lumley (a gentleman of Jewish extraction, whose real name was Levi), had, since Laporte's second period of management in 1836, been his right-hand man, and found it a comparatively short step to take to the place of commander from his position as first lieutenant. This position he assumed in 1842, about the time (*i.e.* in May) that Charles Kemble and his co-proprietors again attempted the control of their unfortunate property. The terms on which he had done so are not specifically referred to in Mrs. Butler's memoirs. Doubtless the phenomenal success of his daughter Adelaide was, as Charles Mathews asserts, the main attraction in his eyes. Later on she writes—

“My father is looking wonderfully well, and appears to be enjoying his mode of life extremely. He spends his days at Covent Garden, and finds, even now—when the German company are carrying on their operations there—enough to do to keep him interested and incessantly busy within those charmed and charming precincts.”

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Chorley thus refers to the German company's season—

“This year [1842] there was . . . a German company headed by the best brilliant German singer I have ever heard. . . . This was Made-moiselle Jenny Lutzer. It would not be easy to accomplish more, or to execute what was undertaken more perfectly than she did. Her voice, too, had a clear ringing tone, which lent itself well to the style chosen by her. The company of which she formed one—together with M^{me}. Stöckl Heinefette and Herr Staudigl—attempted M. Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* in German (on April 20, 1842). But the day of that magnificent opera had not yet come for England; and indeed, when given with German text, it loses effect to a degree which is hardly explicable. Then the utmost care and luxury must be expended on its production, or the work becomes dull and tiring and its effect chill. This a company of strangers, who were only here for a few weeks, and in a theatre of insufficient resources, could not afford, and *Les Huguenots*, accordingly, was overlooked and judged, and people who had not seen the opera in Paris, found it in no respect remarkable, nor worthy of its reputation.”

The season dragged its weary length on from Saturday, September 10, when Kemble recommenced his ill-starred enterprise with *Norma*, in which his two daughters scored a great success,

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and an after-piece by Douglas Jerrold, entitled *Gertrude's Cherries*, until Tuesday, November 1, which appears to have been the last opera night under his management, when Adelaide Kemble sang with Miss Rainforth and Mrs. Shaw, a new contralto, in *Il Matrimonio Segreto*.

Alas, not all the acknowledged talent and charm of Adelaide Kemble's singing could bring enough grist to keep the mill working! By November, 1842, her sister writes to Lady Dacre—

“You may perhaps see in the papers a statement of the disastrous winding up of the season at Covent Garden, or rather, its still more disastrous abrupt termination. After our all protesting and remonstrating with all our might against my father again being involved in that Heaven-forsaken concern, and receiving the most solemn and positive assurances from those who advised him into it for the sake of having his name at the head of it, that no responsibility or liability whatever should rest upon or be incurred by him, and that if the thing did not turn out prosperously, it should be put an end to, and the theatre immediately closed, they have gone on, in spite of night after night of receipts below the expenses, and now are obliged suddenly to shut up shop, my poor father being, as it turns out, personally involved for a considerable sum.”

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Later she writes, "My sister . . . is to go on with her performances till Christmas, when the whole concern passes into the hands of Mr. Bunn,* who, perhaps, is qualified to manage it."

On Wednesday, November 9, a magnificent production of *The Tempest* took place, with Vandenhoff as Prospero, and Miss Rainforth as Ariel, Miss Horton, with whom the part had been particularly associated, having followed Macready to Drury Lane. Great things were hoped for from this, as a spectacle which should draw all London; but unhappily these hopes were not destined to fulfilment, for on Saturday, November 26, the following paragraph appeared in *The Globe* newspaper—

"Mr. Bunn is to be the new manager of Covent Garden from Christmas next. The performers are making arrangements to keep the theatre open on their own account till that time. The change, which was only decided on Thursday last (24th inst.), was on the part of the proprietors consenting to take £20 a night instead of £35 until the new management."

The only production of which I can find a record worthy of note was a revival of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, on Monday, December 12. On December 26 a sort of "stop-gap"

* This is a plan which evidently came to nought, and to which no further references are made in the letters of Fanny Kemble.

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pantomime was brought out by the “writers in *Punch*,” upon the not very promising subject of Magna Charta, but the references to it in the Press were of a very half-hearted character.

Fanny Kemble writes—

“I think I should like to act with my sister during this month in order to secure their salaries to the actors, to make up the deficit which now lies at the door of my father’s management, to put a good benefit into his poor pocket, and to give a rather more cheerful ending to my sister’s theatrical career.”*

January 5, 1843, she adds—

“The houses at Covent Garden are quite full on my sister’s nights, but deplorably empty on the others, I believe. I speak from hearsay, for I have not been into the theatre since the terrible business of the break-up there, and do not think I shall ever see her last performances, for I have no means of doing so. I can no longer ask for private boxes, as during my father’s management, of course, nor, indeed, would it be right for me to do so on her nights, because they all let very well; and as for paying for one or even a seat in the public ones, I have not a single farthing in the world to apply to such a purpose.”

January 3 was her [Adelaide Kemble’s]

* Adelaide Kemble must probably have become engaged by this time to Mr. Sartoris, whom she married a few months later.

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benefit; she had a very fine house, and sang "Norma," and the great scene from *Der Freischütz* and "Auld Robin Gray."

During 1843 there were two attempts made to "run" Covent Garden Theatre: the first by Henry Wallack, who rented the theatre for a short and disastrous season lasting from October 2 to October 31, 1843; and the second by Bunn, who, says Planché, "made a brief and desperate struggle against adverse fortune, after which the theatre ceased to be a temple of the national drama."

Another train of associations for the historic spot was started in September, 1843, with the engagement of Covent Garden Theatre for meetings by the Anti-Corn Law League for fifty nights at £60 a night. The first of these great meetings was held on September 28, when speeches were delivered by Richard Cobden, by John Bright, by W. J. Fox, and by Daniel O'Connell. There is little doubt that to this remarkable series of meetings was largely due the extraordinary wave of popular excitement upon which such matchless orators poured their floods of eloquence, and which led the people of Great Britain to take the irrevocable step that many of their children are now so bitterly regretting. This is in no sense a political work, but a curious commentary upon the enthusiastic

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prophecies of the leaders is found as we read the report of their speeches in Covent Garden Theatre. Mr. W. J. Fox, afterwards M.P. for Oldham, eloquently pictured the great theatre filled to the roof with the unhappy thousands of poor persons, starving and wretched, whose misery was directly brought about, according to the speaker, by the Corn Duties. "Suppose this to be done," he said, "we should be told that there has always been poverty in the world, that there are numerous ills which laws can neither make nor cure, that whatever is done, distress will still exist." He then proceeds to scout such excuse for inaction. "Strike off every fetter upon industry, give labour its full rights," etc., etc., the natural inference being that only by these devices would poverty be at all events alleviated, if not dispersed, and the way paved for the Millennium. What, I wonder, would the enthusiastic Mr. Fox say, could he now revisit "the glimpses of the moon," and find the poor are still with us, only in tenfold the numbers that they were then. That misery and starvation still stalk the streets of London, and that to the residuum of poverty that then and always existed, must now be added the millions of workers whose trades have vanished, beaten on their own ground by cheap German and American products, and whose miserable

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means do not even suffice to provide the wherewithal to purchase the cheap loaf that it was hoped would be within the reach of the poorest in the land when the Corn Laws were repealed.

There is another reference of a political nature to Covent Garden Theatre, in the reminiscences of John Coleman.*

“ 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. . . . 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. . . . 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

* Vol. i. p. 101.

† This was in September, 1844.

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‘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.”

It is sad to recollect that even then, at the apparent height of his triumph, he was in reality a spent force, for only two years later the great statesman and Liberator died on his way to Rome, a broken-hearted and disappointed man.

On January 2, 1845, a single performance of great interest took place at Covent Garden, of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, rendered into English by W. Bartholomew from the German version, which had been set to music by Mendelssohn. The following cast was chosen, and the music was under the direction of George Macfarren: Creon, King of Thebes, Mr. Vandenhoff; Hæmon, son of Creon, Mr. James Vining; Tiresias, a blind soothsayer, Mr. Archer; Phocion, a sentinel, Mr. Hield; Cleon, a messenger, Mr. Rae; chorus-speaker, Mr. Rogers; Eurydice, Creon’s queen, Mrs. W. Watson; Antigone and Irmene, daughters of Ædipus, Miss Vandenhoff and Mrs. J. Cooke.

Mendelssohn, writing to a friend in the previous November, says—

“ I am very glad to hear that the *Antigone* is

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to be performed at Covent Garden, although the mere sound of *Antigone* at Covent Garden has something startling in itself. It is utterly impossible for me to come over, although I sincerely and truly wish I could come! But the music is safe in Macfarren's hands. Pray have very good solo voices to sing the quartet, and a very powerful chorus; and let them sing the choral recitatives with great energy, and *not in time*, but quite as a common recitative, following each other, and thus keeping together. It sounds as if impossible, but is very easy thus."

It is to be feared that the result of the experiment was not a very brilliant success. The *Globe* critic, while speaking well of Mr. and Miss Vandenhoff, says he was—

"disappointed at the operatic parts of the play. The materials of a chorus of sixty male voices require time and labour to mature, and are not to be gathered at a moment's warning from the 'Cider-cellars' and the 'Coal-hole.' . . . There is a lack of solemnity, an absence of thrilling pauses, and an occasional outbreak of jovial, rollicking measures in sad discordance with the woebegone tale of Thebes. Half these learned Thebans of the chorus might be dispensed with, the remainder drilled into something like precision of voice, and especially of gesticulation, the latter being of the most extraordinary redundancy."

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It is interesting to record that the single scene was painted by John, the brother of George Macfarren, the musical director.

An excellent caricature of the performance appeared in *Punch* of January 18, 1845, to which Mendelssohn refers as follows. Writing to his sister Fanny at Rome, March 25, 1845, he says—

“See if you cannot find *Punch* for January 18. It contains an account of *Antigone* at Covent Garden, with illustrations, especially a view of the chorus, which has made me laugh for three days.

“The chorus-master, with his plaid trousers showing underneath, is a masterpiece, and so is the whole thing, and most amusing. I hear wonderful things of the performance. . . . Only fancy that during the Bacchus chorus there is a regular ballet with all the ballet girls!”

We have already referred to the Anti-Corn Law agitation, and do not wish to mention it again, except to record the holding of a great bazaar, commencing on May 8, at Covent Garden Theatre, and lasting for three weeks, the object, of course, being to raise money for the Anti-Corn Law League. So well did it fulfil its purpose that, in the three weeks during which it was open, no less than 125,000 people paid for admission, and a sum of £25,000 was realized for the coffers of the league.

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The last Covent Garden meeting appears to have been held in June, 1845, and three years and a half later the appeals were successful, and the agitation at an end.

Among the desperate attempts to set up Covent Garden Theatre as a prosperous concern by men lacking either in brains or in capital, none is more melancholy than that of Mr. Laurent, who took a short lease of the theatre for twenty-four nights, from Tuesday, February 4, 1845. He opened with *Henry IV.*, and a cast which included Mr. and Miss Vandenhoff and "Mr. Betty," presumably the "infant Roscius" of forty years before, or his son, as Hotspur. The opening night was, it is said, well attended, but it can have been only a flash in the pan.

On Wednesday, February 26, a paragraph appeared in *The Globe* newspaper as follows, under the heading of Covent Garden—

"A meeting of the actors of this establishment was held, to consider the following propositions of Mr. Laurent, upon the adoption of which depended the opening of the house: that all connected with the theatre should relinquish all claim to salary for the four nights they had rendered their services last week, when the season was so abruptly brought to a close; they were also to agree to play during a new season, sharing each night the receipts, after expenses were paid,

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as well as full salary of Mr. Vandenhoff, viz. £10, which included Miss Vandenhoff. The majority agreed, but one dissentient did not think the remainder of the company should be sacrificed to secure two gentlemen—Mr. Laurent and Mr. Vandenhoff.”

Evidently the proposed reopening proved quite abortive, for I can find no further trace of the theatre being open for performance that season; and during the greater part of 1846 the theatre was closed for the extensive structural alteration necessitated by its conversion into an opera house.*

A few lines may be devoted to the mention of William Grieve, whose death occurred during 1844, and who had, with his brother, been connected as scene-painter for Covent Garden Theatre for many years. It is said that he was accorded the distinction unique for a scene-painter of being called before the curtain during a performance of *Robert le Diable* in 1832.

* See Appendix for description.

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CHAPTER XVIII

1847-1856

WITH the opening of Covent Garden Theatre in the year 1847 as an opera house, a new period in its history commences. We have already (see pp. 163-4) briefly traced the causes that led to this epoch-making occurrence, but they may again be glanced at here. During the latter end of Laporte's management of His Majesty's Theatre his state of health had brought about a certain relaxing of his grip upon the reins of his troublesome team. Grumbings and murmurings became loud and incessant; discontent, jealousy of each other, determination to act only when the artist pleased and not when the manager ordered, became frequent, until, as we know, the harassed manager's death put a temporary end to the rebellion. It was, however, renewed, though in perhaps a less acute form, under the new manager Lumley, and a sort of coalition, or cabal, was formed to force him to his knees in certain matters. This coalition, after several seasons' fighting, he defeated decisively, and the leading spirit, Signor Costa, the musical director

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under Lumley, together with certain eminent artists, seceded from the theatre and determined to start an opposition season of their own, backed by the eminent music publishers, Cramer, Beale, and Co. This famous firm had been brought into the speculation in a roundabout fashion. Persiani was apparently the originator of the whole scheme. He owed Lumley a grudge, it is said, for refusing an opera of his composition. Together with a partner named Galletti and a letter of credit upon Rothschild's for £35,000, he took Covent Garden Theatre upon lease, and, having done so, discovered, like Fitzball, that he and his partner were unequal to the task of managing the undertaking. Through the intermediary services of a mutual friend, Manfredo Maggioni, they were introduced to Cramer, Beale, and Co., and Frederick Beale was accordingly appointed manager and director at a large salary and free of all pecuniary liability—a highly desirable stipulation. Mr. Beale thereupon assumed management, on the understanding that Signor Persiani should bank £5000, and keep that sum standing to the credit of the undertaking. On Costa's recommendation, Signor B. Albano was engaged as architect, and the Messrs. Holland as builders.* The latter estimated the

* For a full description of alterations the reader is referred to the Appendix.

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cost of the alterations at £8000, for which, somewhat rashly, Frederick Beale made himself personally responsible. Like all estimates, these proved fallacious, and Mr. Beale eventually found himself liable for £22,000, to which huge sum the expense of rebuilding reached.

The redoubtable Signor Costa was followed into his new quarters by some singers whom Lumley could ill afford to be without. They included Mario, by far the most popular baritone of the day; Grisi, one of the greatest dramatic sopranos, perhaps, of any time—certainly of her own; Tamburini, on account of whose absence a riot had taken place at Her Majesty's; and the Persianis, of whom the husband "was till then known as an unsuccessful composer,"* his wife being also a celebrated *prima donna*. According to Lumley's account, the artistes sang at lower rates of salary to assist the common cause.

Nor was the secession confined to the stage. According to Grove, "nearly the whole"—and even Mr. Lumley himself admits "many members"—of the orchestra "followed their leader," Signor Costa, in his new enterprise, among them being the famous violinist, M. Prosper Sainton, who was principal violin.

Covent Garden was now fighting a sort of triangular operatic duel with both Drury Lane,

* Lumley's "Reminiscences of the Opera," p. 157.



FREDERICK BEALE.

From "The Light of Other Days," by permission of Messrs. Macmillan.

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under Mr. Bunn, and His Majesty's. The last opponent had the advantage of an energetic and powerful director in Lumley, who, in spite of the serious losses he had suffered in his company, yet managed to open his season on February 16 with a fine list of artistes, including the name of one who was destined to more than compensate him for the secession of his jealous and troublesome Italians, who, whatever their virtues as artistes, must have constantly threatened his continued sanity as *employés*. Over the possession of this lady, the renowned Jenny Lind, a struggle was now to take place, into the details of which we have unfortunately not the space to enter in these pages. Briefly, they are as follows: The Swedish Nightingale had in 1845 somewhat imprudently entered into negotiations with Mr. Bunn, and signed a contract to appear at Drury Lane Theatre. This she afterwards desired to cancel—a wish that Bunn, not unnaturally, did not see his way to meet, particularly when he found that her reluctance to act for him was partly due to her wish to act for Mr. Lumley.

Eventually he transferred his rights in her contract to Lumley's opponents at Covent Garden, and the contest for the honour and profit of "presenting" her became still more acute. Lumley offered to bear the cost of any legal action that might be taken; but Jenny Lind

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still hesitated, protesting that she could not start for England until the dreaded contract was cancelled and herself absolved from all penalties. The situation appeared to be a deadlock. Meanwhile affairs at Covent Garden moved with smoothness. An attempt was made to invoke the authority of the Crown, by virtue of the restrictions placed on the patent theatres, to restrain the performance of opera at Covent Garden. The attempt failed.

“The age was one when it was the policy of Government to discountenance monopolies of every kind. The objection was overruled. Covent Garden opened four days before Her Majesty’s, and to all appearance successfully, for, in addition to the powerful prestige of *la vieille garde*,* the *début* of Mademoiselle Alboni was triumphant.” †

Tuesday, April 6, was advertised for the opening performance, to consist of *Semiramide* and the ballet by Albert, entitled *L’Odalisque*, in which Mesdemoiselles Fleury from Paris, and Bertin from Vienna, and other distinguished dancers would perform. Another well-known name, that of Mr. Vincent Novello, now first appears in our annals. He was engaged by Beale as organist. The scenery was by Grieve

* Consisting of Grisi, Mario, Tamburini, and Persiani.

† Lumley, p. 180.

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and Telbin, and the subscriptions amounted to little short of £25,000. All appeared *couleur de rose*, not the least auspicious part of the scheme being its new title of the "Royal Italian Opera," which emanated from the fertile brain of the new director.

But at length the fateful day of Lumley's triumph came, and with it the collapse of the "bluff" of the Covent Garden management. Jenny Lind was persuaded to come, she sang at Her Majesty's Theatre on the evening of May 4, 1847, and from that moment all opposition and rivalry were extinguished, and England lay at her feet.

Perhaps it is hardly correct to speak of the Bunn contract as a bluff, since Bunn did bring an action for breach of contract, and actually recovered £2500 damages.

But we must return to the doings of the "opposition," which constitute the subject of our history. As Lumley admits, a trump-card had also been secured by the Covent Garden management in the newsinger, Marietta Alboni, described in "Grove's Dictionary" as "the most celebrated contralto of the nineteenth century," and at this time only twenty-three years of age, and in the first flush of her youthful beauty. As so many of the greatest artists in the world have been, she was a native of Romagna, and had been trained

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at Bologna, where she was so fortunate as to meet with Rossini and became, so it is said, his only pupil. Her first appearance was made at La Scala in 1843, and between that time and 1847 she sang in Vienna, St. Petersburg, and many other great European cities.

She made her Covent Garden *début* in Rossini's *Semiramide*, and sang afterwards in *Lucrezia Borgia*. The day after her *début* Persiani spontaneously raised her salary for the season from £500 to £2000, and her reputation was established.

Great as was her success, however, as we shall see, it was not sufficient to avert the loss suffered by the new impresario in his first season, and for which the Jenny Lind fever at Her Majesty's was no doubt accountable.

Mr. Willert Beale, in his highly interesting account of his own and his father's connection with the theatre,* makes the startling statement that no less than three different incendiary attempts had been made to set the theatre on fire during the alterations, all of which were fortunately extinguished in time, and the origin of which was never discovered.

In spite, however, of the apparently splendid start and the immense reception of Alboni, things behind the scenes were far from prosperous.

* "The Light of Other Days," p. 46.

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“Persiani had taken fright. He renewed the stipulated sum of £5000 twice, and then made excuses to delay further payment, being alarmed at the cost of rebuilding, the terrific expenses he had undertaken to pay, . . . and the current expenses. The letter of credit upon Rothschild’s vanished. Galletti turned out to be ‘a man of straw.’ Hollands were only paid two or three thousand pounds, and after giving bills for £12,000 more, Persiani fled!”

Needless to say, affairs at the theatre were in a terrible state of confusion. The enormous staff, the artists, the hundred and one creditors of all sorts were pressing for their money, and Beale, junior, was despatched after the fugitive to try and bring him to reason. After a long chase through France and Italy and back again, he was found in Paris, and Mr. Frederick Beale came over to conduct the negotiations, which ended by Persiani’s return and a temporary smoothing over of the trouble.

When the season ended the receipts were found to amount, roughly, to £55,000, and the expenses to £79,000. To balance the deficit of £24,000 there were £8000 of Persiani’s bills and properties in the theatre valued, also roughly, at another £8000. Mr. Frederick Beale thereupon came forward and offered to take the responsibility of the remaining £8000, provided that

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Persiani would surrender the lease and guarantee to meet the bills. This was done, Persiani retired, and Mr. Frederick Beale became the lessee and manager of the theatre.

Among the curious incidents related by Beale of the time of storm and stress through which they had passed, is one when, owing to non-receipt of salaries, a certain *prima donna* refused to sing, and another opera, *Il Barbiere*, was substituted for that advertised. The hasty notice sent to the artists failed to reach the principal one, Ronconi, and the unfortunate Mr. Beale set off in a cab to find Tamburini, with whom there had already been some trouble respecting the giving of this very *rôle* to Ronconi. Tamburini most good-naturedly consented to appear, and came back with Beale. In the meanwhile, unknown to any one, Ronconi also turned up with his wife, went to his dressing-room and attired himself for the part. Imagine the horror of the manager at seeing two Barbers present themselves in his room! Ronconi stood by his contract, and again Tamburini had to be apologized to, and eventually retired without appearing.

Frederick Beale had among his acquaintances at this time a certain Mr. Frederick Delafield,* a wealthy brewer by trade, and an enthusiastic

* A member of the well-known firm of Combe, Delafield, and Co.

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musical amateur by taste, who with Mr. A. Webster, a friend of his own, lived at Willow Bank, Fulham. Delafield used to frequent the shop of Cramer and Co. daily, and watch the progress of the subscription list, then under the management of William Chappell, with immense interest. He was thoroughly conversant with the prospects of the concern, and believing it would prove a profitable undertaking, proposed to Beale that he should become a partner in it. Beale agreed, and he became a joint director. This arrangement did not work well owing to the interference of Webster, Delafield's friend, in the management, which Beale naturally resented. This again led to a further rearrangement, by which Beale assigned Delafield his entire interest in the lease and management for £8000, the sum he himself had paid for them. For this Delafield received Persiani's bills for £8000, scenery and properties estimated at another £8000, undertaking to pay a similar sum of £8000, the remainder of the deficit, as premium for the lease which was transferred to him.

During the seasons of 1848-9, therefore, the director of the Royal Italian Opera was Mr. Frederick Delafield, who called to his aid Mr. Gye, at that time occupied in assisting Mons. Jullien to run English opera at Drury Lane.

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The new director advertised the following seventeen operas, mounted in 1847, as forming a guarantee for the season 1848 :—

Semiramide, L'Italiana in Algieri, Il Barbiere, La Gazza Ladra, La Donna del Lago, of Rossini; *Lucia, Elisir d'Amore, Lucrezia Borgia, Anna Bolena, Maria di Rohan*, of Donizetti; *Ernani* and *Due Foscari*, of Verdi; *Norma, Sonnambula,* Puritani*, of Bellini; and *Don Giovanni* and *Nozze di Figaro*, of Mozart.

In addition to these the lessee announced that an adaptation of Meyerbeer's grand opera of *Les Huguenots*, and a new opera by Auber, entitled *Haydée*, had been expressly prepared for the first appearance in England of Madame Pauline Viardot-Garcia, fresh from her unparalleled Continental triumphs. Other artists announced to appear were Alboni and Persiani in Rossini's opera-serio of *Tancredi*, which was billed to open the season; Grisi in *La Favorita*, with Mario, Ronconi, and Marini as the other principals; and Madame Castellan in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, on the mounting of which a great deal of money was expended. The orchestra consisted of sixteen first violins led by Sainton, fifteen seconds led by Ella, ten tenors led by Hill, ten 'cellos led by Lindley, ten double

* At a performance of *Sonnambula*, 'on May 22, 1849, Sims Reeves made his first appearance at Covent Garden.

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basses led by Anfossi, two harps, two flutes, two oboes (Messrs. Barret and Nicholson), two clarionets (Messrs. Lazarus and Boosé), two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, one ophicleide, drums (Mr. Chipp), triangle, and Mr. Horton, bass drum. The military band was under the direction of Mr. Godfrey, bandmaster of the Coldstream Guards. The chorus numbered forty ladies and fifty-four male voices. The ballet included the promise of no less than ten *débutantes*, including Lucile Grahn. It will thus be seen that to the bold venture of Mr. Delafield might be applied the words of Hamlet, that if they could not absolutely command success, they would at least deserve it. But a malign fate still pursued the theatre. Costa and Delafield were continually at loggerheads. Delafield complained of Costa's lack of energy, and Costa openly flouted Delafield's orders. In July a financial crisis occurred, and was only averted by Gye's assistance.

According to Planché, Alfred Bunn renewed his connection with Covent Garden Theatre during Delafield's tenancy as acting-manager.

Among the greatest and most interesting novelties occurred the first production of *The Huguenots* in its Italian dress, as *Gli Ugonotti*, which took place on July 20, 1848. Enormous expenses were incurred, and a heavy loss to the

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unlucky Delafield was the unfortunate result. It is stated that to such an extent was his passion carried for realism in detail, that as much as £60 was paid for a single suit of armour in one of his productions. He was, however, sufficiently sanguine to continue his efforts after the loss on *The Huguenots*, and staked a huge sum of money on three more great productions, the first of which, viz. *La Prophete*, first produced July 24, 1849, was new to England, *Lucrezia Borgia*, and *Donna del Lago*, on the last of which he is said to have lost £25,000 alone, the total personal loss incurred in the two seasons being, it was understood, over £60,000.

Such madly ruinous speculation as this could, of course, not continue, and by the end of the 1849 season, Mr. Delafield had come to the end of his tether, and became a bankrupt. The performers then, by the advice, it is said, of Gye, for some time worked under a sort of joint-stock or co-operative arrangement, and continued to give performances. This was not likely to last, and from the occasion came the man in the person of Gye himself, who was begged to remain there as director, under the management of a committee of shareholders, and thus solved the difficulties that appeared likely to bring permanent disaster to the opera house. Mr. Delafield, in the mean time, took up his residence

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at Boulogne-sur-Mer, until the great firm, of which he was a member, had honourably paid every creditor in full the debts incurred in that disastrous speculation.

From the year 1850 onwards, and for many a brilliant season, the other name of Covent Garden was Frederick Gye. Until the voluminous diaries and memoirs left by the famous *impresario* are published, the inner history of The Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, under his rule is not likely to become known. Any errors or *lacunae*, therefore, that may be noticeable in the present writer's account of the succeeding thirty years' history of the theatre, must be set down to unavoidable circumstances. By the courtesy of Mr. Ernest Gye, Frederick Gye's son, and for some years himself the responsible manager of the theatre, the writer has been allowed to peruse the series of prospectuses issued by the management before the commencement of every season. These have been of the greatest possible interest and value, for from them have been gleaned many of the details now, it is believed, for the first time put before the public in a connected form.

The year 1850 is principally noticeable for the production of *La Juive*, Halevy's greatest opera, and one that has, up to quite recent times, maintained a large part of its popularity. Another notable event took place on March 16, when the

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great German basso, Herr Formes, made his English *début* as Caspar in *Der Freischütz*.

The 1851 season, upon which much anxious care and expectation had been spent, in view of the great influx of distinguished foreign critics and visitors that it was known the Great Exhibition would attract, opened on Thursday, April 3, 1851, with Rossini's *Semiramide*, Grisi, Tamberlik, Castellan, and Formes appearing in it. Among other successful novelties given were a revival of *Masaniello*, and of *Fidelio* in Italian, with Castellan in the boy-part of *Fidelio*.

In the prospectus for the following year the directors take credit to themselves for the manner in which the artistic standard of the Royal Italian Opera had been maintained before the critical audiences of 1851. They further announced the re-engagement of the distinguished artistes of the past season, and the acceptances of contracts by others, new to the company at Covent Garden. The soprani included Grisi and Pauline Viardot; and the contralti a new-comer of great distinction, Mademoiselle Seguin; the tenors numbered Mario, Tamberlik, Galvani, and Guiémard, the two latter being new-comers; and the basses, Ronconi, Bartolini, Formes, and Marini.

The great Louise Taglioni, and many other famous *danseuses* brought their charming art to



FREDERICK GYE.

From a Photograph in the possession of Miss Clara Gye.

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the aid of the operas, and the illustrious company was rounded off by Mr. Costa and his already unrivalled orchestra. Spohr's now forgotten opera of *Faust* was promised to be produced under his own direction, and many other great attractions foreshadowed.

The arrangement for the production of Spohr's *Faust* had been made by Gye personally, while on a visit to the composer early in the year. Spohr's autobiography informs us that it was "the urgent wish of the Queen for the performance of the opera on the Italian stage," which brought it about. It necessitated the rewriting of a portion of the opera, but the event entirely rewarded him for his three months' work. On July 15, when the first public performance took place under Spohr's own bâton, the chorus of praise was unanimous, and the delighted composer returned to Germany agreeably impressed with the excellence of the great combination of band, soloists, chorus, and *mise-en-scène* of the Italian opera under Mr. Gye.

But the great operatic sensation of 1852 was the fight between Gye and Lumley, of Her Majesty's, over the possession of Johanna Wagner, whose name was the only one that rivalled that of Jenny Lind in its magnetic hold upon the people of musical Europe. Lumley had, on the strength of an agreement effected through a

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friend of the Wagner family, Dr. Bacher, advertised Fraulein Wagner's name in his prospectus for the year, in the sure and certain hope that her advent would recoup him for several recent disappointments in his perpetual and untiring fight with his dangerous rival Gye. But the latter gentleman, relying on the principle that all was fair in operative as in other warfare, bid a higher price for the services of the great singer, and won, though up to a certain point only, viz. she threw up Her Majesty's and announced her intention of appearing under the rival banner. But this was more than Lumley could stand, and he applied for and was granted an injunction to restrain her from appearing. The case was duly argued, and the injunction confirmed. She was forbidden to appear at Covent Garden, and by some legal juggling it would take too long to explain, at Her Majesty's also! Thus, as Mr. Lumley tells us, "she was forced to return to Germany, the disappointed victim of a grasping avarice 'that o'erleaps itself.'" Lumley brought a further action against Gye, claiming £20,000 damages, which he won on the technical plea, but lost on the claim for damages, on the ground that there was not sufficient evidence of Gye's previous knowledge of the contract existing between Lumley and the Wagners.

So ended the famous quarrel, as in the

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celebrated fable, where the lawyers had the oyster, and the litigants the empty shell.

Of the year 1853 I can find nothing more interesting to record than the mention of a failure, viz. that of Berlioz opera of *Benvenuto Cellini*. It should, however, be remembered that Gye was now, and for the next three years, in the happy position of being without a great operatic rival, for Her Majesty's remained closed until 1856. It is true that Drury Lane, under Mr. E. T. Smith, continued to run seasons of opera with a fair measure of success, but the "Lane" has never possessed the prestige attaching to Her Majesty's as one of the two homes in London of Italian opera.

1854 was a notable year for the patrons of Mr. Gye and the opera house. They had secured the adhesion of the greatest bass singer of his own or any other time—the illustrious Luigi Lablache. He was at this time already well advanced in age, being, in fact, in his sixtieth year; but time had, it is said, made but small inroads upon his voice, as it had, indeed, none at all upon his popularity and his unexampled powers as an actor. Space will not permit of any further reference to this great man and greater artist, but his presence alone would have served, as we noted above, to confer lustre upon the theatre and the season. Lablache had

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compeers worthy of him in Mesdemoiselles Sophie Cruvelli and Bosio, while the company still boasted of the pillars which had hitherto supported its high position, in the names of Mario, Ronconi, Tamberlik, and Costa.

Reference is made in the prospectus to the "approaching retirement" of Madame Grisi, which, however, following the well-established example of many previous artists, both vocal and dramatic, was a "plaguey long time" in coming, and did not in effect take place until seven years later, in 1861; and even then was only a farewell as far as Gye and the Royal Italian Opera were concerned, for five years afterwards she reappeared at Her Majesty's! It is worthy of remark that Gye now was able to boast of three of the original illustrious quartette for whom Donizetti, eleven years before, had composed *Don Pasquale*, an opera which, however, had not yet been mounted at Covent Garden, and was promised by the directors for this season.

We must not omit to mention the death of the "last of the Romans," Charles Kemble, at the good old age of seventy-nine years, and who was thus spared the knowledge of the second disaster which overtook his ill-fated property two years later.

The 1855 season began on April 10, and in the annual prospectus reference is made to



FANNY CERITO.

From the Painting by F. Simoncau, engraved by G. H. Every.

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the great forthcoming event of the production of Meyerbeer's latest and greatest success, *L'Etoile du Nord*. Two other events of the very first class added lustre to the year. These were the production of Verdi's new opera, *Il Trovatore*, on May 17, and the first appearance of the great danseuse, on whom the mantle of Taglioni and Vestris had fallen, viz. Mademoiselle Fanny Cerito. Lablache, Grisi, Mario, Ronconi, and the rest of the wonderful combination were still at the command of Gye, and altogether an exceptionally brilliant season was the result. It must have been almost the last season in which the prodigious powers of Luigi Lablache were heard, for in the succeeding year his health began to fail, and two years later, in 1858, this gifted artist and honourable gentleman died, in his native city of Naples, mourned and regretted by the entire musical community of Europe.

During January Monsieur Jullien, who was intimately associated with Mr. Gye, took Covent Garden for a series of concerts at which many great artists performed. Nor must it be forgotten that the faded glories of Tamburini's voice were once again heard, to the regret of those who remembered the great artist in his prime.

The ill-starred year of 1856 began badly for Covent Garden, at least, from a histrionic

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point of view. For a sum of £2000 the theatre was sub-let in January for six weeks, the remainder of the winter season, to the so-called "Professor" Anderson, or the Wizard of the North, as he preferred to be styled, for the performance of legerdemain and pantomime. This gentleman opened his season with a performance of *Rob Roy*, in which he himself took the title-rôle, with a certain amount of success. Other members of the cast were Messrs. Gourlay, Sam Cowell, Mrs. J. W. Wallack, and Harriet Gordon. This was alternated, during January, with a farce and a pantomime, in the former of which Mr. Leigh Murray played. The advertisements announced that at nine p.m. the entry was half-price to all parts of the house. All this was legitimate enough. Later on, during Anderson's conjuring entertainments, entitled "Magic and Mystery," he attempted to retort upon Charles Mathews, who was then at Drury Lane, for a burlesque upon Anderson's entertainment, which Mathews called *The Great Gun Trick*. It is evident that the whole thing was feeble in the extreme, and unworthy alike of the house in which it was produced, and even of the audience who came to see it, for it met with marked disapprobation from them, and was eventually withdrawn.

On Ash Wednesday a "monster concert"



Yours Respectfully
J. H. Anderson

J. H. ANDERSON, "THE WIZARD OF THE NORTH." DURING WHOSE TENANCY IN 1856 COVENT GARDEN THEATRE WAS THE SECOND TIME DESTROYED BY FIRE.

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was given at Covent Garden, presumably by the enterprising Anderson, among the singers being Madame Caradori, Miss Escott, "the Messrs." Braham, and others. The *Illustrated London News*, commenting on the programme, says it contained between forty and fifty pieces, but nothing of interest to the musical amateur!

On February 4 Douglas Jerrold's nautical drama, *Black-ey'd Susan*, was revived, the part of William being taken by the versatile Mr. Anderson.

On February 17 the death occurred at his residence in London of the veteran tenor, Henry Braham, in his eightieth year, whose name carries us back to the old theatre of Rich, Handel, and Harris, and whose fame dated from 1801, when he appeared there in Mazzinghi and Reeve's opera, *Chains of the Heart*, commencing a career which for thirty years saw him the undisputed head of his profession in England, and universally acclaimed as the greatest oratorio tenor singer the world had ever seen.

Anderson produced the *The Bohemian Girl* on February 18 to a huge audience, which, says a critic who was present, "uproariously applauded everything, good, bad, and indifferent."

In the *Illustrated London News* the following paragraph appeared on March 1:—

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“ Professor Anderson has announced what he calls a ‘ Carnival Benefit,’ to take place on Monday next. The performance will consist of the farce of *The Great Gun Trick*, the opera of *The Sonnambula*, the drama of *Time tries all*, the new squib of *What does he want ?* the melodrama of *Gilderoy*, and the pantomime of *Ye Belle Alliance ; or, Harlequin and the Field of the Cloth of Gold*. This extraordinary combination of entertainments is to commence on Monday forenoon and continue till midnight. The cast will on this occasion consist of the united houses of Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and the Strand Theatre ; and we have no doubt that the stupendous performance will meet with a corresponding success. The carnival is to be concluded on Tuesday night by a grand *bal masqué*.” *

These were the exact words of the last announcement of a performance of any kind at the second of Covent Garden’s magnificent theatres ; and they were also the death-warrant for its execution.

Anderson’s farrago of opera mixed with rubbish was duly performed on Monday, March 3, and the curtain rung down for the last time on the stage where the Kembles and Mrs. Siddons had taken their farewell of a British audience.

* It is said that Gye put a veto on the ball when he first heard of it, and was only induced to consent to its taking place on account of the losses Anderson had sustained by his six weeks’ rental of the theatre.

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On Tuesday night the *bal masqué* took place, and at five minutes before five o'clock on Wednesday morning of March 5, while the last bars of "God Save the Queen" were being played, the great ill-fated building was, alas! again discovered to be on fire. The story of the melancholy catastrophe is, in many of its details, merely a repetition of the first disaster, notably in the hideous rapidity with which the flames devoured the building and its contents. By 5.30 the roof had fallen in, and all hope of saving anything substantial from the wreck had been abandoned. The following vivid and picturesque description of the event is taken from the *Illustrated Times*, a publication which has long been discontinued and forgotten. It is interesting to read, in the "Life of Tom Robertson," the dramatist, that the pseudonym of "The Lounger" was that under which the brilliant author of *Caste* was known when writing for the *Illustrated Times*.

"BRAIDWOOD IN BOW STREET.

"If during the month of May, last year, my cousin Julia, who is always brought up from Yorkshire by her mother, when that venerable but misguided lady comes to town to attend the religious meetings at Exeter Hall, to get her teeth looked to, and to invest in a new 'front' at Truefitt's—if, at that period, I say, my cousin Julia had asked me to give her an idea of that

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dreadfully wicked, worldly place, the Royal Italian Opera, what would have been my reply? Probably I should have discoursed to her about the noble portico, and the convenient entrance, about the splendid flight of stairs, and the handsome columns on either side, about the lofty reception rooms through which one passed, and about the snug, cosy little pit box, into which it was generally my good fortune to be issued. I should have told her of the deep crimson decorations, of the fine chandelier, of the universal blaze of light, of the air of aristocracy that was perceptible. I should have talked of her Majesty, in her box; of noted ladies (dames whose drawing-room costumes are faithfully chronicled in the *Morning Post*) sitting in the grand tier; of the stalls, filled with gentlemen, oiled, curled, white neckclothed, solemn, inane, every third one of whom might have sat for the portrait of one of Mr. Leech's 'swells'; of the pit, closely packed with 'genteel' young men, bald-headed old gentlemen, theatrical critics, in seedy clothes, and dowdy ladies, the old ones in turbans, the young ones in wreaths. I should have mentioned the dingy foreigners, who are all musical, and all on the free list, who stand round the back of the pit, applauding all the best *morceaux* of the opera, beating time with heads and feet, and shrinking from a false note as from a hot iron; the librarians scuttling about from side to side, reckoning up their gains, and bowing obsequiously to such of their patrons as they chance to come across; the 'gentlemen of the press'

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making notes on the fly-leaves of their *libretti*. I should have enlarged on Grisi and Mario, on their powers of acting and singing, on their quarrels and terms; on Costa, and his position, and his row with Lumley, and his musical skill; on Beverley, and his painting; on Harris, and his grouping. But, if the said Julia were now to put to me the afore-mentioned question, my answer would, indeed, be different. I should describe to her four gray semi-blackened walls, enclosing a heap of loose bricks, blistered plaster, and incandescent embers. Along one of these walls still stand a few little pillars, and in every circle and crevice where woodwork still remains, a lambent flame is fitfully struggling against the humid atmosphere with which it is surrounded. There is no box for her Majesty now, no grand tier, no stalls, no pit. The oiled and curled gentlemen do not care particularly about it, for Mitchell and Sams sell stalls for Lumley as well as Gye, and will give an equal amount of tick for one house as the other. Old people generally hope that the Opera will now be taken back to the 'King's Theatre,' its legitimate abode; the newspaper critics are rather sorry on the whole, for Bow Street was convenient to the printing offices; the foreigners have not come over just yet, and when they do, so long as they are on the free list, they won't care; and as for the *artistes* of all descriptions, rumour says Mr. Gye means to keep them together, and provide some refuge for the 'lyric drama,' so that they won't suffer.

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“Furthermore, if Julia, with that ardent thirst for knowledge with which I have found it necessary to imbue her, were to inquire what has caused this vast alteration, I should immediately calm her curiosity by reading to her the following business-like announcement, copied from Mr. Braidwood’s official report:—‘Theatre Royal, Covent Garden—Burnt down, properties and contents partially insured in the Phoenix and other offices. Building—insurance unknown.’

“Yes, Covent Garden Theatre, the Royal Italian Opera, one of the sights of London, the most magnificent theatrical establishment in Europe, the perfecting of which in its recent state ruined one of London’s wealthiest men and hampered many others, is no more—a thing that has been, but that assuredly never will be again. I knew it in the day of its glory. I have seen it in its ruin. Let me record what I know of its final anguish.

“It has been my fortune, good or ill, to attend many *bals masqués*. From the rattling carnival balls of the Grand Opera at Paris, with their Postillions, Débardeurs, Titis, Vivandières, Pierrots, Polichinelles, and wonderful variety of costume and fun, to the ghastly solemnity of a masquerade at Vauxhall, where the ‘romps’ and charity-boys, the knights-in-armour, the devils and dustmen, the melancholy Greeks, the wretched Charles the Seconds, and the paste-board-nosed gents, shriek and fight in the gravelled enclosure—I know them all. But I can safely say that never, during the whole course of my

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experience, did I ever 'assist' at a scene of lower blackguardism than that which occurred at Covent Garden Theatre on the night of Mr. Anderson's *bal masqué*. We do not understand these affairs in England; Jullien, who leads us by the nose better than anybody else, and who has succeeded in introducing us to one advantage with many foreign ideas, has utterly failed in making us comprehend the true spirit of the masquerade. There are many things against it; we are a dull prosaic people; we cannot stand chaff, nor can we return it, substituting generally an oath for a repartee; and, moreover, to don a costume is looked upon as a disgrace. So that Jullien's balls, though attended by the very best of the 'fast' set, all the private boxes and the dress circle being thronged, and all the arrangements of lighting, decoration, order, etc., perfect, when looked upon as sources of amusement, must be considered failures. Judge, then, of the scene presented by Professor Anderson's masquerade, at which there were not twenty persons present in evening dress, the decorations of which would have been discreditable to a barn, the company at which would have disgraced a dancing saloon and only held middle rank at a penny 'gaff,' the whole conduct of which was a disgrace to every one connected with it. Can any of your readers who have seen this magnificent theatre filled with the first personages in the land, unexceptionably dressed, and listening with breathless attention to Grisi's sorrow or Mario's despair, imagine the boxes

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filled with drunken savages; with their feet sticking over the cushions, some of them eating the supper which they had procured from the saloon, *and two-thirds at least of the male portion of the audience with cigars in their mouths?* Less than one-tenth of the assemblage was in fancy costume, shooting coats, pea jackets, and muddy boots being in great force. Instead of the pretty white and gold drapery familiar to the frequenters of M. Jullien's masquerades, the walls were covered with old theatrical 'flats' roughly nailed against them, while the 'flies' and all the upper portions of the theatre were left uncovered. A general air of melancholy pervaded the place; there were no extra lamps to illuminate the boarded pit; and the dingily dressed dancers capered in a forced and solemn manner to the music of a dreary band. From eleven at night until four in the morning was this ghastly attempt at revelry proceeded with; then the numbers began to thin, but even at five o'clock there were still some two hundred persons left. These, however, were so hopelessly used up, that Mr. Anderson instructed the band to play 'God save the Queen' (a hint which is invariably taken even by the most drunken British audience), and it was during the performance of this anthem that two of the firemen, engaged in conversation on the stage, observed a bright light shining through the chinks and crevices of the carpenter's shop, high overhead. They hastened upstairs, and on arriving at the shop the whole danger was apparent. The place was filled with flame and



FIRST ALARM OF FIRE AT CLOSE OF THE BAL MASQUÉ, COVENT GARDEN THEATRE, 1856.

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smoke, heaps of charred and smouldering embers were scattered about; and on their endeavours to open one of the fire-mains connected with a tank on the roof, which would have turned eighteen tons of water into the theatre, the fire overtook the men and drove them back without their effecting their purpose. The jovial crowd on the stage, however, knew nothing of all this; no smell of fire could reach them through the dense clouds of tobacco smoke which hung over their heads, and they roared away at 'Send her victorious,' etc., until the sudden descent of a blazing groove in which the 'wings' stand (not a 'beam,' as erroneously stated) first gave them the idea that something might be wrong. Then came an indescribable scene of confusion and horror. Mr. Anderson roared 'Fire!' the few people left, rushed to the entrances, the gas was turned off, women were trampled on, wreaths of smoke and sheets of flame burst through the roof, and the police alone maintained that wonderful calmness and presence of mind which distinguishes them as a body, took possession of all the doors, prevented all entrance, and facilitated the egress of the frightened crowd. Now came the few feasible attempts at salvage. The proceeds of the night, said to be some £290, which lay in the treasury, were carried off by a Mr. Hingston, who rejoices in the title of 'the Wizard's secretary.' Mr. Anderson, Mr. Ponteau, the treasurer of the theatre, and Mr. E. T. Smith, of Drury Lane, rushed to Mr. Gye's private room and secured certain valuable documents and

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paraphernalia. Some properties and hanky-panky tricks belonging to Mr. Anderson, and fortunately placed in an apartment near the stage-door were saved, as were some furniture and a piano belonging to Mr. Costa. And now the flames had burst through the roof, and columns of fire darting into the air illuminated the surrounding neighbourhood for the distance of three miles, and showed the distant Surrey Hills standing out in bold relief. The glare, visible throughout the entire metropolis, roused the watches at every station throughout of the fire-brigade, and in a very few minutes the galloping of horses and the lumbering noise of the engines were heard at the end of Bow Street. Curiously enough, the first engine on the spot was one of those belonging to Delafield and Company, a partner of which house had ruined himself in the conduct of the opera. The supply of water was excellent, but those acquainted with the interior of theatres, know that every piece of woodwork is so heated with the constant gas as to be almost in the condition of touch-wood, and that all scenes, wings, flats, cordage, canvas, and theatrical property generally, are peculiarly inflammable. The fire then, pent up, furnace-like, within the four huge walls, burnt with incredible velocity until half-past five o'clock. Then, with a tremendous crash, the roof fell in, a volcano of sparks was shot into the air, and the most exciting part was at an end. No lives were lost. A man sleeping in the theatre, heard neither the roar of the populace nor

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the raging of the fire, but was awakened by a difficulty of respiration produced by the smoke, rushed to the window, and was promptly rescued by a ladder. There was also a rumour that a boy and a young woman were missing, but this, happily, turns out to be unfounded. The value of the property destroyed cannot possibly be told. All the fittings and decorations, all the magnificent scenery painted by Grieve and Telbin, all the mountings, dresses, and properties of sixty operas; the dramatic library, which was unique in its kind, the valuable operatic scores, some of which, such as the *Elisir d'Amore* by Donizetti, and the *Oberon* of Weber, can never be replaced; the original MSS. of the *School for Scandal*, the *Miller and his Men*, the score of the opera of *The Slave* and hundreds of other curious works; the armoury, consisting of more than a hundred suits of real, admirably-finished armour, and four original pictures by Hogarth, representing the 'Seasons,' which hung in Mr. Gye's private room, are lost for ever.

“Of the origin of the fire nothing is, nor ever will be, correctly ascertained. Four firemen were on the establishment of the theatre, whose duty it was to visit hourly every part of the building. On Tuesday night they seem to have neglected this duty, and remained on the stage. People talk of a strong gas leakage, and it is reported that the machinist of the theatre had represented this fact to certain of the proprietors, who had ignored his statement. Should not some notice be taken of this ?

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“At the time of this dreadful calamity Mr. Gye was in Paris, where he had arrived at the close of a tour made for the purpose of contracting professional engagements for the forthcoming season. The news was telegraphed to him, and he came over at once, came over to see four blackened walls in Bow Street, and to find himself, I should imagine, an almost ruined man.*

“Since Mr. Delafield’s bankruptcy the affairs have been managed by a committee of shareholders, among whom were Sir William de Bathe, Colonel Brownlow Knox, etc., etc., and Mr. Gye has had the chief direction.

“The late building was the property of various ‘renters,’ who, of course, by its destruction have been severe losers, as it was uninsured, and they could have no possible claim upon any future erection. Among these proprietors were the Kemble family, the family of the late Mr. Harris, Mr. Surman, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Thomas Grieve, the eminent scene painter, etc.

“It is not believed that a theatre will be built on the site; nor is one wanted. The fallacy of so enormous a house for theatrical representation has long been proved. Even if

* From an article by Miss Clara Gye in the *Gentlewoman* (August 20, 1898), we gather that Gye’s personal loss amounted to over £30,000. Miss Gye further adds, “If sympathy could have filled the gap, those who suffered most would have had little to regret, and in my father’s case the kindness shown him on all sides and by all grades can never be forgotten, especially that of more than one of the poorer employés, who came and actually offered him the use of their small savings if the money could help him for the moment.”

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it were not, we have still Drury Lane and the old Opera House. Private residences and shops, or else the monster Model Hotel, will be erected on the area (some say a poultry market, for which the Duke of Bedford, the ground landlord, has a strong predilection), and Covent Garden Theatre, on the stage of which Incedon, Charles Kemble, Mrs. Glover, G. F. Cooke, Miss Stephens, Miss O'Neill, Macready, W. Farren, and Fanny Kemble, made their first appearance, and on the boards of which Edmund Kean made his farewell bow, will be simply a reminiscence and a name.

“ On Thursday, the very day after the conflagration, her Majesty, Prince Albert, and the Princess Royal, visited the ruins. Her Majesty and the Princess Royal arrived about four o'clock, attended by Lady Churchill, the Lady in Waiting, Major-General Buckley, and Captain the Hon. Dudley de Ros, as Equerries. The royal party approached the theatre by way of Hart Street, and alighted in Prince's Place, in which her Majesty's private entrance was situated. There they were received by Mr. Gye, the lessee of the building, who had arrived from Paris in the course of the morning, and conducted to a position which commanded an advantageous view of the ruins. To reach this point, her Majesty and the Princess Royal had to pass through a portion of a lobby connecting the Royal Courtyard with the Piazza entrance to the pit, and strewn over with a mass of charred ruins, through which they had to pick their steps with some

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care. They were conducted through a low doorway in one of the interior walls, to a spot near what had been the position of her Majesty's private box, from which they obtained an excellent view of the ruins, and were able to form an adequate conception of the vast area originally covered by the building, and the melancholy scene of desolation and destruction which it presented. After asking Mr. Gye a few questions, her Majesty, the Princess Royal, and the royal suite left the theatre, and returned to Buckingham Palace.

“Shortly after five o'clock, his Royal Highness Prince Albert, attended by Colonel Phipps, and Captain the Hon. Dudley de Ros, drove up in a private carriage to the royal entrance in Prince's Place, and on alighting were received by Mr. Gye, and conducted to the spot from which the Queen and the Princess Royal had just inspected the ruins. His Royal Highness spent about twenty minutes contemplating the spectacle of devastation, and then retired.

“On the same day on which her Majesty visited the ruins, several members of the nobility and aristocracy were also attracted to the scene of the conflagration. Among these were the Duchess of Wellington, the Duke of Bedford, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Lady Peel, Lord Ward, Lord Colville, Lord Marcus Hill, Lord Elcho, and Mr. Hardinge, M.P.

“Throughout the whole of Thursday barriers were thrown across both ends of Bow Street and Hart Street, which form the only means of access

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to the theatre, so as to divert the whole of the passenger and carriage traffic, the latter of which might endanger the external walls left standing. Shores were erected in the course of the day to support the side of the edifice abutting upon Hart Street, from which danger was apprehended, and policemen were stationed to prevent persons privileged to pass along that thoroughfare from loitering in a place which commanded, though not without risk, the most advantageous view of the ruins.

“Among the earliest of the visitors on Friday, March 7, was his Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge—a constant and liberal supporter of the Royal Italian Opera. His Royal Highness was received by Mr. Gye, and conducted over the wreck of the building to those points of view from which the best observation of the ruins could be obtained. The Duke expressed to Mr. Gye his deep regret at the heavy misfortune that had befallen him; and, when informed of the lessee’s confident intention to carry on the opera in some other metropolitan theatre during the present season, his Royal Highness spoke in the most encouraging manner of the proposed enterprise. After devoting half an hour to an inspection of the ruins, his Royal Highness took his departure.

“At half-past three o’clock his Royal Highness Prince Alfred arrived at the theatre, attended by Colonel Phipps. Mr. Gye had left at this time, and in his absence his Royal Highness was received by Mr. Ponteau, treasurer and secretary

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to the theatre, by whom, attended by Mr. Superintendent Durkin of the F division, the young Prince was conducted over the ruins. Mr. Ponteau pointed out to his Royal Highness the most remarkable results of the conflagration, and, carefully avoiding all points of danger, led the Prince to those spots from whence the best view of the *coup d'œil* could be obtained.

“Prince Alfred had scarcely left when his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales arrived, attended by Mr. Gibbs. Mr. Ponteau acted as *cicerone* to his Royal Highness, accompanied as before by Superintendent Durkin and Inspector Dodd. The Prince desired to be led to the spot from whence her Majesty had viewed the interior of the building on the previous day, a request which was immediately complied with. His Royal Highness expressed the deepest interest in the scene here disclosed; and, selecting a few curious relics from the *débris* of molten glass and other refuse lying around, asked permission to retain them, which was immediately accorded by Mr. Ponteau. The Prince viewed the building from almost every point of view, and before retiring expressed, in a very gracious manner, his sense of the attention which had been shown him.

“The members of the nobility who continued to arrive throughout the day—both ladies and gentlemen—kept the officials constantly occupied, the dangerous state of certain parts of the building rendering it necessary that no persons should be allowed to approach the ruins unattended. As the walls settle, the partially destroyed

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principals and beams give way, and large quantities of bricks and rubbish were continually falling. The Chief Commissioner of Police, Sir Richard Mayne, has several times visited the ruins : and, on Thursday, after consulting the surveyors appointed under the 18 and 19 Vic., cap. 122, it was determined that all such portions of the outer and inner walls as were in an unsafe state should be at once pulled down. Accordingly, application was made to the sitting magistrate at Bow Street, and formal permission having been granted, Messrs. Holland Brothers, of Duke Street, the builders appointed by the Commissioners of Police for shoring up and pulling down ruinous buildings, under the above Act, were directed to commence operations forthwith. On Thursday night, last week, the lofty wall abutting on Hart Street was partially shored up, preparatory to being pulled down, the surveyors having condemned this portion of the building as unsafe. On Friday two hundred men were laid on ; and on Saturday all access to the ruins was stopped, as well for the safety of the public as not to impede the operations of the workmen.

“ The surveyors have condemned almost all the walls, both on the outside and in the interior of the building. They are to be pulled down at first to a level which will render accident almost impossible, and then the ruins will be handed over to the representatives of the proprietors of the theatre.

“ THE LOUNGER.”

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CHAPTER XIX

1856-1870

WE are not concerned here with the fortunes of the company of artistes who were deprived of their proper home by the destruction of Covent Garden Theatre, and we must pass immediately to the history of the great structure which took its place. Thanks to the phenomenal energy and talents of Frederick Gye, the third theatre which arose, phoenix like, from the ashes of the second, was in no wise inferior to its predecessor. On the contrary, it surpassed that great edifice in many points. The half-century which had elapsed since the construction of the old theatre, stood for much in the application of the practical arts of building and decoration. Taste and money were not lacking, and the enterprise and genius of Gye allied to these, produced the grand theatre which is still standing another half-century later, a visible monument of the glories of its two splendid ancestors.

Gloomy as were the doubts expressed for the future of Covent Garden Theatre when it was

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first burnt down in 1808, it yet survived to witness many a stirring scene, and echo many a score of glorious voices. When the second crushing disaster overtook it, the croakers were once more heard muttering their prophecies over the future of the famous site. Again, however, were they destined to prove false prophets, for it arose more stately than ever. Gye's opera house is now half a century old, and in spite of the rumours that are constantly spread abroad in the press * that the end of Covent Garden Theatre is imminent, that the Duke of Bedford wants the site for other purposes, that the opera syndicate are dissatisfied, and that the Lord Chamberlain may advise the Crown to withdraw the patent, yet we may take comfort in the thought that threatened theatres, like men, may live long, that even great ground-landlords are chary of disturbing a historic site, that our Lord Chamberlain's officials are nothing if they are not conservative, and that, lastly, there is still the British public to reckon with. Now the public are sentimental, and might, if they were once roused, raise a veritable hornet's nest of protest about the vandals who would conspire to rob them of the wonderful associations which cling to the site, in spite of the destruction, apparently so radical, that overtook the bricks and mortar of

* See *Daily Mail*, December 3, 1904.

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two theatres out of the three that have occupied it. Happy in the present possession of our historic opera house, therefore, we may with some confidence look forward to many a delightful evening spent in its classic precincts before it becomes the prey of the house-breaker, and a place for memory only to linger over.

During the year 1857,* although work was proceeding busily on the construction of the new theatre, so enormous was the task of the builders that progress appeared to be slow, and 1858 found the place still a mere shell, with hardly a suggestion of the finished and beautiful building that was to be. Right up to the very moment of opening did the apparent chaos continue. But the architect, Mr. E. M. Barry, son of the great genius to whom we owe the gracious and beautiful Houses of Parliament, and Messrs. Lucas Brothers, the contractors, spurred on by the restless and dauntless spirit of the manager, had made up their minds that the date announced, May 15, was to see the performances duly recommence. From a newspaper of that time the following account may be quoted, which gives us a hint of the feverish energy with which these gentlemen worked, and the enormous interest taken in the work by the entire population of London.

* The foundations were laid in October, 1857.

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The account of the opening night is again quoted from the *Illustrated London News* :—

“ The new Covent Garden Theatre did actually open last Saturday night, thereby setting at rest the multitude of doubts, disputes, conjectures, and speculations afloat among all sorts of people, almost down to the last moment. The controversy assumed one form peculiarly English. Numberless bets were taken, and it was currently said that the sums staked on the event amounted altogether to more than £100,000. Scepticism, indeed, was not unreasonable, for though we read in our newspapers every morning that Covent Garden Theatre will open on Saturday, May 15, yet the announcement seemed to be visibly contradicted by the aspect of the building. . . . Theatrical postponements are common enough, and announcements, it is surmised, are often made, only to be contradicted, a device supposed to quicken public curiosity and interest. People scrambling along Bow Street through heaps of rubbish and troops of workmen, and looking at rough walls, unfinished pillars, an uncovered roof, and unglazed windows, could not but say, ‘ If the outside is in this state, what must the inside be ? ’ . . . Even on the morning of the opening day the confusion seemed to be increasing instead of diminishing, and persons, tempted by curiosity to visit the scene of their expected evening’s amusement, were inclined to wonder how they could ever get into the house. But when they returned

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they found that all was changed. Every obstruction had been cleared away, and there was nothing but regularity and order. Immense crowds assembled, and rows of carriages approached from every quarter, and yet such were the arrangements that every one arrived at the right door, and reached the proper seat without the least difficulty. . . .”

The new Opera House stood upon a portion of the site of the old theatre and upon other ground added thereto at the back. The remaining portion of the site was eventually occupied by a gigantic conservatory, the Floral Hall, afterwards used as a concert-room. The new theatre was very different in appearance from its predecessor, owing to its great height, and also to the fact that the architect, Mr. Edward M. Barry, had adopted the Italian in lieu of the Grecian style of architecture. The Bow Street front is of an imposing character, and consists of a portico and two wings. The lower portion of the portico is arranged as a carriage-porch, and is completely sheltered, so that opera-going visitors may enter any of the five doors under the portico. The order of architecture employed for the portico is the Corinthian; and the columns, which are constructed of Portland stone, are three feet eight inches in diameter, and thirty-six feet high, or

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three feet higher than those forming the portico of the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The five arched windows under the portico light the grand staircase and crush-room; and the sculptured frieze over these windows, and the figures and carved panels at the sides of the portico, are the works of Flaxman, which so long adorned old Covent Garden Theatre, and are now (by the liberality of the Duke of Bedford) among the principal ornaments of its successor. In the niches at the sides of the portico are statues of Tragedy and Comedy, and the sculptures in panels represent the modern and ancient drama. The panel at the left of the portico contains Hecate in her car, with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The long panel under the portico is filled with sculpture representing the modern and ancient drama, the former being typified by Shakespear and Milton, accompanied by some of the characters in their principal works, such as Prospero, Caliban, Samson Agonistes, and the personages in *Comus*; and the latter represented by Aristophanes, Menander, and Æschylus, with the Muses, Bacchus, Minerva, and other heathen deities and personages. The panel next Hart Street contains Pegasus attended by nymphs. The whole of the above is in excellent preservation, and was carefully cleaned before its

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reinstatement. The other sculpture of the new theatre is highly suggestive of the purpose of the building: the carving of the ends of the portico between the capitals of the pilasters displays musical instruments. The keystones of the windows are theatrical masks; and sunk in circular panels between the windows are busts of Shakespear, Milton, Æschylus, and Aristophanes. It is worth remembering, to the credit of the builders of fifty years ago, that the immense portico, one of the largest in London, was begun and completed within a period of seven weeks, a feat that even modern American "hustling" methods can hardly hope to surpass.

The prospectus had announced the engagements of Grisi, Didiée, Mdlle. Parepa, Mdlle. Victoire Balfe, Madam Bosio, Signore Mario, Formes, Rossi, Tamberlik, and many others of the old company, and these all duly appeared. Costa again took his old place, and William Beverley and Messrs. Grieve and Telbin had painted new scenery. Flotow's new opera of *Martha* was promised, as were many other splendid operas, with such casts as seldom, if ever, fall to the lot of managers of the present day.

The first performance in the new building was *The Huguenots*, with Grisi, Mario, and the

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rest in their accustomed parts. A certain amount of delay occurred owing to the time spent in shifting and setting the new scenes and machinery. It was consequently past midnight when the curtain fell at the end of the third act, and as the opera was not concluded, the opportunity was seized by the turbulent people in the upper regions to create the familiar disturbance. The singing of "God save the Queen" was interrupted with calls for the fourth act, mingled with yells and hisses. Fortunately, her Majesty was not present; but on Saturday, June 5, she paid her first visit to the new opera house, by which time all was working smoothly.

In December, 1858, Mr. Gye concluded an arrangement with the highly successful company, under the management of Miss Louisa Pyne and Mr. W. Harrison, by which the theatre was let for the winter season to them, after their Drury Lane season had closed, for the performance of English opera. Accordingly, on December 27, the season began with the performance of Balfe's new opera of *Satanella*, followed by the pantomime of *Little Red Riding Hood*, with the following cast:—

Satanella.—Count Rupert, Mr. W. Harrison; Hortensius, Mr. George Honey; Karl, Mr. A. St. Albyn; Braccacio, Mr. H. Corrie; the

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Vizier, Mr. W. H. Payne ; Pirate, Mr. Bartleman ; Nobles, Messrs. Terrott and Kirby ; Arimanes, Mr. Weiss ; Lelia, Miss Rebecca Isaacs ; Stella, Miss Susan Pyne ; Bertha, Miss Mortimer ; Lady, Mrs. Martin ; and Satanella, Miss Louisa Pyne. Conductor, Mr. Alfred Mellon.

Little Red Riding Hood.—Music, Miss Mortimer ; Italian opera, Miss Cecilia Ranoe ; English opera, Miss Emily Burns ; Pantomime, Miss Crankell. Characters in the story—The Very Wicked Baron (afterwards Wolf), Mr. W. H. Payne ; Roberto (his head man), Mr. Frederick Payne ; Corin (in love with Little Red Riding Hood, afterwards Harlequin), Mr. Henry Payne ; Little Red Riding Hood (afterwards Columbine), Miss Clara Moyan ; Old Granny (afterwards Pantaloon), Mr. Barnes ; the Wolf, by a Great Brute (afterwards Clown), Mr. Flexmore ; Rustics, Guards, Footmen, etc. etc. ; Queen Moss-Rose (Protectress of Little Red Riding Hood), Miss Elsworthy ; Fairy Rosebud, Miss Francks ; Cupid, Miss Williams ; Wealthiana (the Evil Genius aiding the Wicked Baron), Miss Morrell ; Fairies, Sylphides, etc., by the *Corps de Ballet* ; five Sprites by Mr. Jameson and Sons.

It is hard to find fresh epithets for the “great” seasons of Italian opera which followed each other with unfailling regularity under the

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“consulship” of Gye. 1859, as regards its *personnel*, was no exception. The “old guard,” many of them, still remained, and were strengthened by new blood whenever possible. Meyerbeer’s last new opera of *Dinorah* was performed on July 26 in Italian, and later on in English. This alone relieved the end of what would otherwise have been a season somewhat lacking in novelty. Immense expectations had been aroused, and a brilliant success was scored. The whole *mise-en-scène*, greatly aided by Beverley’s superb scenery, was worthy of the renowned opera house and the composer, and more than this need not be said.

The season closed on August 6, somewhat later than usual; and during the autumn, Mr. Harris, who had been so long stage-manager at Covent Garden, took the Princess’s Theatre under his own direction. On Monday, October 3, the Pyne-Harrison season reopened Covent Garden in its capacity of the Royal English Opera House, with an English version of *Dinorah*. This was produced in a manner in no way inferior to the previous production. The English libretto was written by Mr. Chorley, and the dialogue was spoken, without recitatives. The critics were delighted with Miss Pyne’s assumption of the title-*rôle*, which was declared to be equal to that of the Italian opera artiste’s in

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every way. It is rendered memorable if only for the fact that Charles Santley made his operatic *début* in the character of Hoël, nominally the hero of the piece, although an extremely unlovable person, and an ungrateful part for the actor. The orchestra was again under Mellon's direction, and the entire performance was a triumph for all concerned. During the autumn the Floral Hall, intended by Mr. Gye for concerts, was completed and opened, the designs and construction of which being doubtless inspired by that of the Crystal Palace. The architect was Mr. Edward M. Barry. The next event of interest was the *début* of Miss Parepa as Leonora in an English version of *Trovatore*, and Santley again lent his powerful aid to the piece as Count de Lana. It must be remembered that Mr. Santley had already a double interest in the fortunes of the venerable theatre, as he had lately married Miss Gertrude Kemble, granddaughter of Charles, and niece of Fanny and Adelaide Kemble.

During the first six weeks of the year 1860 some of the older favourites were revived, including the *Rose of Castille* and *Crown Diamonds*. After prolonged expectation and delay, Vincent Wallace's new opera *Lurline*, on a libretto dealing with the story of the Loreley, was produced on February 23 with complete success. The adapter of the terrible old German legend did

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not dare to end the story with a general drowning of his *dramatis personæ*, and so the grimness of the plot was mitigated, somewhat to its detriment, be it said. The success of the opera was, however, so great that it ran to the end of the season, greatly to the profit and satisfaction of the management.

Before the Italian opera season of 1860 began, a notable performance was given on Thursday, March 29, at Covent Garden, "in aid of the funds of the Dramatic College," an institution the subsequent history of which it would be interesting to trace. It was established in 1858, and it was already, at the time of the benefit, affording support to six or seven superannuated actors and actresses. A more remarkable concourse of great artists had certainly never been seen either at Covent Garden or any other English playhouse, as the following extracts from the play-bill show:—

"*Money*.—Sir John Vesey, Mr. F. Matthews; Sir F. Blount, Mr. Belford; Evelyn, Mr. Creswick; Graves (his original character), Mr. B. Webster; Benjamin Stout, M.P., Mr. Keeley; Lord Glossmore, Mr. Harcourt Bland; Sharp, Mr. H. Mellon; Page, Miss Stoker; Clara Douglas, Mrs. Charles Young; Georgina Vesey, Miss Bufton; Lady Franklin, Mrs. H. Marston.

"*Merchant of Venice*.—Duke of Venice, Mr.

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H. Mellon; Gratiano, Mr. David Fisher; Shylock, Mr. Phelps; Antonio, Mr. Ryder; Bassanio, Mr. H. Marston; Salarino, Mr. H. Farrell; Salanio, Mr. F. Charles; Portia, Miss Amy Sedgwick; Nerissa, Miss Bulmer.

“*Black-eyed Susan*.—Doggrass, Mr. G. Peel; Lieutenant Pike, Mr. T. J. Anderson; Raker, Mr. H. Reeves; William, Mr. T. P. Cooke;* Gnatbrain, Mr. J. L. Toole; Jacob Twig, Mr. Cockrill; Hatchett, Mr. C. J. Smith; Ploughshare, Mr. Friend; Susan, Miss Woolgar (Mrs. A. Mellon); Dolly Mayflower, Miss Louise Keeley.

“*Macbeth*.—Lady Macbeth, Miss Glyn; Physician, Mr. G. Peel; Gentlewoman, Madame Simon.

“ ‘God Save the Queen.’—Principal vocalists: Miss L. Pyne, Mr. W. Harrison, Mr. Paul Bedford, and Mr. E. Murray.

“*The School for Scandal*.—Sir Peter Teazle, Mr. Chippendale; Joseph Surface, Mr. Howe; Charles Surface, Mr. Charles Mathews; Lady Teazle, Mrs. Charles Mathews.

“Vocal Music.—Miss Louisa Pyne, Madame Catharine Hayes, Mr. W. Harrison.

“*Box and Cox*.—Box, Mr. J. B. Buckstone; Cox, Mr. Compton; Mrs. Bouncer, Mrs. Griffiths.

“Christy’s Minstrels, *B. B.*—Mr. Benjamin Bobbin, Mr. F. Robson; Squire Greenfield, Mr. C. Cooke; Bob Rattles, Mr. Horace Wigan; Joe, Mr. H. Cooper; Mrs. Puncheon, Mrs. Stephens; Dorothy, Mrs. W. S. Emden.

* This was his last appearance as an actor, at seventy-four years of age.

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“Mr. E. Stirling and Mr. E. Murray, stage and acting managers; Mr. A. Mellon, conductor of the music.”

It is hardly surprising to read that the appearance of each great “star” was “greeted with vociferous acclamation.”

The opening of the Italian opera season of 1860 was heralded by the seventh performance of *Dinorah*; the title-rôle taken by Madam Miolan Carvalho, Corentino by Gardoni, and Hoël by Faure, whose first appearance in England was thus made in the part originally written for him by Meyerbeer himself.

Another interesting *début* was that of Mademoiselle Rosa Csillag, of Vienna, in *Fidelio*, while Flotow's new opera of *Stradella*, and a revival of *Le Prophète*, were among the allurements held forth to the subscribers in the prospectus. Under the heading of “concerts,” a production, for the first time in England, of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, illustrated with costume, scenery, and decoration, was also added, as a sort of bonus or *bonne bouche* to all the opera subscribers.

On December 20, 1860, died Alfred Bunn, aged sixty-two years. Planché says of him—

“He was a strange compound: by no means bad-hearted, wonderfully good-tempered in difficulties and disasters, and endured with the greatest fortitude the most violent attacks of a

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cruel complaint to which he was subject. . . . His management [of Covent Garden] was sheer gambling of the most reckless description, in no one instance that I can remember terminating prosperously, whatever might have been the success of certain productions in the course of it."

A few words may be devoted to recording the fact that the principal attraction of the season, beyond all else, had been the continuous series of triumphs scored by Grisi and Mario whenever they appeared.

On December 6, during the Pyne-Harrison season, Balfe's opera *Bianca; or, the Bravo's Bride*, with a libretto by Palgrave Simpson, founded upon a forgotten melodrama by "Monk Lewis," called *Rugantino; or, the Bravo of Venice*, was produced with considerable success. It shared the honours of the season as usual with the annual pantomime, *Bluebeard*, in which W. H. Payne, a famous clown and father of the Harry Payne of later years, Harry Boleno, and others appeared.

Another novelty consisted of a musical setting of Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha," by an American composer named Stoepel. It was arranged as a recitation interspersed with songs and choruses; but, in spite of some merits, does not appear to have proved a great draw. On February 20, 1861, a clever adaptation of Auber's

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Domino Noir, by Chorley, appeared with great success. Miss Pyne scored heavily as the heroine, and the other members of the cast did ample justice to the delightful opera.

The season ended in March with the *Domino Noir* and Mendelssohn's *Son and Stranger*. The latter is a musical trifle, never intended for performance in a great opera house, and it is hardly surprising to hear that it did not succeed.

At the end of the year 1860 Mr. Gye's extraordinary acuteness in scenting out great artists once again stood him in good stead, and many and various have been the stories of the competition between Mr. Gye on the one hand and Mr. J. H. Mapleson, then manager of the Lyceum Theatre, on the other, to secure the right to the services of Adelina Patti. Mr. Mapleson, as usual, makes *une bonne histoire* of the transaction in his "Memoirs." He tells us that he had actually, in the autumn of 1860, entered into a contract with Mademoiselle Patti, as she then was, on behalf of Mr. E. T. Smith, who was then lessee and manager of Her Majesty's, to sing there in the forthcoming season at a salary of £40 a week. At the same time he engaged Mario, whose term had expired at Covent Garden, while Costa also undertook to join the following year on the expiration of his contract with Mr. Gye.

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During April, 1861, the singer arrived from America, and, finding that her engagement with Mr. E. T. Smith was likely to prove void and of no effect, she very properly set about finding a manager whose undertakings would be duly carried out. She came into contact with Mr. Gye, who recognized at once the prize that had fallen into his hand, and wisely clinched the bargain he had entered into with her by a payment in hard cash in advance. He had further stifled any further chance of possible competition from Smith by a payment to him of £4000, on condition of his refraining from opening the theatre.

Mr. Gye's prospectus, however, which announces the commencement of the season for April 2, 1861, makes no mention of Adelina Patti's name, nor, indeed, are any of the artistes engaged remembered to-day by the "man in the street," with the exception of Tamberlik, Madame Rudersdorff, and Herr Formes, although it only states that "an engagement had been offered" to the great basso.

It is evident, therefore, that either Patti's engagement was not secure when the prospectus appeared, or that Gye did not think the name sufficiently well known to print. But the story of Adelina Patti's *début* so overshadows all other events of the 1861 season, that we must give it

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its due prominence, and treat of it before other matters can be dealt with. She chose for her first appearance the part of Amina, in *La Sonnambula*, on Tuesday, May 14, 1861.

At this time Adelina Patti was nineteen years of age, although, by all accounts, she looked much younger. Mr. Kuhe, in his "Recollections," says she appeared to be about fourteen. Upon making her entry she had no reception, for the audience were so amazed at her youth that they forgot to applaud. But her singing soon dispelled all doubts, and, to quote Mr. Kuhe again—

"it was manifest that here was no case of merely exceptional talent: we were face to face with phenomenal genius. The next day's papers . . . voiced but one opinion. For the second performance tickets were sold at a premium, and on all hands Mr. Gye received felicitations on his lucky find."

Patti repeated the part eight times, and added to her *repertoire* the rôles of Lucia, Violetta, Zerlina (in *Don Giovanni*), Martha, and Rosina, and in an incredibly short space of time took an almost undisputed place as the most popular *prima donna* of her day. During her second season the only great artist who could at all be said to seriously menace her position was Madame Thérèse Titiens, whom Mr. Mapleson (by this

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time migrated to Her Majesty's) had engaged as his *prima donna*. This lady had (according to Mapleson) received most tempting offers from Mr. Gye to join the Covent Garden company. These were conveyed to her by Mr. Gye's envoy and stage-manager, Mr. Harris, the father of a young man whose name was to loom large nearly a generation later in the annals of Covent Garden. He produced a contract, signed by Mr. Gye, with the amount she was to receive in blank, leaving her to fill in anything she chose. The lady, however, rightly considering her word to be as good as her bond, replied simply that she had given her promise to Mr. Mapleson, and would not break it.

To return to the 1861 season, however, the production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, on Monday, May 13, 1861, also demands notice. The critics of the day gratefully acknowledged the artistic completeness of the performance.

“ We had Mozart's music, all Mozart's music, and nothing but Mozart's music. The utmost respect was paid to the text, there were no omissions, no interpolations, no alterations in order to enable a favourite performer to sing music suitable to his voice. . . . We had Faure as the brilliant libertine, the only person since Tamburini who can both act the part and sing the music, Csillag as Elvira, Penco as Donna Anna,

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Tamberlik as Ottavio, Formes as Leporello, Ronconi as Masetto, this great actor, for the love of art, having accepted a small part which he made a great one, and Miolan-Carvalho, as captivating a Zerlina as could be desired."

The rise of the new "star" coincided with the setting of the old, for during May Grisi began a series of eight farewell performances at Covent Garden, which may be said to have created scenes as remarkable for their enthusiasm as the successive triumphant appearances in new rôles of Adelina Patti. During this autumn two famous actors (whose London *débuts* had occurred at Covent Garden) died at a good old age. These were William Farren and John Vandenhoff.

On October 21, the Pyne and Harrison season began with Glover's new opera, founded on Victor Hugo's story of Ruy Blas. Santley, who had temporarily deserted the Covent Garden management, returned this season to the scene of his operatic *début*. Macfarren's *Robin Hood*, which had appeared at Her Majesty's the preceding season, was produced on Friday, November 8, with great success. Later, on November 30, Balfe's opera, *The Puritan's Daughter*, was brought out amid great enthusiasm, Louisa Pyne, Harrison, Santley, and the rest, winning unstinted praise from critics and public.

At Christmas the management presented the

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famous old English story of "Gulliver's Travels" as a pantomime, by the celebrated Maddison Morton, author of *Box and Cox*. The *clou* of the season was, of course, the production, on February 8, 1862, of Benedict's *Lily of Killarney*, or, as it was at first announced, *Rose of Killarney*. The plot was that of the *Colleen Bawn*, which had just had a *succès fou* at the Adelphi. John Oxenford was responsible for the libretto, and the principal characters were as follows: Eily O'Connor, Miss Louisa Pyne; Myles na Coppaleen, Mr. Harrison; and Danny Mann, Mr. Santley. The acting and mounting of the piece were alike perfect, and the foundations of a solid and lasting popularity were laid. The enterprising management further had the satisfaction of seeing their ablest recruit, Mr. Santley, engaged by Mr. Gye for the Italian opera season of the year 1862.

Mr. Gye, in his annual prospectus for the season, refers to the Great International Exhibition of 1862 as being likely to attract visitors to London, and congratulates his subscribers, and, incidentally, himself, on having a brilliant list of artists and operatic fare to set before his foreign patrons.

Headed by the new *prima donna*, Adelina Patti, they included Signor Tamberlik, Mario, Faure, Formes, and Gardoni, while Mr. Costa

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in spite of temptations to join Mapleson at the Lane, remained faithful to Gye.

The season, while quite up to the mark in *personnel*, was not distinguished, however, by any startling novelty, and we pass at once to the continuation of the interesting enterprise of the Pyne and Harrison management, which opened on August 25 with the *Lily of Killarney*.

On November 16 this year Planché and Vincent Wallace's opera of *Love's Triumph* was produced, and the former enters a spirited protest against—

“the barbarous treatment to which it was subjected. . . . Being produced before Christmas, as soon as the holidays arrived it was sacrificed, as too many have been before it, to the pantomime. The length of the dull, monstrous, hybrid spectacle, which has superseded the bright, lively harlequinade of earlier days, precluding the possibility of giving the opera in its integrity, airs, duets, and concerted pieces were cruelly hacked and mutilated, without reference to the author or composer, . . . and this, remember, by a management which solicited the support of the public for a national opera. . . . In France the author and composer would have their remedy at law against any manager guilty of such injustice !”

The pantomime which provoked Planché's wrath was *Harlequin Beauty and the Beast*. It is obvious that the management are seldom, if

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ever, to blame for following the public taste in such a matter. Planché had no real ground for complaint. He had no doubt been liberally paid for his share of the opera, and the two *entrepreneurs* were simply following a well-established custom in compressing his work for the purpose of the Christmas production.

About the beginning of the year 1863 a great opportunity presented itself to the lessee and *impresario* of Covent Garden. A new opera was being performed at the Theatre Lyrique in Paris, by Gounod. The English rights in the music had been secured, it is said, for 1000 francs, by Thomas Chappell, the publisher, who immediately opened negotiations with Mr. Gye for its production at Covent Garden. The work, however, had not apparently made much impression on Mr. Gye, who had been specially to Paris to hear it, and he assured Mr. Augustus Harris, who, Mapleson tells us, had formed a better opinion of the music than his chief, that there was nothing in it but one fine chorus.

Consequently, after due consideration, Mr. Gye refused to have anything to do with it, and Mapleson had the happiness of securing it. The chorus mentioned by Gye as the only one worth anything was "The Soldier's Chorus," and the opera was *Faust*!!

Mr. Gye soon saw that he had made an

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enormous mistake, and, like a wise man, came to terms with the enemy, and produced his own version of the opera at Covent Garden on July 2, with the following cast: Margherita, Miolan-Carvalho, the creator of the part at the Théâtre Lyrique; Siebel, Nantier Didier; Mephistopheles, Faure; Valentine, Graziani; and Faust, Tamberlik.

The fact of his being able to do this is so unusual that the account Mr. Mapleson gives of the matter is worth quoting.

It appears that on realizing the likelihood of the new opera proving a veritable gold-mine to its possessor, he arranged with M. Gounod to purchase the "exclusive rights" over the work, which the composer—oblivious of the fact that he had already sold the English rights (but not exclusive rights) to the Paris publishers, from whom Mr. Mapleson bought them—duly made over to him.

Mr. Gye thereupon, in perfect good faith, proceeded to inform Mr. Mapleson that while he did not wish to interfere with arrangements already concluded, he should expect a royalty for the future upon every performance of the opera at Her Majesty's. This claim Mr. Mapleson resisted, and an action at law resulted, which established the fact, painful enough, as Mapleson says, for M. Gounod, that, owing to some defect

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in registration, no exclusive rights of performance could be secured for *Faust* in England by any one.

Among the great events of the opera season of 1863 was the *début*, on July 18, of Mademoiselle Pauline Lucca, a young singer who had begun her career in the chorus of the opera at Vienna. Later on she appeared at various Continental capitals with ever-increasing success and fame, until, in July, 1863, she appeared at Covent Garden in the unusually trying *rôle*—for a *débutante*—of Valentina in *The Huguenots*, creating an extraordinary impression, although she only appeared for three performances during her visit.

The critics immediately recognized that in Mademoiselle Lucca a star of the first magnitude had made its appearance, the only cause for regret, being that coming as she did at the very close of the season, it was impossible for her to satisfy the *furor* her singing immediately created. Although, like Adelina Patti, she was *petite* in stature, her voice, a pure soprano, had great power and compass, while her rare beauty, dignity, and grace, combined with her talent, ensured her a place at the top of the ladder of fame that is often so painfully climbed by less gifted aspirants.

The season ended on August 1 in a perfect

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blaze of triumph for Gye and the great artists whom his never-failing energy, liberality, and perspicacity had attracted to his banner.

During the summer Mr. Alfred Mellon ran a series of Promenade Concerts with considerable success; and on Monday, October 12, Miss Louisa Pyne and Mr. W. Harrison opened what they announced as their eighth and last season of management at Covent Garden Theatre with Vincent Wallace's new opera, *The Desert Flower*. The production did not meet with an especially warm reception from the critics and the public, in spite of the brilliancy and versatility of Miss Pyne's assumption of the impossible character of the rather truculent heroine with the pretty name. Naturally enough the first performances were welcomed by crowded audiences, and the really charming music found innumerable admirers.

Another novelty presented by the enterprising management was a new opera by Balfe, *Blanche de Nevers*, which appeared on November 21. Again, however, it was demonstrated that good music, by a popular musician, though sung by gifted artists and mounted with taste and liberality, are not sufficient to ensure lasting success unless to these are added a strikingly dramatic story simply and effectively told. Balfe also committed the error of forsaking his earlier, lighter style of composition for a grandiose

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attempt at serious opera, which did not become him. The Christmas pantomime was adapted by Byron upon the well-worn theme of St. George and the Dragon. Later on Levey's *Fanchette* attracted a fair measure of public support ; while on Thursday, February 11, 1864, Macfarren's opera on Fitzball's libretto from *She Stoops to Conquer* was produced, and proved attractive enough to enable the Pyne-Harrison management to conclude their eighth and last season without loss.

The "Royal English Opera," as they called their enterprise, had certainly earned the gratitude of the music lovers of London. In the printed farewell address issued by the lessees to their last audience, a brief statement of their record showed that in their eight seasons, fifteen new operas and five operettas, together with eleven revivals, had been presented. They had, in fact, removed the standing reproach under which England laboured, of having no home for English opera, no theatre in which native composers could secure a hearing for works which demanded a large and well-trained body of artists to interpret them. A significant note is struck by the reference in their address to the fact that in their eight seasons they had expended in artists' salaries, authors, and musical copyrights, upwards of £200,000.

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From the ashes of their company there arose in the same year (1864) the joint-stock enterprise known as the English Opera Company, Limited, which announced their intention of starting operations in October. This speculation, however, proved anything but a success, and the only novelty produced by them was Macfarren's *Helvellyn*, itself long since forgotten.

In 1864 Patti returned, full of Continental triumphs, to Covent Garden and her English friends, while Pauline Lucca also secured special permission from the Berlin authorities to spend almost the entire season in London, under Mr. Gye's management. During the season this gifted artist was announced to take the parts of Margherita in *Faust*, Cherubino in *Nozze di Figaro*, Mrs. Ford in Nicolay's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Catarina in *L'Etoile du Nord*, but an unfortunate illness prevented her from carrying out her intentions, and after only four performances she was obliged to return to Germany for a rest and change of air. The principal male singers were Tamberlik, who played Otello, and Faure in his great rôle of Peter the Great in *L'Etoile du Nord*. Signor Graziano and Signor Mario also appeared in many favourite operas, the latter for the first time assuming the rôle of Faust.

During the spring the *furore* created by

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Garibaldi's visit was at its height, and the famous general was honoured by a gala performance at Covent Garden, at which the cream of Gye's company assisted, and which realized £1141.*

The great success of the season was Patti's assumption of the rôle of Margarita, which recalled the great Jenny Lind's nights at Her Majesty's years before. The only failure of the season was the revival of Flotow's *Stradella*, which had been promised the year before and not performed.

During the 1864 season a young English musician, who was beginning to make a great name by his personal charm and extraordinary talents, applied for and was granted the post of organist at Covent Garden, under the friendly wing of the redoubtable Michael Costa. This was Arthur Sullivan, then only twenty-two years of age, but already known to musicians and the public as the composer of the famous music to Shakespear's *Tempest*, produced by Manns at the Crystal Palace in 1862.

Costa was greatly impressed with the ability of his young recruit, and commissioned him to write a ballet, which was produced May 14, 1864, under the title of *L'Ile Enchantée*.

There can be no doubt that to this early association with the theatre we owe that bent of

* The performance consisted of *Norma*, and the 2nd and 3rd Acts of *Masaniello*.

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Sullivan's genius which afterwards prompted him to write the wonderful series of comic operas by which his fame among English-speaking people was so firmly established. Mr. Findon, in his charming but disappointingly brief "Life of Sullivan," tells an anecdote of his connection with the theatre that is worth repetition.

"In the midst of the church scene in *Faust*, the wire connecting the pedal under Costa's foot with the metronome stick at the organ broke. In the concerted music this meant disaster, as the organist could hear nothing but his own instrument. Quick as thought, while he was playing the introductory solo, Sullivan called a stage hand. 'Go and tell Mr. Costa that the wire is broken, and that he has to keep his ears open and follow me,' he said. No sooner had the man gone to deliver his message than the full meaning of the words dawned upon Sullivan. What would the autocratic Costa say to such a message, delivered in such a manner? When the scene ended, Sullivan went to tender his apologies; but the *maestro* was too much alive to the importance of the message to take offence, and was thankful enough that his young assistant was ready-witted enough to avoid the otherwise inevitable fiasco."

In 1864 E. L. Blanchard produced a pantomime, for the first time apparently, on the popular story of "Cinderella," and set a fashion which

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is likely to go on as long as pantomime are produced at all.

Among the few successes of the Royal English Opera (Limited) was the production on March 4, 1865, of Gounod's *Mock Doctor* (*Le Médecin Malgré Lui*), adapted by Charles Kenney.

During the Italian opera season of 1865, Patti was announced to take up four new rôles, viz. Linda di Chamounix, Susanna in *Nozze di Figaro*, Elvira in Bellini's *Puritani*, and Pamina in *Il Flauto Magico*. Pauline Lucca, who had, by reason of her unlucky illness, been prevented from fulfilling her engagements, was announced for several new characters, the principal one—that of Selika in *L'Africaine*—having been designated for her by the great composer himself, whose death, occurring in May, 1864, had caused an irreparable loss to the music of the world. If, indeed, the statement made in the opera prospectus was not an exaggeration, Meyerbeer had been waiting fourteen years for suitable interpreters of the rôles, for the reason that, in his opinion, the Académie in Paris did not at any one time possess the artistes necessary for its execution.

Faure had been chosen by Meyerbeer expressly for the part of Nelusco in the Paris production of *L'Africaine*, and this caused his

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absence from the English opera of 1865. Among other artistes engaged were Madame Miolan-Carvalho, Signor Mario, Signor Wachtel, Signor Graziani, Herr Schmid, and Signor Ronconi. Among the operas promised were *L'Etoile du Nord*, *Linda di Chamounix*, *Norma*, *Les Huguenots*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Fra Diavolo*, *Il Flauto Magico*, *Faust*, *Nozze di Figaro*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Le Prophète*, and *The Ballo in Maschero*, besides *L'Africaine*, as already mentioned, in which Pauline Lucca "creating" the part of Selika, made an impression which, according to the writer in "Grove's Dictionary," "will not soon be forgotten by those who had the good fortune to see it." This was in July, 1865.

During the same month a bombshell was exploded among the opera *habitues* of London by the announcement of Mr. Gye, that he had transferred the proprietorship of Covent Garden to a public company. Not a word of this is hinted at in the prospectus published in the previous March, in which the announcements of the forthcoming season are set out in the customary detail. Nor is it clear now whether the "public company" referred to was the same which, in 1868, made another abortive attempt to float itself and enter upon opera management.

The history of this transaction is sufficiently curious to be related in detail, but those more

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particularly interested are referred to Mr. Mapleson's account of it. Briefly, it may be said that, although it appeared likely enough that the idea would be carried into effect, for various reasons it never was, and at the beginning of the 1866 season Mr. Gye announced that he remained the proprietor of the opera house as before. He took occasion, however, to remind the public that it was now just twenty years since the old theatre had been partially rebuilt and rearranged to render it suitable for the establishment of a great Italian opera house, for until that time, he points out, no attempt had ever been made to place permanently before them any other than operas of the old Italian *repertoire*, in which none but the most meagre employment of scenery, costume, and orchestral and choral power had been thought necessary.

In the early part of 1866 the Royal English Opera Company were playing the *Domino Noir*, with Louisa Pyne as Angela; but in the middle of February the performances suddenly ceased, owing, it was said, to the funds having been exhausted.

Probably the most distinguished *débutante* of the year 1866 was Carlotta, sister of Adelina Patti, who had for some time enjoyed a great reputation as a concert singer, and now made her first appearance on the stage in England.

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The company still included her more celebrated sister and Pauline Lucca, while Mario, Faure, Naudin, Graziano, Ronconi, and Nicolini all contributed their brilliant talents to the successes of the season.

Another *début* as far as opera was concerned was that of Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, then known as the principal English soprano of her day.*

Among other subsequently famous names must be remembered that of Emile Sauret, who made his *début* then as a boy at a concert on August 27, 1866. In December, 1866, Gustave Garcia, son of the famous old singing-master, appeared at Covent Garden with his wife in an operetta entitled *Terrible Hymen*.

1867 was a year in which the French held a grand exhibition in Paris, and this caused special arrangements to be made by the great *entrepreneur* of Covent Garden to attract visitors to the opera.

The greatest event of the season was, of course, the production on July 11 of Gounod's new opera of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Adelina Patti was announced to create the female title *rôle*, while that of Romeo was created by Signor Mario.

* Grove says Madame Lemmens-Sherrington debuted in opera during 1867.

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Three distinguished persons, all of whom, in their different capacities, had been intimately associated with Covent Garden a generation before, expired this year, in the persons of Maria, Countess of Harrington (the beautiful Miss Foote); Sir George Smart, the friend and host of Weber; and Clarkson Stanfield, the artist.

The Christmas pantomime for the year was *The Babes in the Wood*, by G. A. à Beckett, a writer who for many years was the chief purveyor of *libretti* for this form of entertainment to Londoners.

In December, 1867, Her Majesty's Theatre had, for the second time, met the fate which overhangs all theatrical enterprises, viz. destruction by fire, and for ten years Mr. Gye was once more "monarch of all he surveyed" in musical London. It was not until 1877 that it once more became an opera house.

In March, 1868, Mr. Gye issued his usual prospectus for the forthcoming season, in which he alluded to certain rumours that had recently been circulated in the press concerning the purchase of the opera from the director, and its conversion into a company with limited liability, in conjunction with Mr. Mapleson's interests in Her Majesty's. Matters had actually progressed to a point at which Mr. Gye considered it settled,

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and began to make plans as to how and where he was to spend his leisure time when he was no longer manager of an enormous theatre.

The contracts were all concluded and signed, accountants spent many days at Covent Garden examining books and vouchers for ten years past, when suddenly, and for no ostensible reason, the whole scheme collapsed, and poor Mr. Gye had to leave off thinking about Scottish moors and country houses, and set to work to regain lost time and reorganize his company once more. Fortunately he was a man of courage and infinite resource, and the crisis was safely tided over.

We must here again revert to the Mapleson "Memoirs," and to the account therein given by their author of the first proposals—which emanated from Mr. Gye—for the amalgamation of the two undertakings of the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, and the company from Her Majesty's Theatre. On June 19, 1868, Mr. Frederick Gye wrote a letter to Mr. Mapleson suggesting a meeting, which duly took place, and which resulted in articles of partnership being drawn up binding the parties to remain together for three years on the basis of half-profits, the agreement to be kept secret for six months.

On the conclusion of this agreement, Mr. Mapleson rented Covent Garden for the autumn season of 1868 from Mr. Gye, for, he says, a

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double reason : first, Her Majesty's was in ashes, and he had no place to give his autumn performances ; second, his being there would enable him to see Mr. Gye personally without causing surprise, in order to discuss forthcoming arrangements. During this autumn Mr. Mapleson informs us he discovered Mademoiselle Scalchi, the contralto, " then singing at a building which had been a circus." * He engaged her for five years. About this time he also brought out Miss Minnie Hauk, a young singer about eighteen years of age. She made her *début* with success at Covent Garden as Amina in *La Sonnambula* on November 5, 1868, her next part being that of Cherubino in *Nozze di Figaro*.

After due discussion with Mr. Gye, it was decided that the joint enterprise should be carried on at Covent Garden, pending the rebuilding of Her Majesty's.

Following a suggestion of Gye's, the two managers resolved on effecting a notable alteration in the internal economy of the vast establishment. This was nothing less than the removal from his autocratic position, of Costa, the conductor. This gentleman, doubtless well aware of the value of his own services, had been in the

* It is possible Mr. Mapleson is here referring to the Agricultural Hall, at which Mademoiselle Scalchi sang for the first time in England, September 16, 1868.

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habit of making his own engagements of the orchestra, of course, leaving the management of the theatre to pay the salaries he had fixed. He himself was invariably present on pay-day, and would remorselessly dock the salary of any musician who had been absent or late from any cause whatsoever. Did the unfortunate man venture to resist his tyranny, for tyranny it was, it meant not only the loss of his engagement at the opera, but at the various provincial festivals and the Sacred Harmonic Society, at which Costa's will was paramount. It is not surprising that the joint managers of Covent Garden, themselves men of considerable force of character, did not contemplate running the great theatre with a subordinate vested with such extraordinary powers and methods of using them. Neither was it to be wondered at that the autocrat, whose will had so long been supreme, would tolerate for a single night the assumption by the managers of rights he had enjoyed for over twenty years. Mr. Mapleson tells us that when he heard that they actually proposed to make the engagements with the orchestral players themselves, he immediately resigned, as much to Mr. Gye's satisfaction as it doubtless was to that of his co-manager.

They engaged two new conductors to fill his place, Signors Arditì and Vianesi, the former of whom was already the possessor of extensive

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experience on the Continent and in America, and is now principally remembered as composer of the famous vocal waltz "Il Bacio."

The opening of the new season (1869) was most auspicious, £12,000 was received in private subscriptions, £29,000 from the booksellers and libraries, and another £29,000 from the box-office sales during the season. From other sources, the Floral Hall concerts, etc., came a sum of £10,000, raising the total, according to Mapleson, to £80,000, against which they paid away in artists' salaries £22,000; working expenses, including chorus, £13,000; and orchestra and sundries £9,500; leaving them with a clear profit of nearly £36,000, by no means a bad result of the season's doings. Mr. Mapleson had to pay as his contribution towards the use of the theatre, insurance and poor rates amounting to £3,000. A quaint paragraph in the Mapleson "Memoirs" makes mention of the fact that, by the articles of association, Mr. Gye had stipulated that he should take no part in the management of the theatre, *unless he wished to do so*, a wish "that came upon him after about a fortnight."

Among the new works or revivals promised during the 1869 season were *Fidelio*, *The Magic Flute*, *Robert le Diable*, Cherubini's *Medea*, *Hamlet*, by Ambrose Thomas (for the first time in England, and with Nilsson as Ophelia), and

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Don Bucefalo. *Don Giovanni* was played with the truly wonderful combination of Titiens as Donna Anna, Nilsson as Donna Elvira, and Patti as Zerlina, Don Ottavio being taken by Mario, and Don Juan himself by Faure.

Space forbids more than a brief mention of the astounding constellation of celebrated singers whose services were now rendered available at Covent Garden under the joint management. Besides those mentioned there were also Mesdemoiselles Pauline Lucca, Ilma di Murska, Sinico, Scalchi, and Bauermeister among the lady artistes, while to Faure and Mario (whose names, though recorded by Mr. Mapleson as performers, are not mentioned in the prospectus) must be added those of Signor Tamberlik, the first time for four years, Signor Foli, and Mr. Santley. The principal *danseuses* were Mademoiselle Dor and Mademoiselle Bosé, the latter for the first time in England.

Among other famous names the staff of the theatre included Signor Bevignani at the piano-forte, Mr. J. T. Carrodus as leader of the band, and as *suggeritori* or prompters Signors Rialp and Lago, who afterwards became himself manager for a season or two.

The prospectus is significantly silent concerning the all-important change in the conductor's seat, nor is there any mention of the twenty-one

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years of service of the redoubtable Michael Costa.

The only advance in subscription prices appears from the prospectus to have been in the second row of amphitheatre stalls, raised from twelve guineas to eighteen guineas for the season of forty nights.

Mr. Mapleson next deals with certain negotiations which were now entered into between himself, Gye, and a Mr. George Wood, of the famous firm of Cramer and Co., who had, in company with a Mr. Jarrett, one of the staff of the theatre and a former member of the orchestra, taken Drury Lane Theatre with a view of setting up a rival opera. This, for some reason undivulged to Mapleson and Gye, they did not do, and Mr. Wood proposed instead to become a third member of the firm, and thus still further ensure the operative monopoly at Covent Garden Theatre.

Wood thought he held a very strong trump-card in the fact that, by some oversight on the part of Messrs. Gye and Mapleson, several of their best artists had been allowed to sign contracts with him. They included Christine Nilsson, Mongini, De Murska, Trebelli, Faure, Santley, and others, whose defection would undoubtedly have proved a very serious blow to the company.

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How simple and beautiful, therefore, was the arrangement by which he proposed to transfer his rights to the rival establishment as a going concern, and draw a cool £5000 or £6000 clear profit for doing so. Alas! for these delightful calculations. He had omitted to reckon with the afore-mentioned Mr Jarrett, through whom, as agent for the various artists, the agreements had been made. That gentleman intervened at a dramatic moment, on the very day the triple agreement was to be signed, and in the hour and moment of the coming signature. He pointed out to Mr. Wood that, under the contracts, the seceding artists could only perform at Drury Lane, and that even if he (Wood) joined Mapleson and Gye, they could not sing at Covent Garden, and he would still have to pay their salaries, whether he opened at Drury Lane or not. In short, Mr. Wood was in a cleft stick, and he had no option but to open at Drury Lane, well knowing that he could not hope for a profit, and, incidentally, that his competition, while disastrous to himself, would hardly fail to prove equally injurious to Covent Garden.

This, in fact, was what occurred. Mr. Wood's pianoforte business was ruined by the enterprise, and we have Mr. Mapleson's authority for stating that there was no money made that season (1870) at Covent Garden, deprived as they were

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at one fell stroke of five or six of their finest performers.

The only important alteration in the staff discoverable from the programmes, is that the name of Signor Tito Mattei now replaced that of Signor Bevignani, while the latter took Arditi's place at the conductor's desk with Signor Vianesi.

The principal novelty advertised in the 1870 prospectus was the opera of *Macbeth*, by Verdi, now so seldom heard, but then spoken of as his *chef d'œuvre!*

On January 4, 1870, one of those brilliant benefit performances took place at Covent Garden recalling in its main features those many great occasions half a century before of which the theatre was so often the scene. This was the benefit accorded to Charles J. Mathews, the eminent comedian and an ex-manager of Covent Garden, in the time when, with his first wife, the beautiful Madam Vestris, he spent an eventful three years there, a period which saw the production of *London Assurance* and many other then famous productions long since passed into the limbo of the forgotten.

All the principal theatres sent representatives. Scenes from the popular pieces of the day were followed by the second act of the *Critic*, which was played with the following astonishing

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cast: Dangle, Mr. Alfred Wigan; Governor, Mr. F. Matthews; Sneer, Mr. Barry Sullivan; Lord Leicester, Mr. J. Clarke; Puff, Mr. Charles Mathews; Sir W. Raleigh, Mr. L. Brough; Under Prompter, Mr. Charles Mathews, junior; Sir C. Hatton, Mr. W. H. Payne; Lord Burleigh, Mr. J. B. Buckstone; Beefeater, Mr. J. L. Toole; Whiskerandos, Mr. Compton; first niece, Mrs. Keeley; second niece, Mrs. F. Matthews; Tilburina, Mrs. C. Mathews; Confidante, Mrs. Chippendale. The bill of the play also included the names of Benjamin Webster, Mrs. A. Mellon, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft in a scene from *School*, Mrs. Hermann Vezin, H. Y. Byron, J. S. Clarke, and Madam Celeste.

Needless to say, such a performance attracted an audience "so large as to tax even the ample resources of Covent Garden Theatre."

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CHAPTER XX

1871-1897

CHIEFLY owing to certain disputes, terminating in lawsuits, over various matters concerning the lease of Her Majesty's Theatre, the agreement between Messrs. Gye and Mapleson did not reach its third year (1871), but the latter gentleman rented the theatre from Mr. Gye for the autumn season of that year, which terminated early in December.

This, however, is anticipating our account of the regular summer season of operas which, once more under the sole direction of Mr. Frederick Gye, began on Tuesday, March 28, 1871, with Donizetti's opera of *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

The season is rendered notable by the fact that, as set forth in the prospectus, Signor Mario, after performing at Covent Garden during no less than twenty-three out of the twenty-four seasons of the existence of the Royal Italian Opera, had at length determined to retire. In addition to this melancholy but supreme attraction, Mr. Gye was still able to count upon the unrivalled

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exertions of Adelina Patti and Pauline Lucca. Mario's farewell took place on July 19 as Fernando in *La Favorita*, a part in which he was unequalled, amid a scene of indescribable enthusiasm.

Later on the revival of Halévy's greatest work, *La Juive*, first produced at Covent Garden in 1850, and of which the entire scenery and accessories were destroyed in the 1856 fire, excited great interest.

The season saw a notable *débutante* at Covent Garden in the person of Mademoiselle de Méric Lablache.

Madame Parepa-Rosa had been engaged for the season, after many years' absence, but upon her return from America, was prevented by illness from appearing. An English violinist, who has since won renown, Alfred Gibson, became a member of the orchestra during this season, and filled his position there for no less than twelve years.

The 1872 season found almost exactly the same company of performers with Mr. Gye, but their numbers were heavily reinforced, no less than seven new artistes appearing for the first time in England. One of these soon proved herself a worthy member of the superb dynasty of queens of song who have rendered the name of Covent Garden Theatre illustrious for ever.

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Mr. Mapleson gives an amusing and characteristic account of the accident by which he was deprived of the honour of introducing Mademoiselle Emma Albani to the British public. Space forbids our quoting it in full, but it is worth mentioning that providence intervened in the shape of the lady's cabman, who drove her, on her first arrival in London, to the theatre of Mr. Gye, instead of, as she supposed, to that managed by Mr. Mapleson (Drury Lane). Both of those gentlemen were unknown to her personally; and all being fair in love and war, the astute manager of Covent Garden was not slow to take advantage of the prize within his grasp, and engaged her on the spot. After the contract was signed, Mr. Gye, however, courteously and honourably explained to Mademoiselle Albani the mistake she had made, and there and then offered to release her from her engagement—an offer which she naturally declined, and which, it is hardly necessary to add, she certainly had no after-cause to wish she had accepted.

Mademoiselle Albani was announced as “from the Pergola Theatre, at Florence;” and with the great singer's glorious voice still ringing in our ears, its beauties hardly touched by time, it is easy to imagine the *furore* her appearance in *La Sonnambula* must have caused.

A still more epoch-marking event promised

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for the year 1872 remains to be noted, although it was actually postponed until three years later. It is interesting to read the cautious words used by manager Gye in introducing for the first time the works of Richard Wagner to an English audience.

“The introduction on the Italian Stage in England of the operas by Richard Wagner has naturally frequently been a subject of consideration with the director of the Royal Italian Opera.

“The admirers of Wagner have predicted for his works unprecedented successes in England, while his detractors have warned the director that the “music of the future,” as Wagner’s compositions have been ironically styled, would drive all opera subscribers from the theatre, and . . . the director has naturally hesitated to run so great a risk as to produce operas, the success of which appeared so problematical. An event, however, has lately occurred which has entirely falsified the sombre predictions of the anti-Wagnerites.*

“The director, therefore, considers that the production of one of Herr Wagner’s operas should no longer be delayed, and as three of the most celebrated interpreters of those productions in Germany are now engaged at the Royal Italian opera . . . the director has determined to produce . . . *Lohengrin*. . . . The principal characters to be undertaken by Mademoiselle Marianne

* This was the triumphant success of *Lohengrin* in Italy.

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Brandt, Herr Kochler, and Mademoiselle Emmy Zimmermann."

The prospectus did not anticipate that their *débutante*, Emma Albani, would prove to be amongst the greatest interpreters of the principal female character in *Lohengrin*, but so it was; as Elsa she appeared in May, 1875, in the Italian version of the opera, which had been prepared for Mr. Mapleson, but which he did not for various reasons produce, and as Elsa she achieved one of those great triumphs such as seldom fall to the lot of any artist at the very outset of their career. But of this more will be heard in its proper place. At all events, none of the great Wagnerian artists mentioned in the 1872 prospectus appeared in the opera, for the reason that it was produced in the Italian language with exclusively Italian artists engaged in the cast.

During the autumn of 1872 a considerable success was scored on August 29 by the production of a "fantastical spectacle" by Dion Boucicault and Planché, entitled *Babil and Bijou*. In it appeared a young singer, Joseph Maas, who afterwards achieved some reputation, other parts being taken by Mrs. Howard Paul, Lionel Brough, Annie Sinclair, and Helen Barry.

The season 1873 began on Tuesday, April 1, and Gye announced with pardonable pride that



SCENE FROM "BABIL AND BIJOU" AT COVENT GARDEN
THEATRE, 1872.

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he was still able to count the three most renowned *prime donne* in Europe among his *pensionnaires* in the persons of Adelina Patti, Pauline Lucca, and Emma Albani, and besides these stars, Mesdames Scalchi, Sinico and Monbelli, Signors Nicolini, Bettini, Graziani, Cotogni, Maurel, and Faure, were still lending their powerful support to this brilliant company.

The *repertoire* of the theatre now included no less than forty-four operas, the novelties promised being Verdi's *Ernani*, and a revival of Rossini's *Mosé en Égypte*, with new scenery, costumes, and decorations.

1874 found a similar company announced as engaged, with the possible exception of Lucca, whose arrival by the date of her first performance on April 8 was considered doubtful. Among the newest operas promised, *Mignon*, by Ambroise Thomas, should be mentioned as having enjoyed a long spell of popularity. The Christmas pantomime for the year was the *Babes in the Wood*, with a cast which included Rebecca Isaacs, a singer whose talents had brought her a reputation in a higher form of dramatic art than pantomime.

The season of 1875 was announced to commence on Tuesday, March 30, with *Guglielmo Tell*; a company of singers with the same stars at their head was engaged as before. *Roméo et*

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Juliette was announced for the first time for seven years, and *Le pré aux Clercs*, by Herold, was given for the first time in England. These events are, however, of second-rate importance compared to the first production of *Lohengrin*, which took place on May 8 before an audience that packed Covent Garden to overflowing. According to Mr. Klein, who was present, it was about the worst performance of *Lohengrin* ever seen in an important theatre, in spite of the singing of Albani as Elsa and Nicolini as Lohengrin. The chorus sang out of tune, and the orchestra played too loud. But, in spite of these disadvantages, the opera was received with tremendous enthusiasm, and its success was complete.

The pantomime this year was upon the subject of *Cinderella*, which had not been utilized at Covent Garden since its original production by Blanchard eleven years previously.

1876 began, as many previous seasons had done, with *William Tell* in Italian. Among the artists announced for first appearances was Signor Gayarré, who had, according to Mr. Mapleson, broken a contract made with him, and rendered himself liable for £8000 damages, won in an action in the Italian courts, and which the director of Her Majesty's found himself unable to obtain. He did not, however, make his *début*

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until the following year. The novelties presented were Verdi's grand opera of *Aïda*, with Adelina Patti in the title *rôle*, and *Tannhäuser*, in which Albani sang the principal female *rôle*, that of Venus.

In 1877 the repertoire of Covent Garden Theatre reached the total of 50 operas, a number possessed, as the director proudly announced, by no other theatre in Europe. It may be interesting to give a brief summary of them under the composers' names—

6 by Meyerbeer	8 by Verdi	1 by Ricci
3 „ Mozart	2 „ Gounod	2 „ Wagner
5 „ Rossini	1 „ Thomas	1 „ Campana
1 „ Gluck	1 „ Flotow	1 „ Cimarosa
1 „ Weber	4 „ Auber	1 „ Poniatowski
7 „ Donizetti	1 „ Beethoven	1 „ Gomez
3 „ Bellini		

The most noteworthy event was perhaps the London *début* (April 7) of Gayarré, a Spaniard by birth, with an Italian training, who held a premier position among tenors for many years in operatic London. Mr. Klein says:—

“He ‘bridged over’ to a large extent the interval that separated Mario’s retirement from the advent—as a tenor—of Jean de Reszke. . . . He was an admirable ‘Lohengrin,’ and was the first singer in this part to vary the charm of the love music in the bridal duet by the judicious employment of a particularly lovely *mezza voce*.”

During the year, Her Majesty’s Theatre, after

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a period of ten years' silence, once again heard the music of an opera within its walls.

During the autumn of 1878 and the next year, the Brothers Gatti took the theatre for a series of Promenade Concerts, and engaged the services of Arthur Sullivan as principal conductor. His inclusion of a selection from the music of *Pinafore* during the concerts is always said to have first turned the sun of popularity towards the Opera Comique where that opera was being performed.

In December of this year the death occurred of Frederick Gye, as the result of a gun accident, after a career of almost continuous success, and lasting over thirty years. The death of Charles J. Mathews (*q.v.*) occurred in the same month, aged seventy-five.

In April, 1879, the theatre reopened under the sole management of Mr. Ernest Gye, who had been for many years associated with its greatest successes under the guidance of his father. He still numbered Patti and Scalchi in his company, and to them Jean Lassalle was now added, for whom *Le Roi de Lahore*, by Massenet, was produced.

1880 saw the Covent Garden *début* of a great bass singer, Edouard de Reszke, as Indra in *Le Roi de Lahore*. He was then a young man, only twenty-six years of age, but his voice had already

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“developed the richness of *timbre* and amplitude of volume for which it is remarkable” (Klein). He did not, however, attain the enormous popularity that his brother Jean has since achieved.

In 1880, Prosper Sainton, who had for many years been leader of the band at Covent Garden, resigned that position.

1881 was rendered notable by the visit of Anton Rubinstein to London, principally to see the production of his opera, *The Demon*, at Covent Garden.

1882 saw the return of the captivating artist, Pauline Lucca, after an absence of ten years, during which, says Mr. Klein, her voice had lost none of its freshness, while the piquant grace of her style . . . was even more striking than before.

She played in *Carmen* here for the first time this year, but her performance of Selika in *L'Africaine* remained, as it had ever been, her *chef d'œuvre*, or, as Mr. Klein describes it, “a dream—a supreme achievement to be mentioned in the same breath with the Rosina of Patti and the Marguerite of Christine Nilsson.”

The critics of the day remarked upon the dearth of male singers at Covent Garden. Only one *débutant*, Monsieur Dufriche, is described as “fairly successful.” Novelties, too, were few and far between, the only new opera promised being Lenepveu's *Velleda*, the first performance of which

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took place on Tuesday, July 4. As, however says one critic, "this was evidently placed upon the stage rather to gratify the singers than the listeners, the less said about it the better."

Mr. Lunn, writing in the *Musical Times* for February, 1882, calls attention

"to the fact of so few of our most eminent lyrical vocalists being Italians. . . . Madame Patti is an American, of Spanish extraction; Madame Albani is a Canadian; Madame Sembrich is a Pole; Madame Fürsch-Madier is a German; Madame Valleria, American; Madame Trebelli and Mdlle. De Reszké, French; Señor Gayarré, Spanish; Signor Mierzwinski, a Pole; Herr Labatt, German; MM. Faure, Maurel, Verguet, Nicolini, Soulacroix, and Lassalle, French. Granting, then, that when purely Italian operas are given, those to whom the language is foreign, although able to sing the notes, must pronounce the words imperfectly, what possible reason can there be, when so many nationalities are represented in a lyrical company, for translating every opera into Italian? With a number of German vocalists accustomed to sing the music in the language to which it was composed, why should not a German Opera be performed in German? With French artists, imbued with the characteristics of the school, why not play a French Opera in French? Surely those who were not born in Germany or France could quite as easily study the language of those countries as that of Italy.

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It is true that these questions are now practically answered by the visit of a German company to England, and this may very probably be followed by a company from France; but in the interest of the lessees to whom the lyrical drama in this country has been so long intrusted, we should have been glad if they could have foreseen and prepared for this decline in the taste for Italian opera before it was too late."

Later in the season the same writer notes with satisfaction and some surprise that the change he advocated had been decisively effected.

Probably not the oldest *habitué* of Covent Garden Theatre at this date could remember the singing of the famous Kitty Stephens, whose reputation dated back half a century before. This gifted and beautiful lady, in the person of the Dowager Countess of Essex, expired early in 1882, at her house in Belgrave Square.

A writer on musical matters, recording her death, says—

“As Miss Stephens, she appeared in the then popular operas, *Artaxerxes*, *The Duenna*, and *The Beggar's Opera*. Those, however, were days when dramas interspersed with songs satisfied a large portion of the musical public, and Miss Stephens was, perhaps, even greater in mere ballad-singing than in the rendering of more important pieces. Her voice was most sympathetic in quality, and its compass reached

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to D in alt ; but she relied less upon display than upon the earnest and natural delivery of her words. With all who loved an artless style and purity of vocalization she was a great favourite ; and much regret was felt when, in the zenith of her popularity, she became Countess of Essex, and retired from the profession. The Earl of Essex, whom she married, was a widower, and at the time of the wedding was eighty-two years of age. He died shortly after his marriage ; and the Dowager Countess, who was much respected in private society, lived to be eighty-eight.”

Up to this year Colonel Mapleson had been for some time closely associated (in both London and New York) with Mr. Ernest Gye and the directors of the Royal Italian Opera, Limited. He now found himself obliged to withdraw from the connection, and Mr. Ernest Gye was left as general manager of the company.

In the records of the year mention must be made of the death of Richard Wagner, the great poet-musician, whose daring achievements had revolutionized opera the wide world over, and whose productions had long since made their all-conquering presence felt at Covent Garden.

The entire season of 1883 was only timed to last twelve weeks, and but little that was novel or even interesting was found in the programme. On the opening night *Aida* was performed with



SIR MICHAEL COSTA.

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a new tenor, Signor Marconi. In *I Puritani* a new baritone, Signor Battistini, appeared as Riccardo with great success. Pauline Lucca again sang, and Boïto's *Mefistofele* was produced. The *habitués* of the house were pleased by the restoration of "Fops Alley," and there were other structural improvements in the interior, chiefly with a view to safety in case of alarm of fire or panic of any sort. The only important novelty was Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, which was well received; while Joseph Maas, whose operatic *début* took place in *Lohengrin*, proved that English vocalists are sometimes able to hold their own among the highest ranks of the profession.

1884 was noticeable for the death of the first, and, indeed, the last, great conductor of the Royal Italian Opera under Gye, Sir Michael Costa. It is true that for fifteen years his autocratic personality had been removed from the theatre, but there can be no disputing the fact that it was under his *bâton* that Covent Garden became identified, as it did, with all that was greatest and best in the musical art of its day. Curiously enough, the year of his death was to witness the temporary eclipse also of the great institution over which he had virtually ruled.

The season does not appear to be in any way remarkable, Albani, Lucca, Tremelli, and De Reszke, being a few among the great

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names in the programmes. That which may certainly be held to have redeemed the season from any charge of lack of distinction, was the concurrent arrangement by which German operas were produced (and enthusiastically received) during June. Indeed, for the performance of *Lohengrin* on Wednesday, June 11, with Madame Albani as Elsa, it was said that the demand for seats exceeded the record created by the first night of Verdi's *Aïda* in 1876, from which the critics concluded that the public were more ready to hear a new masterpiece, provided it was likely to be reasonably well performed, than they were to hear any of the worn-out operas of which for a generation they had had a surfeit.

It will be remembered that Mr. Ernest Gye now had the theatre under his sole control, but his responsibility was not of long duration, for at the end of the 1884 season, the company he managed which held the sub-lease of Covent Garden fell into financial difficulties. Various reasons are put forward to account for this, among them the disinclination of society folk to patronize the opera except on Patti nights. Mr. Klein speaks of this period as that of the decline and fall of Italian opera in London. Contemporary with this was the rise in fortunes of English and German opera. 1885 and 1886

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were almost wholly barren seasons, and a climax occurred with a riot at Her Majesty's on March 6, 1886, after which the theatre remained closed for a year. Mapleson gives his version of the Royal Italian Opera's decease with characteristic bluntness. He says that it collapsed for want of £2000!

Colonel Mapleson ran a short season of Italian opera at Covent Garden in July, 1885. Unfortunately, Patti was unable to appear, as announced, in *La Traviata* on the opening night, owing to a cold caught driving over some Welsh mountains to her train, or, as Mr. Mapleson humorously puts it, "Signor Nicolini . . . from some uncontrollable desire to catch an extra salmon, had exposed La Diva to the early morning air, an act of imprudence which cost me something like £1000." This happened twice during the season, which, however, ended with Patti as Leonora in *Il Trovatore*, and a grand presentation to her of a diamond bracelet in commemoration of her twenty-fifth consecutive annual engagement at Covent Garden, which theatre, in the words of an address spoken by Mr. Mapleson at the time, "had the honour of introducing her when still a child to the public of England, and indirectly, therefore, to that of Europe and the whole civilized world."

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In 1886 there appeared anonymously a little volume apparently written by a foreigner, criticising with much acumen the state of music in England in the year 1885. It is entitled "Music in the Land of Fogs," by Felix Remo, and there is little doubt that M. Remo, with whose identity we are unacquainted, lays his finger on the cause of the decay in operatic prosperity in his chapter dealing with the subject.

"Notwithstanding," says M. Remo, "the immense and beautiful halls of Covent Garden, Her Majesty's, and Drury Lane, which are essentially adapted for music on a great scale, London has no National Opera Theatre. Opera is represented there by three months of the Italian season, which lasts from May till the close of July [M. Remo writes before the days of an added six weeks autumn season], by some few weeks of opera in English, and by a few theatres in which operettas are performed. The question is, therefore, . . . how comes it that . . . London, so wealthy and so prone to pleasures, has not a permanent national opera? What does it lack? It has the theatres, the composers, the wealth, and the national operas. If there are not a great number of the latter, it is simply owing to the absence of a market for their wares, and to the fact that, after labouring for six months, their pieces may be played once, and frequently not at all. A national opera would encourage them, and the competition would have as its outcome

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the production of really good work. Moreover, the representations could be varied by producing foreign works in English, as is done in the national theatres of other countries.”

But the reason opera run as a private enterprise does not uniformly prosper is, according to our foreign critic—

“the lack of the moral support of the population, the fixing of reasonable prices of admission, and the engaging of artists who will not crush the undertaking by putting forward pretensions which their talent, whatever it might be, never justifies. The star system has been the bane of Italian Opera. Ensemble has been sacrificed to it.”

Monsieur Rémo then enters into an elaborate argument to prove his contention, and incidentally shows how the system he attacks had, since the days of Handel, been almost invariably fatal to its promoters, with the brilliant exception of Frederick Gye. He then gives some figures, showing the burden that Covent Garden lessees had to bear in 1885.

There were then sixty-three years of the lease to run, and the ground rent, according to Monsieur Rémo was, £1216 12s. per annum. Mr. Gatti was, at that time, proprietor of the lease, which was, however, mortgaged, together with the building itself.

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So it was hardly to be wondered at that the sons of Frederick Gye stooped under a burden so heavy, and faced with the accumulated disadvantages before mentioned.

1886, therefore, found Covent Garden tenantless, and with Her Majesty's in similar plight, it appeared likely that no Italian opera would be played at all. From this reproach, however, London was saved by Signor Lago, whose name was already familiar at Covent Garden. Supported by Monsieur Gayarré and others, Lago got together a troupe of artistes that included Albani, Maurel, and Ella Russell.

The last-named lady made a highly successful appearance, while the baritone, Signor d'Andrade, was also well thought of, but the scenic display and mounting generally was not up to the standard that patrons of the first opera house in London had a right to expect.

Happily, however, a brighter time for the lovers of opera was at hand. With the necessity for a new system came the man to provide it, and with the doings of the new-comer we shall close our long record of events.

The first weeks of the 1887 season were utilized at Covent Garden by Mr. Mapleson, as indefatigable as ever. His only novelty was Gounod's *Mirella*, revived after twenty years' neglect, with Madam Nevada in the title-*rôle*. There was

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also Bizet's *Pêcheurs de Perles*, but neither opera created a great deal of interest. "Popular prices" was the order of the day, and during the remainder of the season nothing heroic was attempted. Signor Lago followed, opening his season on May 24, at the usual opera prices, with *La Favorita*. Later on *William Tell* was revived, and a real novelty—Glinka's *La Vie pour le Czar*—was placed upon the stage for the first time in England. Thus Signor Lago was a very excellent stop-gap; but he was merely keeping the place warm for one who might almost have been destined from his cradle to revive the ancient glories of Covent Garden. His very surname was suggestive of the palmiest days of the older building on the famous site. His father, Augustus Harris the first, had been connected, as we have seen, a generation and a half before, with the great productions of the greatest days of Frederick Gye.

Mr. Klein quotes him as saying—

"My father was stage-manager at Covent Garden, and if any infant ever stage-managed his father, I was that infant. Almost as soon as I could run alone he used to take me with him to the theatre. I remember quite well, as a little boy, standing in the wings as he walked about the stage, while the great *prima donnas* came and petted and kissed me."

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An enviable recollection, indeed!

Augustus Harris was in 1887 still a young man, and full of immense enthusiasm. Possessed of great organizing ability and plenty of good experience for his years, he had started a season of grand opera at Drury Lane, of which he had the lease, with the object of attracting the aristocracy, and once more making the opera the central social function of the London season. He was so fortunate as to secure the services of the tenor Jean de Reszke, then but little known in London, where his brother and sister had both already been seen and heard in opera. This superb artist and his brother were immediately engaged at £100 a night and £320 a month respectively. Jean opened in *Aida*, and secured an instant and complete triumph.

The season possessed many other interesting features, which cannot be mentioned here; but it was not financially a successful one for the enterprising young manager. Undaunted by this, he again set to work systematically to realize the ultimate object of his hopes from the first. This was to obtain the lease of Covent Garden, and transfer his splendid company, bag and baggage, across Bow Street to its proper home. With the powerful aid of some leading society ladies, notably Lady de Grey and Lady Charles Beresford, and Mr. H. V. Higgins,

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Lady de Grey's brother-in-law, a canvass was begun of the smartest and richest people in the great world of London, and this resulted in a subscription that, in a very short time, rendered the *impresario* quite easy in his mind as to the success of his bold experiment.

During Christmas, 1887, the management produced *Jack and the Beanstalk*, which may now quite possibly prove to have been the last pantomime produced in the original home of English pantomime.

On Monday, May 14, 1888, Augustus Harris inaugurated his first Covent Garden season. The opera chosen was *Lucrezia*, with Trebelli as Maffio Orsini. A brilliant audience, headed by the Prince and Princess of Wales, now their Majesties King Edward VII. and Queen Alexandra, were present, and a successful season was early foreshadowed. The principal new-comers engaged were the De Reszkes and Madam Melba, the famous Australian soprano; but there were, besides, Ella Russell, Margaret Macintyre, Albani, Trebelli, and others of the very first rank among the company. The great night upon which the Polish brothers De Reszke and Lassalle made their *reentrée* is described by Mr. Klein in his "Recollections," who also refers at length to the general success, artistic and financial, that attended the rest of the season.

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Mr. Klein gives an interesting account of the working of the hierarchy that "ran" the opera-house through the medium of Augustus Harris when he was alive, and the *personnel* of which is, to a large extent, the same to-day, save that the place of manager is filled by Harris's successor, the secretary to the all-powerful syndicate, Mr. Neil Forsyth.

"The subscription for the season of 1889 was larger than ever. The Prince of Wales (now King Edward VII.) was taking a deep personal interest in the opera, and he and the Princess were among its most regular attendants. Closely in the royal wake followed an ever-augmenting section of the aristocracy, overflowing from grand and pit-tier boxes into several rows of stalls; . . . and the duty of representing these subscribers *vis-à-vis* with the manager was fulfilled with much tact by Mr. Harry V. Higgins, the brother-in-law of Lady de Grey. Her ladyship never for an instant relaxed the hold which her initial efforts had given her in the control and working of the organization.

"At first purely artistic and disinterested, then guided by a general consensus of opinion, finally dictated by her own individual ideas—the wishes of this indefatigable lady have grown to be the commands—nay, the absolute law—of the most independent opera house in Europe. . . . It is enough, then, to say that Lady de Grey . . . occupied from the outset a position of

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extraordinary power and influence. . . . During the early days of the renaissance much diplomacy was used by all parties. Mr. Higgins would convey suggestions to Mr. Harris, who would thereupon have a chat with Lady de Grey, and promise to do his best to meet her wishes. Needless to add that they seldom passed unheeded. As time went on the *modus operandi* gradually altered. When Harris became overwhelmed with his various duties, he was glad to rely upon Mr. Higgins for advice, or even to go to Lady de Grey 'for instructions.' A new *prima donna* had to be engaged, a new opera to be commissioned, a Continental success to be mounted, a new box-subscriber to be passed and admitted. Ere any of these things could be done, it was essential that Lady de Grey should be consulted. So by degrees her word became law, and law it remains to this day."

The 1889 season's novelties included Bizet's *Pêcheurs de Perles*, which failed, and a long-expected performance of Gounod's *Roméo and Juliette*, in French, with a superb cast, rivalling any of the traditional great nights of the theatre's best days: Roméo, Jean de Reszke; Fr. Laurent, Edouard de Reszke; Tybalt, M. Montariol; Mercutio, M. Winogradow; Capulet, M. Seguin; Duc, M. Castelmary; Stefano, Mlle. Jane de Vigne; Gertrude, Mme. Lablache; Juliette, Mme. Melba.

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It is not surprising that such an ensemble attracted great audiences, as did an even more interesting occasion on July 13, 1889, when Jean de Reszke first appeared as Walther von Stolzing in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*. The opera was not at that time done, as it had been five years before, in German, but in Italian, an anachronism banished in the light of later days. The cast was as follows: Walther von Stolzing, Jean de Reszke; Hans Sachs, M. Lassalle; Beckmesser, M. Isnardon; David, M. Montariol; Pogner, Signor Abramoff; Kothner, M. Winogradow; Magdalena, Mlle. Bauermeister; Eva, Mme. Albani. Conductor, Signor Mancinelli; stage-manager, M. Lapissida.

A noteworthy event of the season was a gala performance in honour of the Shah of Persia, the first since the visit of the Emperor Napoleon III. and his lovely Empress many years before.

1890 witnessed what Mr. Klein calls a craze for opera in French.

“The *Romeo* experiment was bearing fruit with a vengeance. As far as time for preparation would permit, no opera composed to a French text was to be sung in any but the French language. Curiously enough, *Faust* and *Les Huguenots* were still for a brief spell to be given in their Italian dress, but *Le Prophète*, *La Favorita*, *Hamlet*, *Carmen*, and *Esmeralda*, were

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all to be done in French for the first time. . . .
The subscription for the season amounted to
£40,000 for ten weeks of five nights each."

It is curious how seldom we meet in published writings with the name of those powerful individuals who are almost always "behind the scenes," in another sense than the theatrical one, in public events, and upon whose will the course of those events so largely depends. The owner of the lease of Covent Garden Theatre at this time was, of course, not Mr., or as he was soon to become, Sir, Augustus Harris, nor yet the wealthy and powerful syndicate, but a gentleman totally unknown to fame, a Mr. A. Montague.

The theatre was unfortunately, as had been so often its fate, heavily mortgaged, and the owner was in consequence so uncertain of the future of his property, that he would not let Harris have a long sub-lease. Eventually he let it to Signor Lago for a six weeks' autumn season of Italian opera at popular prices. During this time the sisters Ravogli made their *débuts* in *Orféo* with immense success.

Of the season of 1891 Mr. Klein gives some interesting statistics, and if not quite, as he states, the heaviest opera season on record, the brief statement in figures is sufficient evidence of the hard work done at Covent Garden during

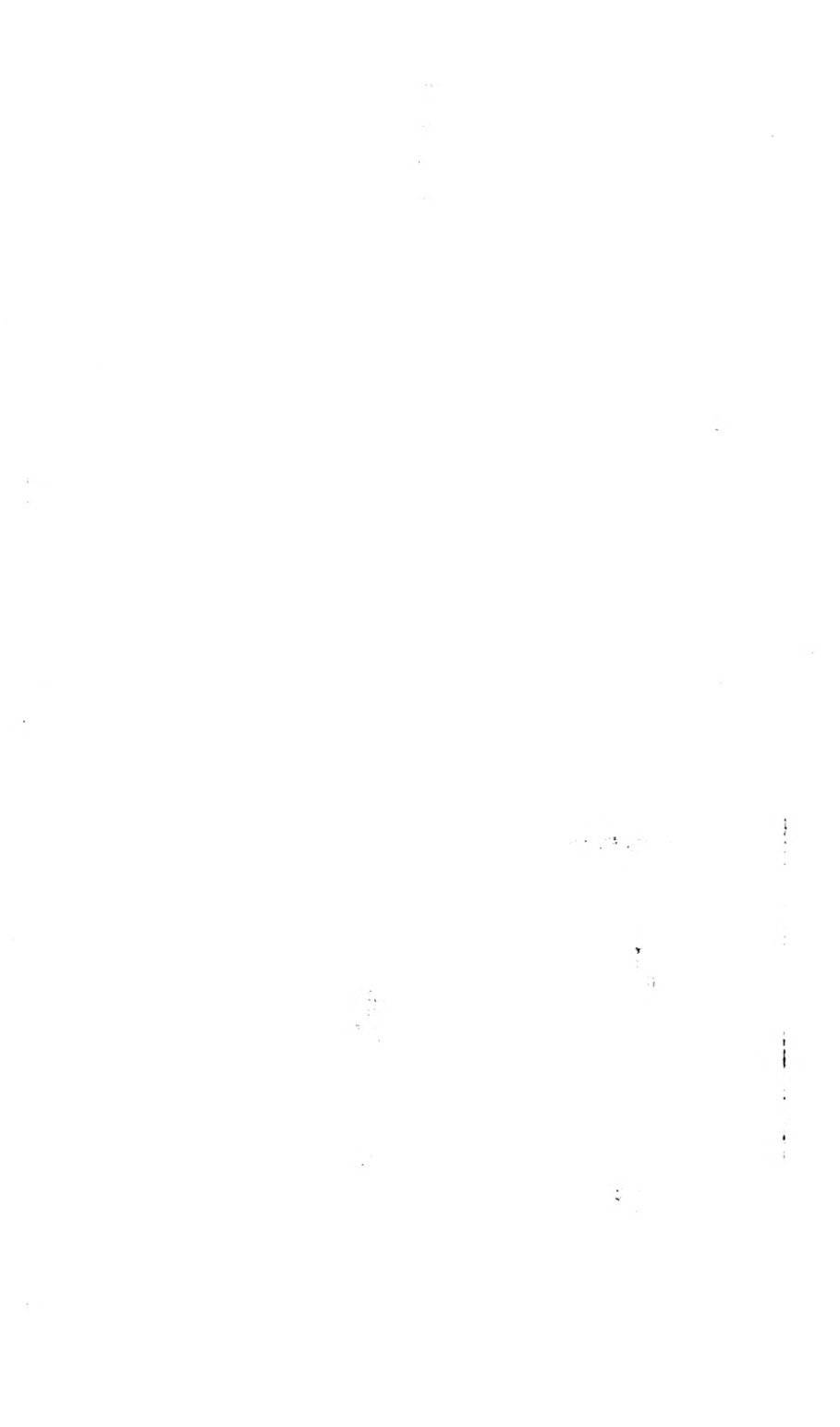
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the sixteen weeks' season. "Twenty operas were mounted, six for the first time under Harris's directorate, and ninety-four representations were given in sixteen weeks. The total receipts were £80,000." The company included forty artists, all the most prominent of whom we have already named frequently in this work. The operas sung were as follows:—

			Perfor- mances				Perfor- mances
Faust	...	...	12	Traviata	...	...	4
Lohengrin	...	...	9	Manon	...	...	4
Romeo	...	...	8	Le Prophète	...	...	3
Huguenots	...	...	8	Mireille	...	...	3
Carmen	...	...	7	Meistersinger	...	...	2
Orféo	...	...	6	Lucia	...	...	2
Don Giovanni	...	...	5	Mefistofele	...	...	2
Tannhäuser	...	...	5	Martha	...	...	2
Rigoletto	...	...	5	Aïda	...	...	2
Otello	...	...	4	Fidelio	...	...	1

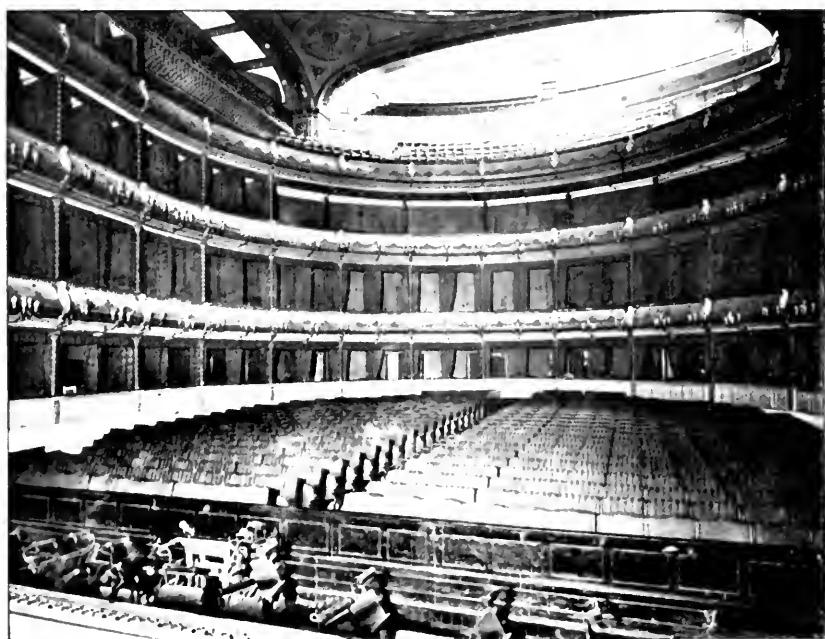
During the autumn Augustus Harris gave a season of French opera with a company of artists from the Opera-Comique, including Mademoiselle Simonnet and others.

In 1892 Harris sandwiched a season of German opera by German artists from Bayreuth on Wednesdays at Covent Garden, an adroit move, by which he secured himself from risk of loss, as Wednesday was an "off" night." The Wagner enthusiasts thus had the felicity of hearing Alvary as Siegfried and Rosa Sueher as Brunnhilde in the great London home of





THE COVENT GARDEN STAGE SET FOR A PERFORMANCE - PRESENT DAY.



THE AUDITORIUM FROM THE SIDE - PRESENT DAY.

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opera. This year, too, it is recorded that Harris very properly dropped the traditional word "Italian," and announced his season for the first time officially as "Royal Opera, Covent Garden."

In 1892 Harris, combining as he did in his own person the dictatorship of both Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres, produced the extraordinary total of one hundred and fifty operatic representations at the two houses during the comparatively short space of time at his disposal.

From the winter season of 1892-3 dates the inception, too, of that great and successful series of *bals masqués* at Covent Garden which have done much to remove the blame of public dulness from our London winters, and which, moreover, continue a tradition associated with Covent Garden from its earliest days.

In 1893 London first made the acquaintance of the younger school of Italian opera composers in Mascagni and Leoncavallo. A royal wedding, that of the present Prince and Princess of Wales, was the occasion of a State performance at Covent Garden, while the unusual event occurred of two English operas being produced during the last month of the season, viz. Isidore de Lara's *Amy Robsart* and Villiers Stanford's *Veiled Prophet* (in Italian).

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In 1894 there were presented new operas by Massenet, Bruneau, and Cowen, together with two novelties, one by the veteran Verdi, *Falstaff*, and *Manon Lescaut*, by Puccini.

1895 witnessed the return of Adelina Patti and the temporary absence from Covent Garden of De Reszke, for the first time for eight years. The Patti *rentrée* was, of course, an extraordinary triumph.

In 1896 the De Reszkes were back again, this time singing Wagner's operas in the poet-composer's native tongue, together with Plançon, Albani, and Emma Eames. But the year was saddened for Covent Garden *habitués* by the heavy blow that befel them in the death of Sir Augustus Harris during the very height of the season, at the distressingly early age of forty-four.

Such intense mental activity as his has always the tendency to overstrain the bodily faculties. Mr. Klein says that he did not realize the limit of his physical powers. Alas! for the blind fatuity that urges such men as he, with their valuable lives in their hands, headlong to almost certain breakdown in the mad rush for power and position. He bore, as we know, the name famous in Covent Garden annals a century before, and his genius for management, combined with talent as an *impresario*, librettist, and stage-manager, were worthy of his name,



NH FORSYTH, ESQ., M.V.O.

From a Photograph by Messrs. Lumley & Co. Boston.

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than which it is impossible to bestow higher praise.

Upon the death of Sir Augustus Harris the present Covent Garden Syndicate was formed to carry on the opera house. Having Earl de Grey as its head, and Mr. Higgins as a director, there was no fear that the previous record would be spoilt. Mr. Maurice Grau became (for a short time only) managing director, and Mr. Neil Forsyth—so well known to Londoners in general and opera lovers in particular—secretary, in which position he has since remained, to the satisfaction of all having dealings with the theatre.

And now we have come to the end of our long journey, since it is not our intention to pursue the history of Covent Garden's triumphs into the last few years. Much—though not, it is to be hoped, of surpassing interest—has had perforce to be omitted. And now there are rumours in the air that the famous old play-house is to be pulled down, and the site turned over to the ground landlord for extension of the market. What truth there may be in such reports the present writer knoweth not. But it may well be long before such a decision is reached. Such traditions as those included in the history of Covent Garden Theatre are not to be lightly tampered with. Whatever be its

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fate, nothing, it is consoling to think, can rob it of the recollections of its past glory and present fame. It is the humble wish of the writer that his name may perhaps be yet remembered by posterity awhile as the chronicler, faithful as far as in him lay, who drew together the many scattered strands that form Covent Garden's banner of immortality, and enshrined them in the pages of the present book.

APPENDIX

I

PATENTEES, LESSEES, AND MANAGERS OF COVENT GARDEN THEATRE (CHRONO- LOGICALLY ARRANGED) FROM 1732 TO THE PRESENT DAY.

John Rich	...	...	...	...	...	1732-1761
John Beard	...	...	...	...	...	1761-1767
George Colman and others	...	...	...	...	...	1767-1774
Thomas Harris	...	...	...	...	...	1774-1802
Thomas Harris and John Philip Kemble	...	...	...	...	...	1802-1809
Henry Harris and John Philip Kemble	...	...	...	...	...	1809-1822
Charles Kemble and others	...	...	...	...	...	1822-1832
Alfred Bunn	...	...	...	...	...	1832-1834
D. W. Osbaldiston	...	...	...	...	...	1835-1837
W. C. Macready	...	...	...	...	...	1837-1839
Madam Vestris and C. J. Mathews	...	...	...	...	...	1839-1842
Charles Kemble (second time)	...	...	...	...	...	Part of 1842
H. Wallack	...	...	...	...	...	,, 1843
? Laurent	...	...	...	...	...	,, 1845
Frederick Beale	...	...	...	...	...	1846-1847
Frederick Delafield	...	...	...	...	...	1847-1849
Frederick Gye	...	...	...	...	...	1849-1878
Professor Anderson (sub-lessee)	...	...	...	...	...	Part of 1856
Louisa Pyne and William Harrison	...	...	...	...	...	Part of 1856-64
Colonel Mapleson (sub-lessee)	...	...	...	...	...	Various dates
Ernest Gye	...	...	...	...	...	1879-1884
Signor Lago	...	...	...	...	...	1886-1887
Sir Augustus Harris	...	...	...	...	...	1888-1896
Neil Forsyth (secretary of Syndicate)	...	...	...	...	...	1897 to present day

APPENDIX

II

PRINCIPAL EVENTS CONNECTED WITH COVENT GARDEN THEATRE IN EACH SEASON FROM THE OPENING TO THE PRESENT DAY.

1732. James Shepherd, architect, built new theatre for J. Rich, who opened same on December 6.
1734. Handel took theatre for opera first time November 9. *Pastor Fido* produced. Mlle. Sallé appeared.
1735. Handel's *Athalia* produced. Beef Steak Club started.
1736. Handel's *Alexander's Feast* first produced, February 19.
1737. Handel left, having lost heavily.
1740. November 6, Peg Woffington's first appearance at Covent Garden. Probable rehearsal of "Rule Britannia" at Covent Garden. Also J. Lockman's and Boyce's oratorio *David's Lamentation over Saul and Jonathan*.
1742. George Anne Bellamy's first appearance on the stage, *Love for Love*, on March 27. Mrs. Cibber engaged.
1743. Handel again took theatre for oratorio, February 18. First performance of *Samson*; Beard sang the part of "Samson." March 23, first time of *Messiah* in London; March 25, second time of *Messiah* in London; March 29, third time of *Messiah* in London.
1744. *Joseph and Semele* in Lent.
1745. Colley Cibber's last appearance.
1746. Handel insolvent. Garrick's first appearance at Covent Garden as "King Lear," June 11.

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1747. First performance of *Judas Macchabeus*. Garrick became manager Drury Lane, April 9.
1748. First performances of Handel's *Alexander Baelus* and *Joshua*.
1749. First performance of *Theodora* (containing "Angels ever bright and fair"). *The Messiah* first announced in London as *The Messiah*, and not, as hitherto, *A Sacred Oratorio*.
1755. Mrs. Siddons born.
1757. *Triumph of Time*, Handel's last oratorio. *Douglas* first produced in London, March 14. Peg Woffington's last appearance, being stricken with illness on Covent Garden stage.
1759. Handel's last appearance, April 6th (dies Good Friday, April 13, age seventy-four); leaves his organ at Covent Garden to Rich. Beard married Rich's daughter as his second wife this year.
1760. Jonathan Battishill appointed conductor of the band about this time (age about twenty-two). John Stanley and J. C. Smith joined in carrying on oratorios.
1761. Rich died, November 26; buried Hillingdon. Dibdin's first opera, *The Shepherd's Artifice*. Beard and Bencraft began management; ground rent £300 per annum.
1762. Samuel Arnold engaged as musical director. Fitzpatrick Riot. *Artaxerxes*, by Arne, first produced February 2, 1763.
1765. January 30, Mrs. Cibber died. First benefit for Theatrical Fund. *Israel in Egypt* first performed at Covent Garden.
1767. Beard retired. T. Harris, Powell, Rutherford, G. Colman (May 14) buy patent for £60,000; each had one-fourth interest. The pianoforte first used in public at Covent Garden.
1768. January 29, first production on any stage of

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- Goldsmith's first play, *The Good-natured Man*. Rutherford sold his share to Leake, bookseller, and Degge, a solicitor. J. Brandon (afterwards famous as box-keeper) entered service of Covent Garden.
- 1769-70. Lawsuit between the patentees (see *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1768).
1772. Miss Linley sang in oratorio during Lent. Theatre partly rebuilt.
1773. *She Stoops to Conquer* first produced on any stage (Monday, March 15). The Macklin riots.
1774. Colman resigned, and sold his share to his partners, and Harris became manager, eventually buying out Leake and Degge and Powell's widow, afterwards Mrs. Fisher, wife of leader of Covent Garden band. Dr. Linley and Stanley carry on the oratorios; J. C. Smith retires.
1775. Sheridan's comedy, *The Rivals*, first produced on any stage, January 17. *The Duenna* (Sheridan and Linley's opera), November 21. The Covent Garden Fund was incorporated by Act of Parliament.*
1776. *The Seraglio*, by Dibdin, November 14. Arne's *Caractacus* produced, December 6. Garrick retired.
1777. Anna Storace first appeared at Covent Garden in the oratorios. Spranger Barry died.
1778. C. Dibdin appointed composer to Covent Garden, £10 a week, or £300 for season.
1779. A coalition or working agreement made with Drury Lane. Miss Ray murdered, April 7, in the Piazza.

* The existence of the Covent Garden Fund was terminated by an order of the High Court of Justice (Chancery Division), dated August 7, 1899, whereby its benefits were transferred to the Royal General Theatrical Fund and the Actors Benevolent Fund, respectively.

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1780. *The Belle's Stratagem* first produced on any stage, February 1.
1781. Mrs. Inchbald first played at Covent Garden. Jackson of Exeter wrote music for comic opera (*The Lord of the Manor*) at Drury Lane. Charles Lamb's visit to the theatre.
1782. Dibdin left Covent Garden. William Shield succeeded him. Mrs. Abington first appeared at Covent Garden, November 29.
1786. Mrs. Siddons' first appearance at Covent Garden, February 25, at a benefit. Mrs. Billington's first appearance at Covent Garden.
1787. April 21, Braham's *début* as a boy at Covent Garden. Covent Garden partly rebuilt this year by Mr. Holland.
1791. Death of John Beard. Shield resigned; Mazzinghi employed. *Oscar and Malvina*, by W. Reeve. Shield re-engaged at Covent Garden.
1792. W. Reeve appointed composer to Covent Garden. Theatre again partly rebuilt. Architect, Mr. Holland. Prices increased: boxes, 6s.; pit, 3s. 6d.; gallery, 2s.; and upper gallery, 1s. Duke of Bedford lent £15,000, and raised ground-rent to £940.
1793. Arnold appointed organist to Westminster Abbey, and wrote music for one more pantomime for Covent Garden.
1794. George Colman, senior, died.
1795. Ashley, famous bassoonist, became director of oratorios.
1796. Signora Galli sang in oratorios at seventy-five years of age.
1800. Haydn's *Creation* first performed in England, March 28. G. F. Cooke first appeared there.
1801. William Russell appointed composer to Covent Garden. Braham reappeared at Covent Garden as a man. Attwood's last opera this year.

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1802. John Philip Kemble bought Lewis's sixth share in the theatre, and became manager.
1803. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons' first season at Covent Garden. *John Bull*, by G. Colman, Junr., first produced, March 5.
1804. Master Betty or "the young Roscius" appeared.
1805. Charles Mathews' first appearance at Covent Garden for Dibdin's benefit. "The Bay of Biscay" first sung by Braham at Covent Garden. Mozart's additional accompaniment to *The Messiah* first performed in public.
1806. Grimaldi first engaged at Covent Garden.
1808. Theatre burnt on September 20; fire consumed many of Handel's MS. scores, his organ, the wines of Beefsteak Club, etc.
1809. Covent Garden Theatre reopened. O.P. Riots.
1811. Henry Bishop appointed composer to Covent Garden and director of music for three years.
1812. Mrs. Siddons retired from stage.
1813. Death of W. Russell.
1814. Miss O'Neill's first appearance at Covent Garden.
1816. Macready's first appearance at Covent Garden; also Miss Stephens, afterwards Countess of Essex.
1817. J. P. Kemble retired from stage, June 23.
1818. William Farren appeared at Covent Garden.
1819. Mrs. Siddons' last appearance on the stage, June 9.
- 1820-2. *Virginus*, by J. S. Knowles, first produced May 17, 1820. T. Harris (the elder) died and Kemble made over his share to his brother Charles.
1822. Henry Harris and C. Kemble quarrelled. H. Harris retired.
1823. *Clari, or The Maid of Milan*, in which "Home, Sweet Home" comes, first produced on any stage at Covent Garden, May 8. J. P. Kemble died, February 26.
- 1824-6. Weber appointed music director in place of Bishop. *Obcron* first produced, April 12, 1826;

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- Weber dying shortly after. Tom Cooke appointed in place of Weber.
1827. *La Dame Blanche*, by Boieldieu, first produced. Edmund Kean's first appearance at Covent Garden.
1828. Gasholder at theatre exploded.
1829. Fanny Kemble's *début* there, October 5. A distraint for rates and taxes at Covent Garden.
1831. Mrs. Siddons died. The theatre involved in six lawsuits.
1832. *The Hunchback*, by Knowles, first produced there, April 5. C. Kemble gave up, after losing heavily. Laporte became manager. Paganini appeared there. Fanny Kemble's farewell.
- 1833-4. Charles Kean appeared there with his father. Edmund Kean's last London appearance there. Alfred Bunn, manager of both Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Princess Victoria visited the theatre. Malibran engaged. *Fidelio* first produced in England.
1835. Osbaldiston became manager.
1836. Helen Faucit's *début*, January 5. Charles Kemble's farewell.
1837. Macready manager. Queen Victoria's first visit to Covent Garden. Clarkson Stanfield, scenic artist there. Appearance of Lola Montez at Covent Garden.
1838. *The Lady of Lyons* first produced on any stage, February 15.
1839. *Richelieu* first produced on any stage, March 7. Macready's management ended and Vestris-Mathews' management began.
- 1840-2. Charles Kemble's last appearances, March, 1840. *London Assurance* first produced on any stage, March 4, 1841. Adelaide Kemble's *début*, November 2, 1841. Sudden termination of the season, November, 1842.
1843. Adelaide Kemble retired and married. Anti-Corn Law meetings at Covent Garden.

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1844. Daniel O'Connell at Covent Garden.
1845. Mendelssohn's *Antigone* produced.
1846. Theatre reconstructed as an opera house. F. Beale manager.
1847. Persiani and Costa started the *Royal Italian Opera*.
1848-9. Delafield manager of opera. Lost £60,000 in two years. Produced *The Huguenots* and *Le Prophète* and became bankrupt.
1850. *La Juive*, by Halévy, first produced. Frederick Gye became director.
1852. The great Joanna Wagner action between Lumley of Her Majesty's Theatre and Gye. Taglioni at Covent Garden.
1854. Charles Kemble died.
1855. First appearance of Cerito at Covent Garden. Jullien's first concert there. *Trovatore* first produced, May 17.
1856. Covent Garden again burnt to the ground during masked ball, March 5.
1857. Foundation Stone laid in October.*
1858. Rebuilt by Gye, and reopened May 15. The Pynce-Harrison company opened at Covent Garden. Charles Santley made his operatic *début* there.
1859-60. Meyerbeer's *Dinorah*, and Wallace's *Lurline* produced.
1861. Patti's *début* at Covent Garden.
1862. *The Lily of Killarney* first produced, February 8.
1863. *Faust* produced there. *Début* of Pauline Lucca.
1864. Arthur Sullivan organist at Covent Garden.
1865. Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* produced.
1866. Carlotta Patti's *début* at Covent Garden.
1867. *Roméo et Juliette*, by Gounod, first produced there.

* Upon this occasion the original stone laid by George, Prince of Wales, in 1808, was discovered, and the writer is assured by Mr. Edwin O. Sachs, architect to the theatre, that it is still in position at the north-east corner of the building.

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1868. Costa resigned. Mapleson took Covent Garden for six weeks.
1869. Mapleson and Gye joined forces. Christine Nilsson, Santley, and many other great artists engaged.
1870. Tito Mattei pianist at Covent Garden. Verdi's *Macbeth* produced.
1871. Mario's farewell, July 19. Gye and Mapleson parted.
1872. Albani's *début* at Covent Garden. *Babil and Bijou* produced, August 29.
1875. *Lohengrin*, first time in England, May 8.
1878. Death of Frederick Gye.
1879. Mr. Ernest Gye director of the opera.
1880. Prosper Sainton resigned leadership of the band.
1882. Return of Pauline Lucca.
1884. Death of Sir M. Costa.
1885. Colonel Mapleson again at Covent Garden.
1886. Signor Lago's season at Covent Garden. Ella Russell's *début*.
1888. Augustus Harris became lessee and operatic director. The de Reszkes and Melba engaged.
1889. *Roméo et Juliette* in French.
1892. Engagement of great Wagner singers from Bayreuth. Harris continued his management of Drury Lane conjointly with Covent Garden.
1894. Verdi's *Falstaff* produced.
1895. Patti's return.
1896. Death of Sir A. Harris.
1897. The Royal Opera Syndicate became lessees of Covent Garden Theatre.

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III

RICH'S PORTRAITS. (See Frontispiece to vol. i.)

IT has been by no means an easy matter to obtain any portrait of Rich suitable for reproduction in this work. No painting or portrait is to be found in the National Portrait Gallery, nor is there anything of the kind in the print collection at the British Museum. Indeed, the writer was definitely assured there that it was highly improbable such a thing was in existence. Inquiry among print shops in London established the fact that, if any such existed, they were extremely scarce. Caricatures there certainly are, if not in abundance, in quite a considerable number, most of them representing him in harlequin's costume, with the mask concealing his features. The excellent French print, reproduced opposite page 6, vol. i., is fortunately an exception, and is probably a very fair likeness, apart from its interest as presenting the harlequin in detail, and not as one of a group. The graceful action of the figure is well caught, and altogether the print is of the greatest possible value.

Of other pictures representing Rich, there is one at the Garrick Club, which, attributed to Hogarth, is a picture of Rich with his family, and quite valueless for purposes of reproduction, even if the club authorities would allow it to be so used. It is, perhaps, permissible to comment upon the curious policy adopted by the club towards such requests, bearing in mind that it was originally founded "in the interests of Dramatic Art!"

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It is said that Hogarth's connection with Rich was occasioned by the great artist's satirical print caricaturing the *Beggar's Opera*. However this may be, later on Rich commissioned him to paint a group from the prison scene of the opera, a picture into which he introduced a number of portraits of the company, including Beard as Captain Macheath, and Rich himself.

Mr. W. J. Lawrence finds a difficulty in reconciling the undoubted friendship which existed between the two men with the fact that the satirical plate of "Rich's entry into Covent Garden" is also ascribed to Hogarth. But it is to be doubted whether Rich was either very thin-skinned or a man who bore malice for long, and he had been accustomed for so many years as a public man to be the target for caricaturists, that one more or less probably did not affect him.

There is existent in Hogarth's Collected Works another "conversation piece," entitled "Garden Scene at Mr. Rich's villa at Cowley." Ireland, in his "Graphic Illustrations,"* speaks of having seen it in the possession of Abraham Langford, of Highgate, whose family had it direct from the painter's hands.

Langford was the successor in his business of Cock, the famous auctioneer, who was an old friend of Rich, to whom he is represented as speaking in Hogarth's other picture of the prison scene in the *Beggar's Opera*.

It is an extraordinary thing that Ireland makes the error of calling the Covent Garden manager "Thomas" instead of John Rich, a fact which, to our thinking, somewhat detracts from the value of his lengthy remarks upon the picture. It shows the famous harlequin seated in the foreground, while the figure of his second wife, Amy, is shown standing by a table, with her hand upon it. The other figures are: his friend Cock, who is examining a picture, which is held up for his inspection by a servant; Mrs. Cock, who was a well-known connoisseur in art matters; and, lastly, the portrait of the painter himself, who is presumably

* Vol. ii. 1799, p. 68.

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also discussing the merits of the picture under consideration.

Ireland considers this group as "the best of our artist's productions in this style of painting I have ever seen. It is excellently grouped, and each figure is happily appropriate to the general subject."

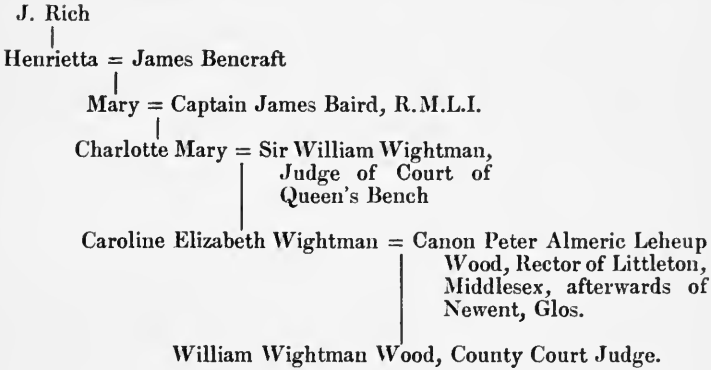
In the catalogue of the effects of the Beef Steak Club, sold at Christie's in 1867, it is noteworthy that a "portrait of John Rich, Esq.," fetched 27s. It would be interesting to trace the present whereabouts of this picture, but the writer has not been successful in doing so.

It was obvious that none of the portraits we have referred to above presented the man in sufficient detail to be completely satisfactory.

The writer had, in fact, almost given up hope of coming across anything of the kind, especially as an inquiry in *Notes and Queries* failed to bring any replies—although it brought the invaluable assistance of Mr. W. J. Lawrence to his aid—when one of those curious coincidences occurred which do sometimes happen outside the pages of a detective story. By the merest chance the writer discovered that a near relative of his own was actually married to a lineal descendant of Rich himself! Naturally from thence it was plain sailing. The family still happily possessed a fine half-length portrait of their distinguished ancestor, and its present possessor, His Honour Judge Wood, most kindly allowed it to be photographed, and reproduced in this work. It may not be without interest to state that the owner of the picture is descended from Rich's eldest daughter, Henrietta, who married James Bencraft, one of her father's company of actors, and that Judge Wood also possesses a fine holograph two-page letter from Rich to "dear Henny," which goes far to refute the alleged illiteracy of the eccentric manager.

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PEDIGREE OF THE OWNER OF THE RICH PORTRAIT.



It is believed that the portrait was left, or given in his lifetime, by John Rich to his eldest daughter, Mrs. Bencraft, from whom it passed to her eldest daughter, Harriet Bencraft, who died unmarried about 1837. After Miss Bencraft's death it came into the possession of her niece, Charlotte Mary Baird (afterwards Lady Wightman), daughter of Captain James Baird, R.M.L.I., of Lochend, near Edinburgh, and his wife, *née* Mary Bencraft. Lady Wightman, on her death in 1871, left it to her nephew, General Augustus Fraser Baird, late Bengal Staff Corps, for his life, and on his death to her eldest grandson, Judge Wightman Wood, in whose possession it now is.

THE BENCRAFT AND BEARD PORTRAITS.

The Bencraft portrait was also bequeathed to Judge Wood by Lady Wightman, who in her lifetime gave away a third portrait, which was afterwards returned to her daughter, Mrs. Benson, in whose possession it now is, and who supposed it to be Bencraft when an old man. But upon comparing it with an engraving of Beard, the celebrated tenor, published in 1787, it was found to be the original of the engraving. This portrait no doubt came to Lady Wightman from her great-aunt,

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Mrs. Beard, Rich's second daughter, Charlotte, who married, first, Captain King, and, secondly, John Beard, and died at Hampton 1818.

EARLY PANTOMIMES. (See vol. i. p. 8.)

The indecency of early pantomimes is frequently alluded to by contemporary writers. Mr. W. J. Lawrence describes a copy of the first edition of "Harlequin Horace" in his possession, which bears the date of 1731. "The frontispiece shows the Temple of the Muses, an obvious stage scene, with a pantomimic *danse à deux* in the background, and ladies in boxes at the sides viewing—and some of them seemingly shocked at—the performance. In the foreground Apollo reclines despondingly on the works of Shakespeare and Vanbrugh, while the Hogarthian action of the dog in *Perseus and Andromeda* indicates the contempt shown for the deity even by the animal creation."

PROGRAMMES AND PLAYBILLS.

It may not be unacceptable to the reader to include here some remarks upon the subject of playbills, printed in the *Era* newspaper, from the able pen, we believe, of the late Mr. R. W. Lowe, a well-known authority upon theatrical affairs.

"Playbills, or theatrical placards, about which a lengthy chapter could be written, were invented, I believe, by one Cosmo d'Orvieto, a Spanish dramatist who flourished a short time before Cervantes, and it was Dryden who, in 1667, at the production of his *Indian Emperor*, first had programmes distributed at the doors. Previously, dramatic performances were announced by a crier in the streets to the sound of a tambourine, although in ancient Rome the bill existed, the author's name being given on it when he was at all celebrated and likely to 'draw.' In France theatrical placards were originally quite different from what they are at present. The author's name never appeared on

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them, the actors merely announcing that 'their poet had chosen an excellent subject.' The poet of each theatre being well known, it was needless to name him. A still longer time elapsed before the actors were mentioned in the bill, and the comedians gained by this omission, for the public always expected to see the leading members of the company. Disorderly scenes often occurred, however, when this hope was disappointed. In the second series of *La Revue Rétrospective* I have discovered the report of a council held by the comedians of Paris in December, 1789, to draw up a petition to the mayor imploring him not to order them to put the actors' names on the bill, as they considered such an innovation highly injurious to their interests. But although it contained neither authors' nor actors' names a playbill in those times was a very elaborate document, replete with details about the crowded state of the house the previous day, the merit of the piece to come, and the absolute necessity of engaging places for it as early as possible. A flattering criticism of the play was often given—the 'puff preliminary' already—and occasionally the whole bill was written in verse. When a cabal against a new piece was dreaded, no bill appeared.

"Another form of advertisement formerly in use was the announcement from the stage of the next day's entertainment."

This also obtained in England at the London theatres as late as Macready's day. He refers to the practice more than once in his autobiography. It is an unfortunate fact that the national collections at the British Museum are not at all complete in the department of playbills. Although it is evident that such ephemeral productions were bound to become scarce, they have received but little attention from collectors. The collection of Drury Lane and Covent Garden bills presented by the late Sir Augustus Harris is probably the finest and most complete in existence, but it contains many gaps. These are annoyingly frequent when they should record important first night performances or the *débuts* of great actors and actresses. Miss Schlesinger, a well-known writer on musical matters,

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in an article on opera playbills in the *Connoisseur* of September, 1902, says :—

“The market value of playbills is not at the present time very great, an early Garrick bill privately sold realizing about two guineas, but old playbills are being eagerly sought after not only by amateurs for their collections, but also by those interested in musical and dramatic history, in musical biography, and in musical instruments of bygone days; in fact, by all who are seeking to reconstitute the past.

“The collector is often puzzled by finding two or even three playbills of the same date similar but not identical in every item; all may be genuine documents, but it is important to know which represents the actual order of the performance. Neither printing nor distribution was accomplished during the first decades of the last century with the same lightning rapidity as in our day, and forecast handbills, complete in every detail and containing at the bottom of the sheet exact information as to where tickets might be obtained, were printed and distributed in advance, as well as the general poster announcement of larger size. When, on account of some alteration in the programme, the handbills had to be reprinted on the day of the performance, the information as to the purchase of tickets, no longer necessary, was often omitted, a circumstance which frequently proves a guide in discriminating between the bills, when a clue is not otherwise obtainable from the daily press.

“At the end of the eighteenth century the daily newspapers published the correct bills of the principal theatres at length; this was considered so influential in promoting the circulation of the paper that the proprietors of the news-sheets willingly paid the theatres a yearly subsidy for the privilege.”

Dibdin tells a story in his reminiscences of Lewis, the actor and harlequin of Covent Garden, with whom he was in the habit of walking home to Barnes from the theatre once a week throughout the summer.

“One day as we passed a Richmond playbill, in which Mrs. Jordan’s name presented itself in the largest possible type, he (Lewis) remarked on the numerous

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heartburnings such kind of distinction often produced in provincial theatres, as well as the little squabbles arising from the order of precedence in which performers' names were placed in a playbill. With respect to the latter he highly commended Mr. Kemble's arrangement, by which the actors took rank in the bill according to the dignity (not the [acting] value) of the characters performed. When actors, dancers, etc., represented equal characters *en masse*, as soldiers, citizens, etc., their names were always placed alphabetically."

THEATRICAL PROPERTIES AND SCENERY AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1743. (See vol. i. p. 92.)

It is possible that a remarkable schedule of scenery and properties at Covent Garden, preserved at the British Museum,* was compiled in connection with the above mortgage. To any one with even a slight technical knowledge of the theatre behind the scenes, this list possesses a peculiar interest.

"The Schedule referred to in and by an Indenture of Assignment made the 30th day of January, 1744, Between John Rich, late of the Parish of Saint George Bloomsbury but now of the Parish of Saint Paul Covent Garden, in the County of Middlesex, Esq. (Eldest son and heir and also Devisee named in the last will and testament of Christopher Rich, late of the Parish of St. Martin in the Ffields in the same County of Middlesex, Esquire, his late father, deceased), of the first part, Martha Launder, of the Parish of St. George Hanover Square in the said County of Middlesex, spinster, of the second part, and Hutchinson Mure, of the Parish of St. James within the liberty of Westminster and County of Middlesex, Esquire of the third part. . . .

"A list of Scenes. [*Flats in the Scene Room.*] Cottage and long village, Medusa's Cave and 3 pieces, Grotto that changes to Country house. Inside of Merlin's cave, outside of ditto, dairy, Hermitage, Clock Chamber, Farm Yard, Country House, Church, town, chimney chamber, fort, Rialto, Harvey's hall, Othello's new Hall. Hill transparent and 2 peices, Inn Yard, Arch to

* Addl. MS. 12,201, f. 30.

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Waterfall, Back of Timber Yard, Short Village, Second Hill, front of timber yard, garden, short wood.

“[*Flats in the Top Flies*]. Shop Flat and Flats in the Shop.—A large pallace arch, an old low flat of a tower and church, an open flat with cloudings on one side, and palace on the other. [*Back flats in Scene room*]. Harvey’s palace, Bishop’s garden, waterfall, long village, long wood, corn fields, the arch of Harveys palace, back Arch of Ariodante’s pallace, a canal, a seaport, [*Back Flats in Great Room*]. The flat to the Arch and groves, open country cloth. [*Ditto in the Top flies*]. The Sea back cloth, the King’s Arms, Curtain. [*Wings in the Scene Room*]. 4 Ariodante’s pallace, 12 Harvey’s pallace, do. rock, do. woods, do. Atalanta’s garden. . . . Ceres garden, 6 vault, do. Hill, do. Inn Yard, do. fine chamber, do. plain chamber. [*Wings in Great Room*], Eight moonlight. [*Do. in Painters Room*], 2 of Ariodante’s pallace, but are rubbed out and not painted. [*Do. in the Shop*], 2 tapestry, 2 old Rock [*Painted pieces in the Scene Room*], 6 tint pieces, Shakespeare’s monument, Macbeth’s cave, Cædipus tower, the moon in *emp.* of do. an arbour, 2 pieces transparent Hill, a balcony, old garden wall, a balcony pedestall, front of gallery in Ariodante, a small palace border in do., a frontispiece in do., 2 wings, common canopy in *Rich^d. 2^d*, a Balustrade, 3 peices open Country, tree, Blind, near garden wall, 2 peices tree in *Margery*, a palmtree in *dragon wantley*, a sign of Rummer with beam, new mount in four peices and 2 brass lines and iron swivells, the two lottery wheels, 6 ground peices to the trees in *Orpheus*, a figure in Harvey’s palace, 2 stone figures in Medusa’s cave, [*Do. in Great room*], 7 open country peices, 6 peices cornfields, 4 open country peices, 4 orange trees in potts, 6 garden peices, hedge stile and fence 4 peices, a ground peice in two parts, front of garden that changes to house, 4 peices, 6 rock peices with trees, the house at end of melon ground, Balustrade and 2 figures, back part of melon ground and 2 trussells, the burning mountain two peices, the back of machine in *Jupiter and Europa*, the Moon in *Emp.* of do., a blind to the back machine, the back of the back machine, a ground peice of Atalanta’s garden, the back cloth, sky border to Arch in *coronation*, cottage in *Margery*, 4 haycocks, eight posts to false stages, the King and Princes box comp^t. The front of great

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machine in *Jupiter and Europa*. The water peice to bridge, a pedestall in *Winter's Tale*, a peice ground landskip, [*Do. in Yard*], 2 wings and 1 border to the back machine, 8 wings to great machine in *rape*,* four borders to ditto, the falling rock in *Alcina*, four peices, the compass border to Atalanta's garden, the bridge in *The Rehearsal*, 3 peices, the front of a small chariot clouding, 6 gothick chamber borders for false stage, 2 large borders fixed to Battens used in opera, [*Painted peices in first flies*], a gibbet tree in *Apollo and Daphne*, a transparent in *Oedipus, King of Thebes*, a do., a blind in *Theodosius*, a small rock flat, eight peices of old clouding, a marble pedestall, 3 figures on pedestalls, 6 do. with braces, cornfields in 6 peices, a tomb in *Timon*, a garden wall in five peices, the front of an Altar. [*Do. in the Top Flies*], 6 waves, and 2 shore peices to ditto, a peice of a falling rock in the Operas, 3 old wings, the horses to front of Back machine in *Apollo and Daphne*, [*Do. in painting Room*], a tomb with figure and lamp, 6 columns to Fame's temple, 2 water peices out of use, 2 large branches for coronation. [*Do. in Shop*], a peice of 2 columns and Arches with hinges, arch and balustrade, part of an old pall^{re}, 2 peices, an arbour, a large border of Ariodante's pallace and small transparent in *Atalanta*, the front of a ship, the front of Ceres chariot, the figure of Massinello on a pedestall, an old rock, two oxen in *Justin*, an old small landskip, a clouding to a machine, a large frame for scaffold, a border to frontispiece in *Ariodante*, four furrows in *Justin*, a small old peice out of use, half an old architect front, two small peices to do., a sign of a Harlequin and sign iron, 12 peices of breaking clouds in *Apollo and Daphne*, an old sky border, 12 pedestalls of different sizes, one of the muses on a pedestall, [*Property's in Scene room*], the Spanish table, study of books, a blind used common, a coffin, a tub, 5 stage ladders . . . , a Gibbet in *Orpheus*, 6 doubters and 8 lighting Sticks, [*Properties in Great Room*] . . . a haycock in 2 peices, the mill in *Faustus*, supper table and 2 chairs, . . . 2 scaffolds for *Sorcerer* . . . nine single blinds with 48 tinn candlesticks . . . a red curtain fixt to batten . . . [*Do. in the Yard*] . . . The stage in the *rape* in four peices, front steps to do. . . . the great travelling machine made for *Orpheus* . . . [*Do. in first flies*], 6 battins with red bays for barrs, 12 top grooves

* ? Rape of Proserpine.

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with 6 iron braces and ropes, 2 small borders and 2 iron rods, large hill hung . . . key and collar to the fly in *Perseus*, the scroll of 1000 crowns a month . . . 6 handles and 12 brackets for the sea . . . the statute in the *Rape*, the buck basket, the tubb, egg, wheelbarrow, dunghill, childs stool, gardner's basket, a raree show, 3 green banks, a lyon, . . . a turning chair and screens, *Perseus*, . . . Rhodope's chair on castors, beaureau, skeleton's case, pidgeon house, skeleton table and leather chair . . . the great wheel and spindle, a small wheel and barrel to the circular fly . . . cupids chariot, two rain trunks and frames. . . . The Stage cloth . . . three canopys to the King and Princes boxes, a red bench and footstool to ditto, Medusa's couch, . . . The chariot in *Emp[eror] of Moon*, the dragon in *Faustus*, a Mountebank's stage and tressells . . . 4 barrels, w^{tes} and ropes to the flies, . . . 41 green benches, the rails that part the pit in 5 peices . . . , a flying chariot, the great machine *Jupiter and Europa* . . . the curtain bell and line, a hook to draw off the cloudings, three lighting sticks. [*Do. in Top flies*], 12 braces and stays to the round fly, a monster, the Calash and wheels in *Emp. of Moon*, 2 barrels, weights, wires and scaffoldings to dragon. [*Do. in Roof*]. The barrel to the Stages with ropes, weights, etc., a barrel to figure in *Oedipus*, w^t and rope, the barrel to the great machine in *Jupiter and Europa*, now used in *Comus*, with their wires, wts. and ropes, 2 old barrels, 2 old Gibbets. . . . The border bell and 12 candlesticks. [*Properties in Painting Room*]. . . . Painters scaffold, wts., ropes and grooves, 2 colour stones and dressers fixt, 2 folding trussels, and 1 fixt for painters use. . . . The fortification chair in *Jupiter and Europa*, the body of a machine in *Apollo and Daphne*, a grindstone handle and trough, a painters easel, and do. with figure of Harlequin, 86 thunder balls, 6 baskets to do. . . . 4 candlesticks for the thunder. [*Do. in the Shop*], 3 hanging scaffolds, ropes and hand-rails to round fly, 7 waves not cover^d, the cutt chariot in *Sorcerer*, a large modell of the Stage not finished . . . the thunder bell and line. . . . [*Do., &c., contained in the Cellar*], the lamps in front fixt with barrels, cordage, wts., &c., the grave trap and 3 others with do., the scene barrel fixt with cog wheels, &c., 12 pr. of Scene ladders fixt with ropes, Banquo's trap with barrel and cordage, 6 columnus to the dome in *Perseus*, a barrel

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groove, and wts. to trees in *Orpheus*, 6 trees to do., the post and barrel to pidgeon house, the egg trap and box snaps, flap to grave trap, the Pallisadoes barrel, cordage, &c. . . . an old woman and grooves in *Faustus*, a trophy, a rock and grooves, rope, a cloud, the Shell in *Comus* . . . and 41 sconce candlesticks . . . 5 tin blinds to Stage lamps . . . 115 three corner tinn lamps, 2 long iron braces and screws in *Orpheus*, one long do. in *Merlin*, 3 small do. . . . 6 old iron rings and chains for branches brought from Lincolns Inn. . . . The trap bell and sconce bell, [*Do.*, &c., *on the Stage*], the frontispiece, wings and borders, the curtain and borders, six iron rims and brass chains for branches, 6 borders and 6 pair of cloudings fixt to battens with barrels, wts. and ropes, three hill borders, transparent and blind, do. the melon ground, wts. barrels and ropes, 2 back garden cloths fixt, 24 blinds to scene ladders, 192 tinn candlesticks to do., 12 do. fixt to a post with five canopys, a hang^r gibbet fixt with ropes and pulleys, 30 bottom grooves of different sizes, Ceres falling car, 4 large braces to mount in *Perseus*, a pyramid in Atlanti's garden, a tree used in a dance, 2 tops to back machine, the serpent and trunk, one large carpet, one throne and 4 other carpets, 4 bell glasses, the bell machine fixt with barrel, wts. &c. . . . [*Stuff in Yard*], 14 lamps posts for stage out of use. [*Do. in Rope Room*], 2 muffle ropes with swivells fit for use. . . . 2 old check ropes with swivells, 19 old ropes of different lengths used in *Rape*, a muffle to fly in *Emp. of Moon*. . . . The weights and their dimensions. The great counterpoize to all the traps and iron hooks 487 lbs. The grave trap, 2 wts. and iron hooks 126 lb., middle trap 67 lb., counterpoize to front lamps 170 lbs., 2 weights in painting room 250 lb., total 1100 lbs. [*In the flies*], 1 wt. $7\frac{3}{4}$ -inch diameter $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep, ditto 1 wt. 10 in. diam. 2 in. deep, ditto 1 wt. 10 do., 2 do. $\frac{3}{4}$. To the six brances several wts. and iron hooks $7\frac{3}{4}$ do., 11 do., ditto 1 w^t 7 do., $2\frac{1}{4}$ do. To the chariot in *Merlin*, 1 wt. 6 do., 6 do. . . . To the machine the back of the stage and iron hook, $6\frac{3}{4}$ diam., 4 ft. $10\frac{1}{2}$ deep. . . .

[*The Green Room*], a grate, a clock, a large glass in a gilt frame, a small mahogany table, 15 candle branches, a scuttle, a pair of snuffers, . . .

[*Candle Room*], 46 copper pans, 12 iron pans, 5

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candle baskets, 2 dozen wood boxes for pans, 2 doz. and half hanging candlesticks, 8 doz. brass sockets for branches. . . .

Properties Continued.

8 maces gilt, 2 crosses . . .

Medusa's Head, a wooden crow, 2 Charon's paddles, . . . saddle, bridle, and harness in *Emp. of the Moon*, three frogs, one toad, one snail, and three other dresses, 2 boars one stufft, an alligator, 6 small tree branches and two trophies, Minerva's shield, 6 dancers chairs, two Hodds with bricks and mortar, a birdcatchers cage, 2 nets, a leather bottle, a painted owl . . . 2 wooden legs and a seat, a yoak and a saddle and trappings for mock coronation . . . 3 tin halberts, a spring javelin, 12 tin spears with tassells, 12 crooks, 3 running footman's canes and . . . 3 pasteboard shields, 3 tin do., a spinning wheel, a cobbler's bench . . . a baboon, 2 arms, a body of a Taylor, a head of a lawyer, 8 pr. of crutches, 7 haymakers forks, 8 rakes, 5 tin fruit stands, 8 tin crowns, chimney-sweepers bag, shovels and brush, tinkers budget, hammers and kettle, 5 pasteboard signs, 6 tin-headed spears, 12 devils forks, 6 wooden guns, 2 large iron-headed spears, Oroonoko's chains, 3 parchment masks, 3 transparent letters, one iron skull-cap, Macbeth's daggers, 2 pasteboard fowls, 6 wood flam-beaux, transparent skeleton, two artificiall melons, pierrot's cand^k, 3 brass do., 2 green lawyers bags, a stufft ham, the shield in *Perseus* [and *Andromeda*] of looking glass.

ORGANS AT COVENT GARDEN. (See vol. i. p. 325.)

The following interesting details concerning the Covent Garden organs were kindly given to me by Dr. C. W. Pearce,* the well-known musician, who is

* "DEAR MR. SAXE WYNDHAM,

"I have great pleasure in sending you accounts of three Covent Garden Theatre organs, dated respectively 1808, 1809, 1810.

"Observe that Jordan's organ (1808) was a third shorter in compass than its successor, built by Russell in the following year, and that the Jordan tierce and trumpet were not repeated in the later instrument. The former stop must have been truly horrible, with the 'unequal temperament' then in vogue. Russell's two 4-foot stops were a step in the modern direction; but the absence of

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a great authority on the subject. They have not, I believe, previously been published.

Extracts from a MS. book bound in parchment, entitled "An Account of Organs and Organ Builders, collected by Henry Leffler. 1800."

"[The collection was *begun* in the year named, but was obviously continued for some years after that date.—C. W. P.]

"*Organ in Vauxhall Gardens* [as it existed in] 1800. One sett of keys from CC to E, with shifting movement.

"GREAT (7 stops): Open Diapason, 52 pipes; Stopped Diapason, 52 pipes; Principal, 52 pipes; Flute, 52 pipes; Twelfth, 52 pipes; Sesquialtera IV. Ranks, 208 pipes.

"'Built about six weeks after Adam was breeched.'"

"*Organ in Old Theatre Royal, Covent Garden* (1808).

"(Burnt with the theatre, 1808.)

"Built by Jordan.

"One sett of keys from GG to D, long octaves.

"7 stops: Open Diapason, 55 pipes; Stopped Diapason; 55 pipes; Principal, 55 pipes; Twelfth, 55 pipes; Fifteenth, 55 pipes; Tierce, 55 pipes; Trumpet, 55 pipes.

"*Organ in New Theatre Royal, Covent Garden* (1809).

"Built by Russell; open'd Oct. 1809.

the lower bass octave to the open diapason must have been a serious loss, probably occasioned by lack of room, although the omission of a reed stop as well seems to point to an exercise of niggardly economy in the cost. I take it that Jordan's organ was *not built* in the year 1808, but was then recorded by Mr. Leffler. The 'oratorio organ' shows a still further advance by having one of its stops—the hautboy—enclosed in a swell-box, although played from the same manual as the other stops. Here we get not only a trumpet, but an open diapason running to the bottom. You may like to compare the accounts of these three Covent Garden organs with that of the organ in Vauxhall Gardens at the beginning of the 19th century. I gather from Mr. Leffler's disparaging remark that this last-named instrument was an *old organ*, perhaps going as far back as Handelian times. His abstention from grumbling in the case of the three theatre organs leads one to suppose that these were more up to date than the organ at Vauxhall!

"With kind regards and best Christmas wishes,

"Believe me,

"Yours very sincerely,

"C. W. PEARCE."

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“ One row of keys, long octaves, GG to F.

“ 7 stops: Open Diapason to G, 47 pipes; Stopped Diapason, 58 pipes; Principal, 58 pipes; Flute, 58 pipes; Twelfth, 58 pipes; Fifteenth, 58 pipes; Sesquialtera III. ranks, 174 pipes.”

“ *Oratorio Organ, Covent Garden Theatre* (1810).

“ Built by Allen, 1810.

“ Has one sett of keys, long octaves, up to F.

“ 8 stops: Open Diapason, 58 pipes; Stopped Diapason, 58 pipes; Principal, 58 pipes; Twelfth, 58 pipes; Fifteenth, 58 pipes; Sesquialtera III. ranks, 174 pipes; Trumpet, 58 pipes; Hautboy Swell, to Middle C.”

RECEIPTS OF THE SEASONS.* (See vol. ii. p. 14.)

The gross receipts during the twelve seasons, 1809–1821, amounted to £991,811, or an annual average of £82,650. These seasons were under the management of Harris. After the new arrangement by which C. Kemble, Willett, and Forbes became lessees, during the 1824 season the receipts amounted to £71,000.

	£	s.	d.
1809–10	96,051	14	4
1810–11	106,177	8	10
1811–12	95,001	6	2
1812–13	78,209	3	8
1813–14	87,160	14	11
1814–15	93,613	17	9
1815–16	83,780	7	9
1816–17	77,603	1	3
1817–18	75,149	9	8
1818–19	74,121	12	4
1819–20	55,833	14	0
1820–21	69,108	15	10

September 6, 1819—April 20, 1820:

	£	s.	d.
157 nights	34,464	6	6
157 nights' salaries and weekly payments ...	26,932	19	4

September 18, 1820—April 14, 1821:

157 nights	37,902	3	0
157 nights' salaries and weekly payments ...	23,034	14	10

* Extracted from printed report of Henry Harris's appeal in the House of Lords against a Chancery suit filed by C. Kemble.

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(See vol. ii. p. 159.)

The following is taken from C. J. Mathews' "Life"
(edited by Charles Dickens):—

A RETURN OF ALL PERSONS ENGAGED IN THIS ESTABLISHMENT DURING THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 26, 1840.

Company—Gentlemen ...	38	<i>Ladies' Wardrobe.</i>	
,, Chorus singers	8	Workers	42
,, Ladies ...	34	Dressers	14
Band ...	32	Attendants	2
Officers ...	9	Mrs. Thomas, Mrs. Lewis	2 = 60
Box-keepers ...	2	<i>Supers.</i>	
Check and money takers ...	15	Midsummer Night's Dream	52
<i>Bradwell's Department.</i>		Pantomime ...	37
Workers	60	Extra chorus and band ...	13
Supers 22 = ...	82	Property Department ...	4
Scenery Dept. Painting-		Printers, billstickers, etc. ...	57
room ...	10	Watch and firemen ...	5
<i>Sloman's Department.</i>		Police ...	4
Carpenters ...	26	<i>Attendance at Bar.</i>	
For working pantomime ...	80	Boxes	16
Cassidy ...	1	Pit	18
<i>Gentlemen's Wardrobe.</i>		Gallery 8 = ...	42
Workers	24	Place-keepers ...	7
Dressers	14	Box-keepers ...	10
Extras 18 = ...	56	Total ...	684

EXTRACT FROM THE "ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS,"
DECEMBER 6, 1856. (See vol. ii. pp. 179-181.)

A NEW Italian opera on an entirely novel basis in this country, designed to combine the French and German grand opera with the Italian school, having been organized by Mr. Gruneisen and his friends in the course of the year 1846, the next step was to find a suitable house for the new company. Covent Garden, one of the largest of our theatres, was still too small for the purpose, and Mr. Albano, who had hitherto been chiefly known as a civil engineer, was called to undertake the gigantic work. He submitted three plans—

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largest theatre in the world, surpassing San Carlo and La Scala ; a second, smaller than those theatres ; and a third, which, though it gave additional tiers of private boxes, left the theatre of its original size. The second plan was adopted.

Mr. Albano obtained possession of the building in the beginning of December, 1846, and for five weeks the work of demolition went on with marvellous rapidity. Afterwards three relays of workmen, at one time amounting to from 900 to 1200 persons, were employed in the house, who worked day and night.

We have not space to describe the skilful operations by which the architect obtained a very extensive auditory, with an increase from three to six tiers of boxes (making altogether one hundred and eighty-eight), with first and second amphitheatre, and gallery, without disturbing the effect of the house, which, at the opening on the 6th of April, 1847, contained about four thousand persons. The building, as a whole, was converted into one of the largest theatres out of Italy.

On entering, the appearance of the house was exceedingly striking. The breadth between the boxes was 60 ft., with 80 ft. from box to curtain, which gave a good proportion to the height, with its colossal amphitheatre. The stage, between the columns of the proscenium, was 46 ft. wide, being a gain of about 10 ft. over the old one. The sky-like ceiling was one of the most imposing beauties of the new edifice, its dimensions being 70 ft. by 62. Acoustic principles were universally admitted to have been well cared for, and most successfully carried out in its construction, being partly elliptic, partly hyperbolic, and covered all round ; and the proscenium, forming a splayed arch, threw the voice into the centre of the house. We have engraved this superb theatre, as it appeared at the opening, on the night of the 6th April, 1847, in the presence of an immense assemblage of rank and fashion, and of artistical and literary celebrities ; for no one present that night can ever forget the burst of applause which followed the magic effect produced by the instantaneous and brilliant illumination of the house, when the famous band struck up, and the curtain rose, showing the first scene of the opera of *Semiramide*.

And now let us recall from memory, and survey for a moment, what the architect's skill accomplished in

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that structure, so rich, yet so simple; so gorgeous, yet so elegant; so massive in its proportions, and yet so light. The circular sweep of the six tiers of boxes, with the graceful curves in their fronts; the white and gold ornaments in relief of their façades, relieved here and there by a ground of turquoise blue; the crimson hangings and parapets; the elegant caryatides on the grand tier, with its rich acanthus leaf and exquisite frieze; the lovely blue ceiling, with its floral, architectural and allegorical belts, its chaste cornice in white and gold, and the gilded perforated ornament, through which the chandelier descended; the superb panels and Royal arms in bold relief on the proscenium, bounded on one side by the figures of Italy, and on the other by that of Britannia—both emblems on golden grounds—gave to the whole pictorial gracefulness and harmonious amalgamation.

Considering the magnitude of the works, that the theatre was taken to pieces and reared again in all the splendour of the opera house within the short space of four months—full one-third of this time being occupied in pulling down the audience part of the house, from the foundation of the vaults to within a few inches under the roof, etc.—it must be admitted that a great feat was accomplished by Mr. Albano. Immediately after the conflagration, by which this magnificent theatre was reduced to a heap of ruins, many inaccurate statements were made with respect to the cost of the works, which are set down at sums varying from £40,000 to £75,000; but we learn from the published statement of Mr. Albano that the whole of the cost of the works of building, painting, etc., was under £23,000. There was a further sum of £4000 expended for fixtures, chandelier, gas-fittings, looking-glasses, and other fittings.

NOTES AND ERRATA

VOL. I

Page 6 (1st par.). The author is assured by Mr. W. J. Lawrence that there is no foundation for the statement that Rich's stage name of "Lun" was derived from a French Harlequin.

Page 29 (2nd par.). The print by Vaudergucht here referred

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to formed the frontispiece to one of the editions of "Harlequin Horace," a satire by the Rev. J. Miller, which was dedicated to J—N R—H, Esq.

Page 30 (2nd line from bottom), for "*pit-boxes*" read "*pit and boxes.*"

Page 73. The statement as to the arrangement of the Pantomime plot of *Orpheus and Euridice* is an error, and should be disregarded.

Page 186. A writer in Grove's Dictionary points out that the tune which resembles the famous Advent Hymn was a concert-room song entitled "Guardian Angels, now protect me." It was introduced into *The Golden Pippin* (presumably at Covent Garden) in 1776, and sung by Miss Catley in the character of Juno.

Page 223 (bottom line). *The Duke of Milan*, by Massinger, was *not* an unacted play.

Page 258 (7th line), for "*Obranto*" read "*Otranto.*"

VOL. II

Page 17 (22nd line), for *Cherry's Fair Star* read *Cherry and Fair Star.*

Page 18 (13th line), for *Govent Garden* read *Covent Garden.*

Page 114 (6th line), for *against* read *again at.*

Page 192 (9th line), for "*La Prophete*" read "*Le Prophète.*"

Page 201 (13th line), for *Henry Braham* read *John Braham.*

Page 208 (7th line), for *boats* read *boots.*

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NOTE.—Singers and the more important Plays are indexed under these headings as well as under their separate letters, thus "Braham" will be found among "Singers" as well as under "B." The class-headings are not, however, arranged alphabetically, but in the order in which each name is dealt with in the text. All Shakespeare's plays are indexed under "Shakespearian Revivals." Pantomimes are indexed only under their class-heading, and are not separately referred to.

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* Schoelcher's *Life of Handel* classifies "Alexander's Feast" as an ode, and "The Choice of Hercules" as an interlude.

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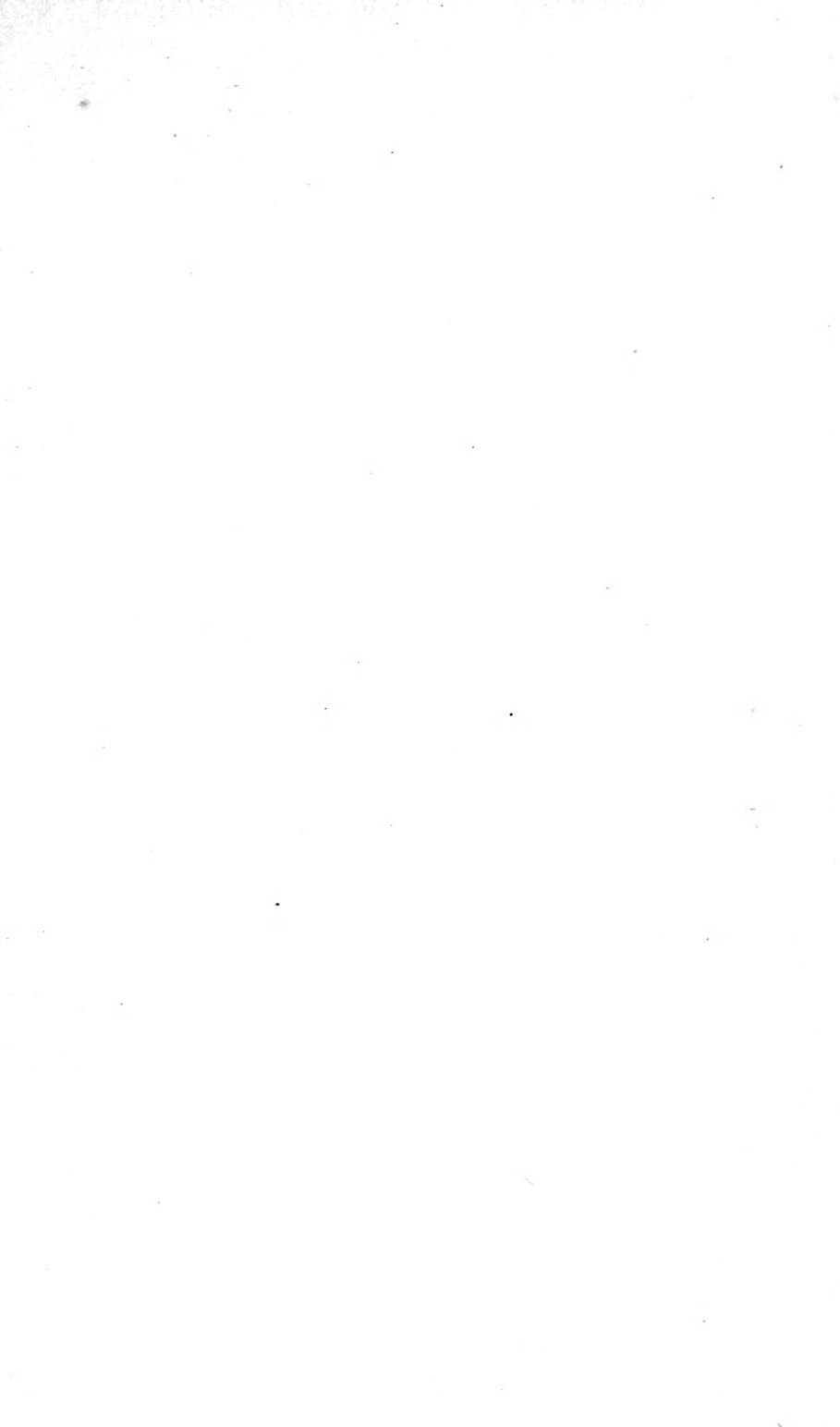
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