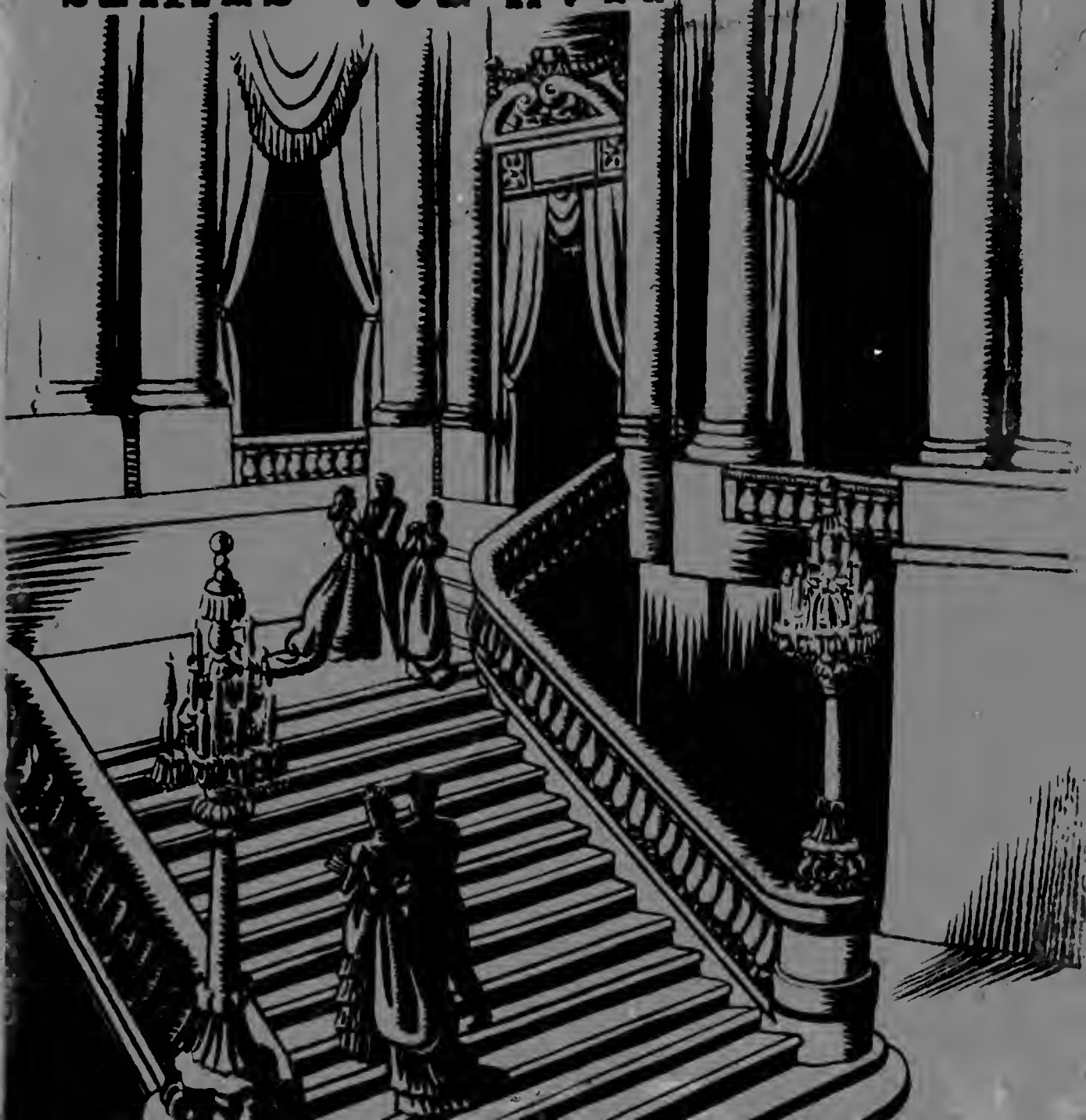
FAMOUS PLAYHOUSES OF SAN FRANCISCO

PART III

THEATRE RESEARCH SERIES VOL XVII



History of the San Francisco Theatre, Volume XVII

FAMOUS PLAYHOUSES: Part 3

Compiled by Workers of the Writers' Program
of the Work Projects Administration
in Northern California

Sponsored by the City and County of San Francisco

1942

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Official sponsor of the Northern
California Writers' Project

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY

John M. Carmody, Administrator

WORKS PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

Howard O. Hunter, Commissioner
Florence Kerr, Assistant Commissioner
William R. Lawson, Administrator for Northern California

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FAMOUS PLAYHOUSES

PART III

(1861-1906)

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

PREFACE

With this volume, seventeenth in the Theatre Research Series, the Northern California Writers' Program continues the work begun by Project 465-03-9-286, sponsored by the City and County of San Francisco, which prepared the first 15 volumes in the series.

The present volume was prepared by the San Francisco unit of the Writers' Program under the immediate direction of Lawrence Estavan, Assistant District Supervisor, and under the supervision of Katherine Justice, District Supervisor. The research was the work of Gretchen Clark, Michael Kreepshaw, Dorothy Phillips, Elleanore Staschen, and Jack Wilson. The final manuscript was written by George Hanlin and Alan Harrison.

Walter McElroy, State Supervisor
Northern California Writers' Program

CHAPTER I

UNION HALL

(1863- 1898)

In the sixties the neighborhood of Third and Howard Streets, a fashionable residential area, was "too far out of town" to be considered a theatrical district. Nevertheless, Union Hall was located in this neighborhood. Peter Donahue's horsecar company was responsible not only for the location but for the hall's construction above a car barn and stables. According to the Chronicle of March 22, 1896:

> "The structure was built and intended for the protection of the ninety cars of the Omnibus Railroad Company . . . A double purpose animated the projectors. Building and realty speculation occupied the public mind. The temptation of high rentals, the need for a first-class hall for social gatherings, and the travel over its lines induced by the entertainments to be given there, all combined to make the speculation a good one."

In such circumstances it is hardly surprising that Union Hall had a curious, unrivaled reputation. Its pre-theatrical career started in the tradition of Tucker's Academy and Platt's Hall, opening to the public April 30, 1863, with "a promenade concert and ball" given by the Pennsylvania Steam Fire Engine Company Number 12, at which the Bianchis, Mrs. W. G. Leighton, Josephine D'Ormy, and Signor Fellini were featured in vocal selections.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Bulletin of April 30, 1863, came out with a description of the interior which must have been responsible in part for the "very great assemblage that was present" -- much to the advantage of the Omnibus Railroad Company:

> "The main room is 94 by 104 feet in area and 30½ feet from floor to ceiling. On the south side are the orchestra platform, with a ladies' toilette room adjoining, and two private rooms on each side very tastefully fitted up and superior in comfort and accommodation to any of our theatrical boxes. The Corinthian columns with gilt capitals give a fine effect to the stage proper. On the north side are the ladies' dressing and cloak rooms; the gentlemen's dressing and hat rooms, and a large refreshment room above, with a fine gallery comfortably supplied with seats for the convenience of spectators. The dressing rooms are

luxuriously furnished and have all the requisite conveniences. The walls and ceiling of the hall are pure white, with the wainscot and platform painted in imitation marble of veined and mottled yellow, very pleasing to the eye. The seats on the side of the hall are covered with crimson plush, which makes a fine and agreeable contrast."

The following day, after attending the inaugural, the Bulletin's correspondent saw fit to temper his report with reproachful criticism:

"A very great assemblage was present, to seat which during the concert no provision was made. However, after a while, most of the ladies found chairs. The proprietors of the building may hereafter think it expedient to construct galleries on three sides of the hall, which would give seating room for nearly a thousand people. At present there is only one small gallery, at the north end of the apartment, which is not capable of seating more than one or two hundred persons. Owing in some degree to the immense empty floor, the solid walls, unbroken by openings of any kind, and the long stretch of level ceiling, with only here and there a skylight window, the music rang and reverberated through the hall most unpleasantly. The cross echoes so confused the orchestral music as to make it a little better than a discordant noise. There ought to be some remedy found for

this acoustic defect . . .

"It was a strange scene to look down from the gallery upon the brilliant mass of dancers on the floor beneath. Notwithstanding the spaciousness of the hall, the number of persons present was so great that the dancers were limited to infinitesimal spaces."

FESTIVALS AND DANCING

Union Hall's name reflected the strong Northern sentiment that prevailed in San Francisco during the Civil War. Its next series of festivals was given by several thousand school children who recited pieces and sang songs of loyalty to the Union cause. This was followed, as in the case of Tucker's and Platt's, by a dreary succession of concerts, lectures, and balls interspersed with all-too-frequent amateur theatricals.

In 1865 Professor O. A. Lunt established a dancing academy in the hall, and devoted three nights a week "to the children of prominent families." But it must be assumed, in view of his admission in the Chronicle of March 22, 1896, that the enterprise was not profitable despite its persistence:

"'I gave up possession in 1874,' the Professor states, 'on account of Union Hall's waning popularity. Subsequently other dancing masters leased the hall, but the days of its glory had passed and it steadily fell behind the procession, until one dancing master gave a series of Sunday night entertainments at ten cents

admission and was successful. These were variety performances and opened up a new field of usefulness to the old place.'"

ENTER MOROSCO

The nameless dancing master referred to by Professor Lunt, with his cheap entertainments, provided the opportunity for a theatrical era under Walter Morosco, who converted Union Hall into a variety theatre sometime during the seventies; but although there is ample evidence that Morosco's Amphitheatre -- or Morosco's Howard Street Theatre, as the former Union Hall was called -- was popular for nearly a decade, almost no details about it can be learned. Apart from contributing brief and scattered reviews, the press appears to have ignored this house until provided opportunities for news coverage independent of straight theatrical reporting. Consequently, its record leaves room for conjecture about specific events and dates. Even the new theatre's opening was described vaguely, some 20 years after its actual occurrence, in Morosco's obituary. Said the Examiner of December 27, 1901:

"Walter Morosco induced his friend John Byrnes, proprietor of the Brooklyn Hotel Bar, to join him in the vaudeville management of the Union Hall. Byrnes put up the money and Morosco contributed expenses. The vaudeville show failed steadily for two months. Then Morosco hit upon the idea of running vaudeville from 8 to 10 and

melodrama from 10 to 12 -- prices ten and twenty cents. The double bills captured South of Market, especially the melodramas. Union Hall was a success for eight years."

A playbill dated April 11, 1887, is evidence that Morosco scorned newspaper advertising in favor of his own methods, for he employed one Eugene Haswell as publicity agent. With the assistance of Frank Cole, "advertiser," Haswell published and distributed by mail a sheet called the Advance Courier which kept patrons informed of coming attractions.

Haswell's playbill proves illuminating in other respects, listing among Morosco's dozen employees a "head barkeeper, steward and porters." The melodramatic offering, Hazel Kirke, was elaborately produced in four acts with an enormous cast, most of whom were evidently members of a regular stock company, and attracted audiences of about 2,000 week after week. William A. Brady played the leading role, Pittacus Green, and Lottie Beaumont was Hazel Kirke. A synopsis of the four acts leaves no doubt regarding the fare that appealed most to the crowds "South of Market Street."

Act I -- Dunstan Kirke's Mill. "I cast thee out forever from feyther's love, and may my eyes no more behold thee."

Act II -- The villa at Fairy Grove. "I go to cover his infamy with my shame, and may heaven forgive you all."

Act III -- Kitchen of Blackburn Mill. "I was blind when I drove her out, and now when I could save her, I cannot see! I cannot see!"

Act IV -- The same. "At last, Dunstan, the iron of thy will has melted in the fire of a woman's heart."

"Why," asked Morosco (in print) at the end of the program, "can we produce the same plays as high-priced theatres, with new scenery and mechanical effects, strong company and all accessories each week, when the price of admission is only 10¢? Answer -- It is owing to the great seating capacity of the house."

Ironically enough, although Union Hall had begun as a place of expensive amusements designed to please "polite society," it had become the stronghold of frankly "impolite society," a variety theatre of the "very worst sort," looked down upon by moralists rich and poor. The house under Morosco's management, however, was utterly democratic; its patrons had a voice in matters pertaining to their likes and dislikes, and when they voted in favor of smoking in the galleries only, their wishes were observed.

DENOUNCED AS FIRETRAP

On January 24, 1889, just after the fire commissioners had inspected the building, the Examiner came out with a full column of judicious comments which tended to show by indirection how

popular this theatre was and how unsuited to theatrical uses. Both the Examiner and the authorities considered it a firetrap:

"Morosco's is one of the largest halls used as a theatre in the city. It is situated over the stables of the Howard-Street carline, and is but poorly adapted to the uses to which it is now applied, being merely a vast rectangular room 90 feet in width, with a stage at the southern end and a deep gallery around the walls. A variety show is conducted there and the place is so popular that almost every night in the week the house is well filled, while on Saturday and Sunday evenings it is crowded to overflowing.

"Sometime ago Mr. Morosco, the proprietor, said that the house would seat 2,700 persons, but yesterday he said 2,000 in round numbers. As there are only two exits of an aggregate width of thirteen feet, it is obvious that should a fire break out when the theatre was crowded, a frightful loss of life would ensue. The necessity of some official action looking to the lives of the frequenters of this resort is apparent . . .

"After surveying the interior of the theatre with grave apprehension, Mr. Edwards, one of the Fire Commissioners, remarked: 'I think this is the worst death-trap I ever saw. Look at that narrow flight of stairs leading down from the west gallery. It is almost impossible to walk down alone without falling.'

"The galleries will probably seat 700 people and there are, besides this three-foot flight, two other staircases, each four feet six inches wide. The steps are steep and winding, and a frightened crowd would be certain to tumble over each other in the haste of escaping from fire and smoke.

"The seats and framework throughout the interior of the building were found to be of wood, and the chairs on the main floor were not fastened down as required by law.

"Going back towards the stage the inspectors were surprised to find that instead of the required proscenium walls of brick, the partition separating the auditorium from the back part of the theatre was nothing but upright boarding, covered on the outside with canvas and wall paper.

"'Nothing would burn quicker than that,' said architect Laver. 'Put a match to that and it would go up like a flash.'

"Mr. O'Connor scanned the narrow staircase leading to the gallery on the west side and observed that the door at the top had been nailed up. Looking about at heaps of rubbish and other inflammable material, he remarked: 'Just as I said. It is a perfect firetrap.'

"The stage manager called Mr. O'Connor's attention to the fact that he had provided some hose for putting

out fire. There was a length of twenty-five feet under the center of the stage, which the manager said 'would throw water all over the house.' He was informed that even if the theatre was in good shape, the hose would be wholly inadequate.

"After hunting around the stage for some time for a back entrance, Mr. O'Connor found a stairway leading down to the car stables. The width of this exit was two and one-half feet. At the bottom was a door which was found to be open. 'That door is always open,' called the stage manager from the top of the stairs.

"'Did you ever see this door unfastened before?' asked Mr. Barry of a man who was at work in the stables.

"'No, it's always fastened from this side with a bolt; how did you get in?' was the reply.

"This stairway was the only possible mode of exit for the actors, and in case of fire in the front part of the building, the players would be cooped up effectively.

"In the galleries numerous cigarette butts and cigar stumps lying about the floor told the inspectors smoking was allowed during the performances. A match thrown by a careless smoker against the wooden, paper-covered proscenium would be all that would be necessary to set the building on fire.

"The inspectors left the building unanimously of the opinion it would have to be closed up."

PROS AND CONS OF PRESS AND PULPIT

Despite this unanimous opinion, which the Examiner seems to have shared with relish, Morosco's theatre did not close. It was still flourishing in 1892 -- amid a barrage of criticism from various pulpits -- with such melodramas as the Pearl of Savoy, The Hidden Hand, starring Ben and Adeline Cotton, and varied vaudeville performances. On July 3 of that year the Examiner again printed a lengthy article -- this time in defense of Morosco's theatre:

"The recent adverse criticism of theatrical matters in this city by the public, and more particularly by the pulpit, in which a very prominent and very popular amusement resort was involved, prompted your reporter to thoroughly investigate the matter, particularly regarding Morosco's on Howard Street, between Third and Fourth. No doubt thousands of San Francisco's patrons of amusements have either scoffed or ridiculed the mention of attending a performance at this family resort by a local divine, and through this source no doubt emanated this recent caustic comment. The fallacy of his statements would entirely be put to rout by the attendance, and the minister would be brought to realize that he was associated with the bone and sinew of our great metropolis.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

From prattling babe to the pater familias of the household, all seemed highly pleased with the pleasant surroundings. And well they might, as there is a commendable absence of the fumes of tobacco and the presence of liquors in the audience. Here is the one cheap-priced theatre in San Francisco that presents creditable dramatic and comedy productions, and lives entirely upon its door receipts. How excellent dramatic talent can be employed, plays rented and mounted at such low prices has always been an enigma to the writer, and doubtless is so to the general public, but the solution is the simplest and founded on the principle that many at a low price are the equal of few at higher prices.

"The first time the writer alighted from the Howard Street car and ascended the stairs, a scene was presented that gave him one of the greatest surprises of his life. There were at least 2,500 of as enthusiastic and intelligent people as can be seen in any theatre in this country. A look over the audience revealed a sea of heads and faces assembled in what proves to be the largest theatre in the city. Here was found a representative assemblage, from laborer to the thrifty merchant, with their families, viewing with evident pleasure what proved to be a dramatic production of sterling merit, even if the admission prices were but ten and twenty cents. Nearly all the past successes are eventually

produced here, and a number of the brightest lights of the dramatic stage gained their experience at this house.

"The stage scenery was grand and is said to be as good as any in the best theatres. The seating capacity of the place is 3,000, and the ventilation is superb. It is nothing like the sweat boxes that one gets into now and then without going very far from town for the dignifying privilege of paying a dollar or so. Appearances except when they become too gaudy, are still synonyms of respectability to many. It is truly first-class in every respect, with the exception of its being ten and twenty cents, and the present stock company is reputed to be one of the strongest dramatic organizations extant, the members being selected for his or her versatility and individual merit. Their compensation is gauged by their talents. The performer at the Baldwin or California today may be a member of Morosco's stock company tomorrow."

EXIT MOROSCO

Morosco must have made some improvements in the house after the fire commissioners had visited it, and it is also likely that his patrons voted against smoking and drinking during performances. Until he opened his Grand Opera House on March 26, 1894, a block distant at Third and Mission Streets, Union Hall continued to be highly successful as a variety house.

It is reasonable to assume that Morosco's patronage followed him, for the most part, to the new location. But Eugene Haswell, his erstwhile publicity agent, did not. Instead, he remained at the old stand and tried to manage the place on his own as the Howard Street Theatre, an attempt that dismally failed after one production, O'Neill the Great, which lasted about six weeks.

The name of this production is thought to have been a pseudonym for The Great O'Neill which was then entangled in controversy as the result of Haswell staging it as a rival to one called The O'Neill; or that of William Greer Harrison, The Prince of Ulster, which he is believed to have pirated, at least in part, from the Irish original advertised by Haswell. Thereafter Union Hall was tenantless for nearly two years.

One last effort to revive Union Hall's popularity despite discouraging competition from Morosco's Grand Opera House was made by George F. Clayton. On October 12, 1895, this manager reopened the hall as the People's Theatre, with Dion Boucicault's After Dark. Prices were still 10 and 20¢. Despite a fresh coat of paint and some remodeling, the hall's decline could not be disguised. Through by Daylight followed the Boucicault piece on October 20, with James M. Ward, Margaret Reid, Josie Haines, and Charles Edmonds in its cast; then came an Irish play, Shamus O'Brien, followed by The Black Flag, which apparently closed the house to all further theatrical activity.

By March 22, 1896, according to the Chronicle of that date, the hall stood "empty and tenantless" again. In the writer's opinion there seemed no hope of its being revived, since the cost of renovation would be prohibitive and the location itself had ceased to attract the public. He added:

> And so Union Hall, dedicated to the cause of human liberty and the preservation of Federal Unity, bids fair to pass from the minds of men, and although it has played quite as important a part in California history as Faneuil Hall at Boston and Independence Hall at Philadelphia did in the early history of the nation, yet unlike them bids fair to lose its identity and to be forgotten in the rush and bustle of Western life."

A FIERY FINISH

Whether or not people forgot Union Hall during its last days, they certainly remembered its vivid end, May 2, 1898 -- 35 years after its erection -- when it caught fire and was completely destroyed by one of the "hottest conflagrations the city has seen in years." The Chronicle of May 3 described the scene in detail:

> "Historic Union Hall, on Howard Street, near Third, went up in flames late last night, furnishing the Fire Department with as difficult and dangerous a task as has been set to its hands in a long time. But for the skill

and energy of Chief Sullivan and his men, this morning's story would have been sorrowful telling . . .

"For some reason not explained no alarm was rung until the fire had been under way for three-quarters of an hour, or possibly longer, and by the time the department arrived on the scene the big structure was belching flames a hundred feet in the air. People residing in Tehama Street, in the immediate vicinity of the hall, declared that the building was burning all evening, and say with positiveness that a bright glow was visible through the Tehama Street windows of the building an hour before any alarm was sounded . . .

"Union Hall extended through from Howard to Tehama Street, and the interior of the vast auditorium, from street to street and from basement to roof, was a seething mass of flames when the firemen tackled their jobs . . . It seemed as if no building eastward to Third Street could escape the general conflagration. The brick walls of the building, and the excellent work of the fire-fighters kept the flames from spreading disastrously . . .

"At 11:45 p.m. the flames were under control. At midnight the fire was practically extinguished. The damage from the fire was confined almost exclusively to Union Hall and its contents. A large number of old 'bobtails' and some old two-horse cars of the defunct

Omnibus Railroad Company and the North Beach and Mission Line were stored in the building. They were the property of the Market Street Railway Company, but none of them was worth more than $15.00 to $30.00 . . . The St. David, one of the most notorious lodging-houses in the city abuts on Tehama Street and that part of it was scorched by the flames . . .

"Opium fiends, rudely awakened from their dreams, ran over each other in their anxiety to escape, and men and women in various stages of scant attire crowded into the hallways . . ."

The rundown condition of its neighborhood, thus revealed, was one reason Union Hall was not rebuilt.

CHAPTER II

MOZART HALL

(1868 - 1870)

The career of Mozart Hall was short; but its confused and curious history was enlivened by flashes of notoriety. Opening in 1868 as a music hall, it housed in rapid succession variety, theatricals, minstrels, lectures, concerts, balls, and benefits, and after 1870 subsided into obscurity. There is little apparent reason for its lack of success. It was centrally located in a $50,000 building on the north side of Post Street between Kearny and Dupont (now Grant Avenue) Streets, was equipped with a stage, and seated 1500. Judging by the following description in the Daily Alta California of June 2, 1868, it offered unusual possibilities:

> "Apel's new brick building is now nearly finished and already partially occupied. It has a frontage of 50 feet on Post Street, a depth of 137½ feet, and is three stories in height, with a full basement. There is an alley along the western side of the building running through to Sutter Street, and another in the rear, so there is no lack of conveniences for entrances and exits,

and protection against fire. The second and third stories are cut up into three halls, the main one, an assembly hall, being 47½ by 94 feet in the clear, and 26 feet in height, intended for a dancing and concert room, and the others of smaller size for the use of several societies. The halls are under rent to two Germans for 5 years. French artists are now engaged in decorating the ceilings and walls of these halls in fresco in an elaborate and tasteful manner and the work will soon be finished."

On July 11, 1868, the Daily Dramatic Chronicle announced its opening:

"Mozart Hall -- Post Street, between Kearny and Dupont.

"The above new and large hall, which has been erected with particular regard to acoustics and the comfort of the public, is now completed. The proprietors flatter themselves that in the erection of the above building they have succeeded in completing a concert hall which cannot be equalled by any in this city; and the fact that they have expended over $7,000 in fitting up the same, shows that they have not spared any expense. The opening will take place on Sunday, July 12, 1868, with a grand concert and ball! For which occasion Kraus & Allen's Band has been engaged. Concert to com-

mence at 8:00 o'clock. Admission 50¢, including lunch. The hall will be let on liberal terms for concerts, balls, etc. A bar is connected with the above hall, at which only the best of wines, liquors and cigars will be kept. Henry & George Wass, Proprietors."

DRINKS, SMOKES, AND THE CAN-CAN

The respectable tone of the above advertisement is somewhat marred by indication that the Messrs. Wass, when genteel entertainment was slow in appearing, intended to put Mozart Hall to less respectable uses. In 1869 the proprietors affronted the city's moral arbiters by renting the hall to a certain " Professor" Young, who advertised in Figaro and the Daily Dramatic Review of March 10:

"Can-Can! All who have not seen the celebrated Can-Can danced as it should be, may now have an opportunity of seeing it as originally danced at the famous Jardin Mabille, Paris, by attending Prof. Young's

Fancy Dress and Masquerade Ball

at

Mozart Hall, Thursday evening, March 11th.

"An elegant watch will be presented to the person holding the ticket containing the lucky number. No report of the Ball will be given. Doors open at 11:00 o'clock; dancing to commence at 11:30 p.m. Ladies are requested to appear masked.

Tickets $2.00"

nence at 8:00 o'clock. Admission $2., including lunch. The hall will be let on liberal terms for concerts, balls, etc. A bar in connection with the above hall, at which only the best of wines, liquors and cigars will be used. Henry & George Wass, Proprietors."

PRICES, TICKETS, AND THE JAM-CAN

The remarkable tone of the "new advertisers" is somewhat marred by indication that Mr. Wass, who "pushed entertainment" was a bit in appearing. Intended to put Mozart Hall to been rent-paying wass. In 1899 the proprietors attempted the eight-year moral subtlers by renting the hall to a certain "Professor" Young, who advertised in Pagano and the Daily Dramatic Review of March 1:

"Can-Can! All who have not seen the celebrated Can-Can danced as it should be, may now have an opportunity of seeing it as originally danced at the famous Jardin Mabille, Paris, by attending Prof. Young's

Fancy Dress and Masquerade Ball

at

Mozart Hall, Thursday evening, March 16th.

The elegant watch will be presented to the person holding the ticket corresponding to lucky number. No report of the "ball will" be given. Doors open at 11:00 o'clock; dancing to commence at 11:30 p.m. Ladies are requested to appear masked

Tickets $2.00

The Mabille was a notorious dance hall established in 1840. It was there that Chicard invented the can-can.

Mozart Hall definitely was classed: it housed variety entertainment and its lessee advertised in Figaro. Two years later public opinion on melodeon entertainment was aired in the courts, when George T. Russell, publisher of Figaro, brought a $15,000 libel suit against Charles de Young, et al., publishers of the Chronicle. (See opening of next chapter.)

In 1869 Tom Maguire leased the Mozart and called it the Mozart Minstrel Hall. He opened on December 21 with his famous San Francisco Minstrels, and offered such favorites as Joe Murphy, Ben Cotton, W. F. Baker, and J. Edwards. After a few performances the hall closed for alterations until December 28. The reopening was made notable by the San Francisco debut of W. B. Leavitt.

MINSTRELS FLOP

With such a formidable company on the boards, it appeared that Maguire had launched his "permanent home of minstrelsy"; but such was not the case. On January 16, 1870, Figaro announced:

> "The excellent minstrel combination which includes such names as Cotton, Ashcroft, Haynor, Bamford, and Leavitt, have appeared in a round of their best acts during the week; but the attendance has fallen off in spite of these attractions so much that Mr. Maguire has

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

concluded to abandon the minstrel enterprise. Mozart Hall will be closed, as a regular place of amusement, after tonight, and the lovers of the legitimate burnt-cork drama will find no place in the city where their tastes may be gratified. This evident decline in the public taste for minstrelsy indicates, possibly, that we have had too great a surfeit of this class of entertainments for a year past, and the people demand a change.

"We are of the opinion, however, that a first-class minstrel hall, well located, can be made to pay permanently in this city. The difficulty with Mozart Hall was that the seats are on a level floor, and do not command a good view of the stage. To make it a commodious place for these exhibitions, an inclined floor would have to be put in, and this Mr. Maguire did not feel himself warranted in doing without a longer lease than it was possible to obtain."

What Maguire failed to do no one else apparently tried. Minstrelsy had begun to wane, as Figaro suggests, and variety had arrived to take its place. Within a few years melodeons similar to Mozart Hall were springing up in every corner of the city. But for some reason, Mozart Hall reverted to its dual role of half music hall, half melodeon.

THE CHURCH ATTACKS

For the next few months the Hall offered a series of concerts, balls, lectures, and amateur minstrel performances.

Then, on April 30, 1870, Figaro proclaimed a benefit for the actress Kate Armstrong "to take place at Mozart Hall on Thursday evening, May 5th." Apparently this benefit was condemned, for Figaro furiously took up the cudgels in two articles:

"There are still sweet evangelicals who unctuously praise the Lord with hallelujahs and metaphorical harpings for 'electing' themselves as 'chosen vessels' and damning all the rest of mankind. It is time that these loathsome vermin, the spawn of a theology more cruel and disgusting than any heathen creed, should be cogently rebuked. A poor helpless woman with a needy family clamoring for bread finds that she can earn the wherewithal to supply her children with the necessities of life by the innocent use of talents with which God has endowed her, in promoting the amusement of the public. She is a Christian woman and a member of a Christian church; but her fellow Christians of the 'Tabernacle' do not recognize 'amusements' as among the necessities of human nature. They regard this world 'a vale of tears,' and whosoever tries to make it a pleasant sojourning place is an emissary of the devil.

"According to their creed, misery is promotive of piety, and cheerfulness and mirth are grievous offenses in the sight of God. We must pull long faces, we must fast and torment ourselves, and go about this pleasant

world with mortified countenances, if we would be in favor with the Almighty. Art and literature, and the drama, and whatever tends to adorn and sweeten life and refine our tastes must be tabooed. Music, unless in the shape of nasal psalmody, is an abomination unto the Lord. Clerical mountebanks may get off irreverent jokes in their religious melodeons, but the genius of a Shakespeare, or the talent of a Boucicault, is profane. If the evangelicals are satisfied with poor acting and stale witticisms within the bare walls of a church, why should they rail at thoroughly artistic acting, and nimble wit at the theatre?

"It is hard to say why they should; but the fact is they do. And so the poor woman who in her humble way does precisely the same thing at the theatre that the ordained Pharisee does in the pulpit, winning by his third-rate performance the applause and laughter of an uncritical audience, is 'cut off' from the communion of the suffering saints and has the 'Right Hand of Fellowship' withdrawn from her by the canting Pharisees of the 'Tabernacle.'

"If this is 'religion,' it is high time that it should be abolished, and room made for culture, enlightenment, and humanitarianism."

THE STAGE DEFENDS

The second of the two articles, while not less caustic in

tone, is quite specific as to Kate Armstrong's offense. It labors to defend the lady's probity by again vehemently discrediting the church:

"Horrible Catastrophe! The Hand of Fellowship withdrawn -- Woman Given Over to Satan! Elsewhere we have referred to the poor lady who was excommunicated from an evangelical church for playing in a theatre. She was poor, had others to support; didn't like to starve; couldn't be tempted to sin; couldn't get anything else to do, and therefore went to the theatre and played a harmless little part, for which she received $10 a week.

"The brethren were scandalized and horrified. They were afflicted in soul. They labored with her; they prayed for her; they admonished her repeatedly; they held numerous holy snuffles; but, we regret to say, they never fetched her any money to feed the sweet little helpless ones who importuned her for bread. At length the dejected brethren met in sorrowful conclave, and after a pious conflict in prayer, handed the comtumacious sister over to the tender mercies of the Devil.

"O! Glorious and heroic Christian woman and true mother! How the sympathies of fifty thousand men and women will gather round your humble tenement, and how their hot glances of contempt and scorn will converge upon and blister into the sleek-oiled fronts of your

illiberal, sniveling, hypocritical, inhuman, unchristian like persecutors."

The program for this benefit was Benjamin Webster's One Touch of Nature, in which Kate Armstrong appeared in the leading role, and a farce, The Irish Attorney.

Mozart Hall housed subsequent entertainments, benefits, masquerades, amateurish and sometimes rowdy variety, but its brief life passed into obscurity. Its ultimate fate is unknown; it simply disappeared from the records like so many of its kind.

CHAPTER III

THE PACIFIC THEATRE

(1868 - 1872)

Lawsuits against melodeons, as cited in the preceding chapter, were not uncommon in the sixties and seventies. The following testimony from the notable case of Figaro versus the Chronicle, reported by the Bulletin of January 24, 1872, is an introduction to the Pacific Theatre and to the period in which it existed:

"L. P. Ward was recalled, and testified to having attended the performances at the New Pacific Theatre and the Bella Union, in 1869 or 1870, both of which were advertised in Figaro at that time. The performances were of a very lewd and immoral character.

"Mr. Campbell then, with a view of proving that the Figaro was a 'smut machine' and immoral publication as charged in the article said to be libelous, offered in evidence a number of copies of the Figaro containing the advertisements of Professor Johnson's parties; also the article attacking the Grand Jury for a portion of

CHAPTER VII

[illegible] THEATRE

(1851 - 1879)

[illegible] as cited in the preceding chapter, were not [illegible] the extent [illegible]. The following [illegible] versus [illegible] Bulletin [illegible] 1879, [illegible] Pacific Theatre [illegible]

> [illegible] the New Pacific Theatre [illegible] both of which were [illegible]. The performances were of a very low and immoral character.
>
> [illegible] a view of [illegible] article said to [illegible] Jones, offered in evidence [illegible] copies of the Figaro [illegible]

their report filed in November, 1869, in which the melodeon houses were condemned; also several numbers containing articles abusive of the Chronicle and its proprietors.

"Officer John Ellis testified that he was detailed by the chief of police to visit the Pacific Melodeon during the month of September; that he made daily reports as to the character and attendance. He testified at length as to the character of the performance given there, describing the indecencies of the can-can dance and the exhibition generally."

The Pacific Theatre was thus classified with the Bella Union shortly after its opening performance. Undeniably bawdy, they were popular in their appeal, despite pulpit fulminators, grand juries, and police officers. So they continued to be until they were terminated -- not by religio-legal pressure, but by the subsidence of public interest, or its diversion into a more refined channel of amusement -- vaudeville.

The Bella Union was archetype of them all. It survived longer, took the lion's share of blame, praise, and box-office receipts, and died more reluctantly. Nevertheless, during its relatively brief career, the Pacific Theatre equalled it in notoriety and ran it a close race in the bid for audiences.

ALIAS COMIQUE AND GLOBE

The name H. B. Platt is already familiar to readers of

these volumes as the builder and owner of Platt's Hall. Having once profited from a theatrical venture of sorts, Platt, With the financial assistance of James Brooks, former proprietor of the Golden Era, erected in 1868 the four-story building at Pacific and Kearny Streets variously known as the Theatre Comique, Pacific Melodeon, Pacific Theatre, New Pacific Theatre, and finally as the Globe Theatre. Since three of these titles were conferred -- usually with a corresponding change in physical decorations -- within four months of the building's completion, it appears that this rather presumptous little playhouse had the capacity, like all melodeons, to alter its guise as readily as its variety programs.

THEATRE AND HOTEL

Like most playhouses, the Pacific shared its building with other establishments; stores abutted on it from both Pacific and Kearny Streets, and its two entrances were flanked by display windows. The upper stories housed a hotel of some 200 rooms; but it is unlikely that the roomers slept very soundly with a variety performance in full swing directly below them. From the roof floated a house flag bearing the name "PACIFIC," applying to both theatre and hotel.

Despite all this, the new theatre was quite elegant and commodious, in keeping with the latest in architectural advancement. Figaro of November 28, 1868, described it thus:

"The New Pacific Theatre, at the corner of Kearny

[illegible] Bay-
[illegible] modified, [illegible] modern [illegible] of [illegible],
[illegible] Lincoln [illegible] of Jean Hooker, [illegible] apart-
[illegible] are Down [illegible] Way. [illegible] 1909 [illegible] four-story build-
[illegible] decorative [illegible] vernacular, known as the Theo-
[illegible] Complex, [illegible] Bungalow, [illegible] Illustrator [illegible] New Pacific
Theatre, [illegible] usually as the Globe Theatre. [illegible] three of
these [illegible] monumental — usually with [illegible] corresponding
[illegible] in physical [illegible] — with [illegible] of the
[illegible] Middleton [illegible] appears [illegible] these [illegible] monumental
[illegible] bungalows [illegible] usually, like [illegible] to
[illegible] as the [illegible] usually [illegible] variety [illegible].

"LAST OF THE HOTEL

[illegible] building
[illegible] and [illegible] two [illegible] were flanked
[illegible] bungalow windows. [illegible] electric [illegible] of some
[illegible] rooms, but [illegible] very [illegible] measure about very
[illegible] [illegible] performances in full swing [illegible]
[illegible] from the roof located [illegible] Clay [illegible] the [illegible]
Pacific, applying to [illegible] the [illegible] motor.

Despite all this, [illegible] the theatre was [illegible] and
commodious. In keeping with the [illegible] in [illegible]
[illegible] Pacific [illegible] November 18, 1909, [illegible] time.

"The New [illegible] Pacific [illegible] Theatre

and Pacific, is now ready for occupancy by any manager who wishes a neatly fitted up and commodious place of amusement at a moderate rent. Its size is 42 x 70 feet; its stage is 35 x 42; it has seating room for 800 people. The drop curtain was painted by an Italian artist of the name of Arragona, who painted the fine drop at present in use at Maguire's Opera House. The subject is an Italian landscape. The theatre has two entrances -- one on Kearny and one on Pacific Street -- and has six means of exit in case of emergency. It is ventilated throughout on the newest principle --ventilators running through the sides, rear wall and ceiling. The proscenium is decorated in white and gold, with silver chandeliers. Full sets of scenery and duplicates have been painted. Hydrants are fixed in the property room, and 300 feet of hose are provided. We hope before long to see this well-arranged little theatre occupied by some company which will establish there a popular class of amusement."

Figaro's hope was about to be fulfilled on December 5, 1868, when the Daily Dramatic Review announced:

"The Martinetti Troupe will open the Pacific Theatre for the holiday season with a series of grand pantomime and ballet divertissements."

THE THEATRE COMIQUE

The Martinettis were a family of versatile acrobats and comedians from Paris who were already well known and liked in San Francisco. There had always been a ready market for the sort of entertainment they offered -- burlesque ballet and humorous sketches done somewhat in the tradition of the Comedia dell' Arte; and they had reason to anticipate a long stay at the Pacific Theatre, which they had leased and renamed the Theatre Comique. But despite an auspicious opening on Christmas Eve, the Martinettis ran their show only one week before announcing its termination "to enable the management to complete certain improvements in the arrangement of seats."

Apparently the plans for this theatre had been based on Platt's experience with the music hall, for the Daily Dramatic Review of December 5, 1868, reveals what was wrong with the original seating plan:

> "The auditorium consists of a parquette, dress circle, and four proscenium boxes, and will accommodate comfortably an audience of 800. The dress circle seats are all stationery, with cushioned bottoms and backs, while those in the parquette are movable and will fold up, similar to those in Platt's Hall."

Since the Martinettis had no intention of converting the place into a ballroom at any time, the movable chairs proved an uncomfortable nuisance and a hazard in case of fire. It

required about two weeks to install stationary seats more in keeping with theatrical requirements, and the Pacific reopened in mid-January with a flare of announcements and a large French audience on hand to inaugurate the new season.

The troupe's career was lamentably brief, considering its reputation, its conscious use of the Comedia dell' Arte technique, its ability to improvise and perform miracles of fairy tale within a strictly pantomimic framework which, with ballet and trapeze acts, delighted the sophisticated at the Metropolitan Theatre later in 1869. But at the Theatre Comique the Martinettis failed to entrench themselves. Paul as Harlequin, Julien as the Clown, Philippe as Pantaloon, Madame Desirée as Columbine -- all in roles with which they long had been identified -- somehow could not fill the house consistently and make it pay. December receipts were almost $2,000 for a few performances; January brought only $968. By February 23, 1869, the Martinettis were through; the Theatre Comique as such passed out of existence. Figaro of that date gave one reason in the following brisk notice:

> "The Martinettis concluded their season of pantomime and ballet last Saturday evening, although no announcement was made of such a determination. Excellent as have been the entertainments offered by this talented troupe, they could scarcely have been expected to succeed while presenting their old repertoire of pieces,

which have been seen so often by our amusement-goers. The enterprising proprietors, Messrs. Platt and Brooks, will scarcely permit this neat little theatre to remain long closed."

THE PACIFIC MELODEON

However the proprietors felt about allowing the theatre to remain closed, under the terms of the lease it was imperative that the Martinettis dispose of their obligation. Messrs. Platt and Brooks apparently had nothing to do with the transaction by which Joseph Koster acquired the Pacific Theatre some days later, buying at a discount from the Martinettis their unexpired lease. The theatre's name was changed to the Pacific Melodeon and J. H. McCabe became its manager.

Under McCabe's management the house in no real sense altered its character; it simply became a forthright arena of variety which evolved directly out of the minstrel shows. The Pacific Theatre company was built around a nucleus of blackface performers who were among the most versatile and accomplished of the period. Charley Rhodes, banjoist and balladist, who wrote "The Days of '49," Harry Spriggs, Jimmy Carton, Charley Storms -- all first-rate minstrel comedians and musicians -- formed with the then-famous gymnasts, Painter and Durand, the headliners in McCabe's company which opened March 8, 1869, to a "comfortably filled" house.

Variety itself, and not the individual melodeons, provoked the moral stricture of nineteenth century crusaders and

reformers. As their programs show, all melodeons -- including the notorious Bella Union -- followed a pattern as stereotyped as that of the minstrelsy that preceded it or the vaudeville that followed. The entertainment was sensational; but it was no more "indecent" than the "burlesques" sometimes performed at the California Theatre and Maguire's Opera House.

A minstrel first part, followed by an olio, or interlude, and concluding with a burlesque, burletta, or extravaganza, comprised the framework of variety. Because it was a tour de force including too many irreconcilable theatrical forms within a single program, it became so diverse that -- under pressure of desperate competitive innovations -- it became unmanageable. Its alleged indecencies were chiefly those of the olio, an interlude of songs, dances, and humorous skits. Certainly no one found fault with the minstrelsy or with the purely theatrical conclusion.

MC CABE'S MAZEPPA

When McCabe began to direct the destinies of the Pacific Theatre it became a typical melodeon overnight. Less than a month after the opening he staged Mazeppa, that three-act melodrama which Adah Isaacs Menken had introduced and rendered instantly popular in 1863 at Maguire's Opera House. The young actress who took Menken's role on this occasion was Ella La Rue, unknown outside the melodeon circuit perhaps, but within it a spectacular favorite. Ella and her trained horse, Reveille, provided thrills for the audience night after night

-- notwithstanding the fact that Mazeppa was by then a piece whose breathless sequences had been exploited many times.

McCabe himself, a veteran actor who had been on the Coast since 1849; Lizzie Worrell, of the famous Worrell Sisters, who had been associated with almost every melodeon in San Francisco; and many others in the regular company also had parts in Mazeppa, besides doing their own particular turns in the miscellany which preceded it. But the guest star, with her remarkable horse, stole the show.

On May 1, 1869, after Mazeppa had run some weeks, McCabe was obliged to extend the engagement still another week. This same program also offered a loose agglomeration of songs, dances, jokes, and acrobatic feats that formed in themselves a kind of vaudeville repertoire; and then, to conclude the bill, "the original Parisian Can-Can." In keeping with the pace of variety one sensation rapidly succeeded another and McCabe even resorted to a circus trick in order to attract the crowds. The gymnast William Painter, in addition to his regular stage appearance, gave a spectacular exhibition in front of the theatre before the evening performance began -- walking a tightrope stretched across Kearny Street from the roofs of opposite buildings, 60 feet above the ground. This act was presented gratis for the benefit of patrons, potential patrons, and for some who would never set foot in the Pacific Theatre; it was repeated so frequently that it became a kind of prologue to the show proper. It appears to have paid well as a publicity

stunt, for during the month of August, 1869, the gate receipts mounted above $4,000.

THE "BLACK CROOK" CRAZE

Another indication of McCabe's successful management was Figaro's announcement on January 17, 1870:

> "The Black Crook, extravagantly produced on Saturday evening, will be repeated tonight. From beginning to end it is replete with jollity. We notice a change in the stage management. Mr. John Woodard, a gentleman of experience, assumes control in place of our friend McCabe, who, we hear, goes eastward for new talent for the house. The programme is made up as usual of songs and dances, the newest and the best."

The Black Crook, like Mazeppa, had gone through the stilted motions of a craze in 1867, had been burlesqued and reburlesqued, played to death and then shelved. McCabe's production followed its resurrection by Tom Maguire at the Opera House. But whereas the Black Crook was a principal attraction at Maguire's, The Pacific relegated it to the end of the bill, after a minstrel first part and the olio. It lasted only a few days, giving place to a new extravaganza called The Persis, or Come and See It.

The Persis, containing many puns, spicy song hits, and innuendoes, was really the first a series of original innovations instituted by manager John Woodard during McCabe's

[illegible] Commission [illegible] 1938), the same decisions mentioned above [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] a [illegible] was [illegible] on February 1[illegible], 1[illegible].

[illegible] Co. [illegible] on [illegible] regarding [illegible] charge [illegible] a [illegible] for [illegible] of [illegible]

[illegible] through the utilization [illegible] and [illegible] Access to accommodation [illegible] Oscar [illegible] a [illegible] of [illegible] on [illegible] and [illegible] fill [illegible] only a [illegible] called [illegible]

[illegible]

absence. It marked the beginning of a different era, heralded the appearance of such notable additions to the company as Ned Buckley -- later a melodeon proprietor and manager of other houses -- the minstrel Lew Parker, and those darlings of variety, Ida Wallace, Ida May, and Maggie Brewer. The startling scenic effects and slapstick comedy, the demons, fairies, fiends, and monsters who peopled the extravaganza were endowed with a brief, bright life which, like Tinsel-glitter, Queen of Persis, soon passed from the stage of the Pacific Theatre into oblivion. Near the end of January, Ned Buckley dropped out of the cast and his position as "bones" was taken by Lew Rattler.

THE SHOO-FLY CAN-CAN

The sensational Shoo-Fly Can-Can burletta, which succeeded The Persis, became so popular that it ran for months, first as a separate entity; later, it was incorporated into an extravaganza titled Found Ashore, or The Shoo-Fly Can-Can on the Farallones.

On February 15, 1870, Figaro remarked:

> "Found Ashore, or the Shoo-Fly Can-Can on the Farallones, is a capital rib-tickler. Abounding in local hits and allusions and being brim-full of general fun, it will hold the boards for a goodly season. Tonight Miss Fanny Herne, a beautiful and talented comedienne, late of Tony Pastor's Opera House (N. Y.), will make

her first appearance. Among the new attractions are The Jubilee, by Rattler and company, Double Eschelle, by Painter and Durand, and a variety of songs and ballads in the first part."

Because it thus featured the can-can in a more elaborate form than the dance itself had ever achieved in previous performances, the Pacific Theatre now acquired a solid reputation for low-life and remained thenceforth, from a moral point of view, among the most offensive of the despised melodeons. Nevertheless, such a policy continued to find ample public response. The house was packed night after night and the Shoo-Fly Can-Can was vociferously applauded, as was each so-called change in program which occurred weekly without displacing the chief attraction.

Woodard apparently knew the singular function of variety and, like Maguire, possessed the unusual ability of anticipating the public's desires in advance of current trends. Whereas McCabe had been content with imitations, Woodard deemed it wiser to install Momus in the temple and give this god of mocking ridicule a free hand. Although retaining the can-can, or variations thereof, long after its first flush of popularity, he reduced it to a routine of the olio, and featured burlesques, skits or farces written around contemporary subjects. Abounding in local allusions, perfectly timed, and suited to the idiosyncrasies of the actors who played in them, they were

turned out by their unknown authors with machine-like skill as they were needed. Some of the titles are indicative of their timeliness: Women's Rights, or The Emperor's Dream of the Naked Truth; The Drunkard's Daughter; The Oakland Trio, or The Ratcatcher's Daughter. In April, 1870, when the Overland Circus was playing in San Francisco and starring the Risarelli Brothers, Woodard presented a sketch called The Underland Circus, "by the Rise-er-Early Brothers."

PACIFIC CHANGES HANDS

So well indeed did Woodard direct the destiny of his melodeon that he retained the post of stage-manager even after this notice appeared in Figaro of April 25, 1870:

> "Pacific Theatre -- This cozy little dramatic resort has undergone a change of proprietorship. Mr. Charles H. Platt, the efficient business manager, and Mr. James Miller, late of the old Bowery Theatre, New York, and formerly associate manager of Covent Garden, London, have become the joint proprietors of the establishment. These gentlemen are enterprising and experienced in the dramatic business and success will undoubtedly perch upon their banners."

But Figaro's prediction was wrong, for from the time of its appearance the Pacific Theatre began its slow decline. All manner of tricks and sensations were tried; outside talent was employed on a scale hitherto unprecedented; the company

was better than it ever had been. On May 7 "good houses nightly" were reported; yet the box-office receipts for the month dropped below $2,000. Alice Leed from Australia, the bright star of the moment, played for seven weeks in a series of burlesque hits called The Fays, Trips to the Moon, The Streets of San Francisco, Three Fast Women, Kathleen, or the Pride of Kilrouge, The Robber's Wife, and finally The McFarland-Richardson Case. On May 26, 1870, Figaro stated:

> "The McFarland-Richardson Case continues to be exciting and its interest will last for a goodly season yet. The Four Lovers [a piece inserted in the first part, as was frequently done to make a "double feature"] introduced the fun last night. Miss Alice Leed was very attractive as Pomona, and Miss Atlanti, a new acquisition, made a very favorable impression as Estelle. The olio was very good. The same bill tonight."

The next day, however, brought no show. In place of the usual advertisement, Figaro carried the following brief notice:

> "Pacific Theatre -- This theatre has been closed for repairs. Due notice will be given of its re-opening."

The end had not yet come. The Pacific did reopen some two weeks later -- at reduced admission prices and with the engagement of Hollan Effendi, "the Nubian Wonder, formerly in the services of the Khedive of Egypt." Replacing the clever

minstrelmen who had been wielding bones and tambourine, were now two lady performers, Nellie Vining and Cherry Belle. Lew Rattler and Ned Harrigan and a galaxy of other favorites were lamentably absent from the program; Jimmy Murphy, excellent and versatile though he was, could not fill the shoes of so many. Hence, if the review in Figaro of June 13, 1870, can be credited, Hollan Effendi gave practically a one-man show, which was chiefly a gymnastic exhibition:

"The Pacific Theatre was crowded on Saturday night, when it was re-opened after being re-fitted and re-decorated, and having many improvements made in it. The first part in which Cherry Belle swang [sic] the tambourine and Nellie Vining rattled the bones, was good throughout -- choruses, songs (comic and sentimental) and a lively walk-around, all were well received. Cherry Belle's banjo eccentricities were capital.

"The great star of the evening, however, was Hollan Effendi . . . The performances of this accomplished balancer and gymnast on the slack wire, with one hand tossed up two small balls and with a stick in the other kept a felt hat revolving in the air.

"Hollan Effendi is a big card for any house, and the Khedive was a fool if he willingly let him leave his dominions . . . Nellie Vining appeared as a rival of Lingard in the song 'Par Excellence.' George Pearce quite gained the hearts of the audience by singing some

very pointed anti-Chinese ballads, accompanying himself on the banjo; and Jimmy Murphy performed a jig in capital style. The performance concluded with the 'Shadow Pantomime.' The same bill was played last night to the delight of a numerous audience and will be repeated tonight. Great novelties are in preparation, and still more talent will be engaged."

BRITISH BLONDE WAR

The "British Blonde War" originated at Niblo's Garden, New York, early in June, 1870, when leading comedian Harry Beckett and others in the Lydia Thompson British Blonde Company seceded from that group and, with several popular stars from the Lisa Weber Burlesque Troupe, organized a rival company billed as the British Blondes. The original blondes had been engaged to open at the California Theatre in July, after concluding their Eastern engagements. But when manager Henderson of Lydia's company learned that the renegades had raced across the continent and were to open at Maguire's Opera House before the end of June, he attempted to cancel his engagement at the California. At this point John Woodard stepped into the fray, apparently making Henderson an offer to appear at the Pacific Theatre. Said Figaro on June 13, 1870:

"Pacific Theatre -- It is whispered among those behind the scenes in theatrical matters, that a troupe of British Blondes has been engaged for this theatre

which will far eclipse that at an opposition establishment. We shall see what we shall see."

-- and again on June 20:

"Pacific Theatre -- The great 'Original British Blondes' will make their first appearance at this house tomorrow, in a list of their specialties. Tonight the usual varieties by the company, to conclude with 'Going to the Ball.'"

But the blondes did not materialize, and Figaro announced:

"Pacific Theatre -- . . . We are informed by the management that in consequence of the machinations of Sherry Corbyn and the California Theatre capitalists, the original British Blondes will not make their appearance until Wednesday night, when they will positively give their first entertainment and triumph over all rivals. Another troupe is announced to appear at the California Theatre on the same night, but as Mr. Toots says 'It's of no consequence.'"

This was an ingenious, if untruthful, interpretation of the facts. Sherry Corbyn, Maguire's manager, had nothing to do with the matter, and the "California Theatre capitalists" had warfare enough on their hands competing with Maguire without bothering with such small fry as the manager of the Pacific. They did not release Henderson from his agreement, and

the Lydia Thompson British Blondes duly appeared at the California.

Woodard, having no choice in the matter, engaged a number of variety performers he called "the only true and original British Blondes," and these impostors opened at the Pacific on June 22, 1870, in the burlesque, Allfontina, or the Blonde Crocodile. The finale to this typical melodeon episode was amusingly reported by Figaro, June 23:

> "Pacific Theatre -- After a capital first part and variety performance last night, manager Woodard appeared before the curtain to explain the many troubles which had beset him during his endeavors to engage for the Pacific Theatre the only 'true and original British Blondes.' The audience quite sympathized with him and enjoyed the peep behind the scenes afterwards afforded them. The Blondes, with their beautiful golden locks streaming down below their waists, all looked charming, and were greeted with much applause. The piece which serves to introduce them to the public, and the funny rehearsal which forms the prologue to it, caused much amusement. The tableaux and dances which were arranged by Cherry Belle, were excellently well performed, and would do credit to any stage. It will not be too much to say that the best edition of the French can-can, full

of grace and fun, but no vulgarity, ever seen in this city, was presented last night at the Pacific Theatre.

"Altogether the performance was one of superior character. The Blondes looked lovely, the crocodile was perfect, the transformed blonde boy /a member of the company who had dyed his hair/ was very funny, and all present were satisfied that those who miss seeing the Pacific Theatre British Blondes cannot be compensated for the pleasure they have lost by the satisfaction they have experienced in witnessing the performances of the rival troupes. The Blondes will appear again tonight and until further notice."

STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

Woodard made further bids to keep the floundering Pacific Theatre afloat when he engaged Lew Rattler and Johnny de Angelis, two of the funniest blackface comedians then in California, and otherwise strengthened his company by the addition of many of the favorites previously seen on its boards. There were several weeks of uproarious successes by the British Blondes; School for Scandal ran concurrently with Allfontina for a while; there followed "a lavish expenditure of money in re-engaging the British Blondes" when their engagement terminated July 2, 1870, and an extended run of a few

[illegible]

more nights. But the house could not be saved.

THE GLOBE GOES OUT

During the latter half of 1870 the Pacific Theatre's bills degenerated in quality and the innovations in quantity, at last giving way to such obvious tricks as female amateur wrestling matches. On December 13 the last advertisement appeared. The Pacific Theatre was no more. In 1871, after being closed nearly a year, it had a brief revival as the Globe Theatre under Charles Vincent, who managed to keep it open a little over two months before its final collapse. The building survived until the following year and was heard from once more in Figaro, which on January 1, 1872, wrote the melodeon's epitaph:

> "Globe Theatre -- A New Year's Calico Ball will come off at this theatre tonight. The whole body of the theatre has been covered with a new floor for the occasion."

The New Year's Calico Ball did not "come off": the musicians failed to appear. So the Pacific, which had lived gayly and boisterously, passed its last days in sorry desolation and was probably razed sometime in 1872 to allow for the widening and extension of Montgomery Street. (No mention of it is given in the city directory of 1873.) Figaro as early as April 2, 1870, had forecast such an end:

"Montgomery Avenue -- The completion of this great improvement will produce a notable change in the theatrical aspect of the city. It will obliterate from the map four of our places of public amusement -- the Metropolitan, Maguire's, the Pacific, and the Jackson Street Circus Lot. This will necessitate the erection of new theatres in more central localities."

CHAPTER IV

THE WINTER GARDEN

(1872-1883)

"Some time ago several gentlemen, leading members of the Horticultural Society of California, purchased the large skating pavilion on Stockton near Post, and have since then been reconstructing and enlarging it so that it will afford room for six or seven thousand people. The new building will be known as the Horticultural Pavilion, and here will be given the fruit and flower exhibition of the Society. The interior is being modeled after the style of the Winter Gardens in Berlin, Hanover, and Paris. Thirty-two pillars finished with rustic work support the gallery around which are to be arranged 300 gas burners with colored globes. The stage represents a castle resting on a rock work and in one of which will be a prismatic water-fall. The floor of the hall will be laid out as a model garden, showing the German, French and English style of arranging pleasure gardens. This beautiful Winter Garden, which, it is intended, shall surpass anything in the United States, will be opened to the public on or about August 22."

Figaro, on July 27, 1872, thus heralded the establishment of Horticultural Hall, later known as the Winter Garden. Its distinguishing feature, as the guests discovered on August 21, 1872, when the doors were thrown open for a preview of the interior, was the dazzling array of more than 3,000 gas jets, many of them clustered in a huge, central chandelier shaped like a palm tree. Also colorfully displayed were several thousand plants and flowers, whose donors were competing for an aggregate of $2,000 in prizes offered by the Horticultural Society.

The public opening occurred the next day, when Schmidt's and Schlott's orchestras combined to give a band concert. For the next nine years Horticultural Hall served the utilitarian purpose of a garden, concert hall, skating rink, and circus arena. Showman Yankee Robinson* was responsible for its latter function when he installed his own circus, October 7, 1872, advertising the 3,000 gas jets and renaming the place Grand Grotto Temple. Two days later Figaro remarked:

> "The Horticultural Hall on Stockton Street, near Post, now turned into a circus temple, presented a brilliant appearance last night, lighted with thousands of variegated lamps and every seat filled. In fact

---

See Vol. II of this Series.

there were hardly seats enough to accommodate the crowd. Tonight two-hundred additional chairs will be placed in the dollar portion of the house."

Robinson's circus was popular for a time, but people soon grew nostalgic for the old circus lot on Jackson Street, where animals performed in the traditional environment of the "big top," with sod and sawdust underfoot and canvas billowing above. Robinson abandoned the pavilion to L. M. Henry, who on November 12 converted it into a skating rink. A rink it remained, with interludes of light-infantry drills, socials, dances, lectures, concerts, and periods of idleness, until 1881.

On March 14, 1881, the hall, remodeled on the style of the Tivoli, opened as the Winter Garden under F. F. Morse and J. A. Meade, who made of it a light-opera house and beer garden whose modest admission price of 25 cents included a refreshment ticket. According to the Examiner of March 15, 1881:

"This new place of amusement opened its doors last night under most favorable auspices. The house was good and the performance, The Chimes of Normandy, achieved a success. The hall has been newly painted and the stage altered so as to accommodate the large company."

In the cast for the Chimes of Normandy were Fannie Marston, Louise Lester, James A. Meade, Louis Nathal, Frank Rora-

back, and George Harris. Although the opening was auspicious, later performances of Gilbert and Sullivan's Pirates of Penzance and Offenbach's La Fille du Tambour Major were disappointing to the management. On April 18, Stahl and Mack acquired the Winter Garden, went to much expense installing a new stage, new scenery, new frescoes and a new coat of paint throughout; the new proprietors named M. A. Kennedy their stage-manager, and began an uninterrupted series of light and comic operas that ran well into 1883.

For their opening, Stahl and Mack offered the nautical opera Billee Taylor, or The Reward of Virtue, with Harry Gates playing the title part and Hallie Moore the role of Phoebe. This opera packed the house for three weeks. "Billee Taylor is all the rage," said the Post on May 23. "It is a worse furore than Pinafore, if such a thing can be imagined."

STANDING ROOM ONLY

Tom Casselli, a first-rate comedian and singer, came to the boards in June in the extravagant La Mascotte, which had an even longer run than its predecessor, continuing to draw large audiences until July 10. On the eve of the final performance the Post reported:

> "Today and tomorrow will be the last opportunity lovers, brothers, mothers, and others will have of seeing La Mascotte, as on Monday Boccaccio will be produced in grand style. Under clever management of that

[illegible]

[illegible]

artist and gentleman, M. A. Kennedy, the place has prospered far beyond the most sanguine hopes of the proprietors, and it will continue to do so as long as they have such a good company together as the one engaged at present, an excellent orchestra, and a man who understands the business so well as Mr. Kennedy. The chorus will bbe enlarged, also the orchestra, and Bell has painted new scenery, and altogether we are promised a pleasant surprise in the care and attention bestowed on a proper representation of Boccaccio which will positively be produced on Monday, the 11th."

Manager M. A. Kenedy, on July 18, during the run of Boccaccio, advertised in the Post: "Sunday night! A scene unprecedented! At 7 o'clock people turned away! Seating capacity of house 2,500! Number of tickets sold 3,000!" Such methods seldom left any standing room at the Winter Garden after 7:30 p.m.

Mounted cheaply, played with a dash of slapstick recklessness, Jonah in the Whale (the work of a local musician named Hoffman), La Fille du Tambour Major, La Grande Duchesse, and a curious operatic adaptation of the Black Crook, following one after another at the Winter Garden, continued to fill the place "to its rafters" and finally, on October 22, 1881, called forth this bit of mild criticism from the Post:

"The management have very wisely placed entirely

new scenery on the stage, and it is time they did so, for one gets tired seeing the black and white carpet and jaded parlor scene, which has been used so many times before. The chorus has been considerably augmented, but they sadly need training, as they stand on the stage like wooden figures."

Just before this was written, an excavation of 14 feet had been made under the stage for the installation of "machinery," the stage had been rebuilt, and the popular comedian Edward Barret had been made stage-manager. Doubtless the proprietors considered themselves extravagant in spending so much money on improvements -- since the house would hold no more than its original 3,000 capacity -- and six weeks were spent in rehearsing and preparing the Black Crook, while an opera which had outlasted its popularity was retained on the bills. Nevertheless there was no falling off in attendance, even though the gallery gods were heard more than once to groan.

SECOND-RATE TIVOLI

The programs improved in 1882, with Pinafore, Donizetti's The Love Potion, The Bohemian Girl, and Fra Diavolo making bright spots in an otherwise tarnished repertory of musical junk -- much of it contrived on the premises. But the Winter Garden remained a second-rate imitation of the Tivoli during its entire career. It never once rose to first rank, even with its production of Iolanthe, then Gilbert and Sullivan's

latest work. On January 27, the occasion of Iolanthe's San Francisco premiere, the Post came out with a direct criticism:

> "The Winter Garden -- Gilbert and Sullivan's comic aesthetic opera Iolanthe, their latest composition, was produced at this house last Monday night for the first time in San Francisco. With one or two exceptions the opera was very poorly cast, and in some instances equally poorly rendered. The work throughout showed lack of sufficient rehearsal and want of proper management; and the chorus, especially the female portion, was almost wretched at times. Mr. Urban as Lord Chancellor does his best with the character, which does not at all suit him. Arthur Sullivan has never been very partial to tenors, as he considers them 'sticks' on the stage, and that accounts for the tame music given to the character of Earl Tolleller, impersonated by Mr. Horaback, of which character he has not the slightest conception . . . "

The critic went on to point out other glaring inconsistencies, then summarized with a laconic statement which neatly damned the entire performance: "The orchestra is very good."

LAST SCENE -- A FIRE

Iolanthe, which should have made the fortunes of Stahl and Mack, proved to be their downfall. Attendances fell off night by night and ultimately forced the theatre to close,

since there was no money with which to pay the actors' salaries. On February 10, attempting to remedy this situation, the company reopened under its own management in the burlesque or "play" Musketeers. "It is devoutly to be hoped," said the Post that same day, "that the public will remember the past efforts of this clever company to amuse, and will reciprocate accordingly." But the public either did not remember, or remembered too well; the venture was only a mild success.

A month or so later the Winter Garden's legal owners managed to get enough money together to reopen the house on its former basis, offering instead of opera a succession of dramatic outbursts such as Rip Van Winkle, Saratoga, The Victims, The Persecuted Dutchman, Sweetheart, Toodles, The Chimney Corner, and A Kiss in the Dark. They threw in with these a few musical numbers and specialty acts. The Winter Garden was well on the way to becoming a melodeon when it caught fire on August 4, 1883, and burned to the ground. The last notice concerning it appeared in the Call on the following day:

> "Winter Garden -- Nothing additional has been learned as to the cause of yesterday morning's fire, in which a large number of buildings, including the Winter Garden, Red Men's Hall, Druid's Hall and the Verein Eintract building were entirely burned. The blaze shooting up in the rear of the Winter Garden was discovered by police officers Corrigan, Flynn and Merrifield.

A general alarm was turned in and the whole department was engaged in fighting the hottest fire San Francisco has seen for years. The Winter Garden building was a large barn-like structure and owing to the material used in its construction it soon succumbed. It required 200 policemen to keep back the enormous crowd that had congregated on every side."

CHAPTER V

THE ADELPHI

(1877-1891)

The Adelphi was unlike its two predecessors of the same name. Adelphis I and II had been razed by fire almost 20 years before 1877, when Messrs. Cogill and Cooper christened their new melodeon The Adelphi and opened it as a variety house. Both the earlier Adelphis, though ostensibly theatres devoted to the drama, were melodeons of a sort during most of their brief careers; Adelphi II, a forthright melodeon, had made frequent sorties into the field of melodrama, and all three were, in the newspaper parlance of that time, "tiny bijou theatres."

Located on the south side of California Street, two doors west of Kearny, the Adelphi shared its elegant new quarters with a carriage "repository" which occupied the ground floor. Messrs. Cogill and Cooper, variety performers of considerable reputation, entrusted the theatre's management to John Woodard, former stage-manager of the Pacific Theatre. Just before the opening, Figaro on April 18, 1877, proclaimed:

CHAPTER V

THE ATLANTIC

(1947-1952)

The Atlantic was [illegible] professorship of the same name. Adolphus I and II had [illegible] for almost 80 years before Lord, who [illegible] Duglis and Duncan flourished [illegible] reference. He [illegible] it as a variety [illegible]. Both the [illegible], [illegible] flourishes [illegible] were [illegible] of [illegible] of the broad [illegible] Duglis II, a [illegible] mathematician, and [illegible] Leonard [illegible] the field of [illegible], and all [illegible] was, in its [illegible], [illegible] of that time, "[illegible] [illegible]."

Located on the [illegible] side of [illegible] Street, two doors west of [illegible], the Atlantic shared its [illegible] with quarters with a [illegible] "[illegible]" [illegible] Duncan Lord, Duncan Duglis and [illegible], [illegible] of considerable [illegible], enhancing the [illegible] management [illegible] Woodward, for [illegible] [illegible] "[illegible]." [illegible] the [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

"The opening announcement of Cogill and Cooper's new theatre appears in our columns. The opening night is fixed for Saturday, April 28th. John Woodard, the stage-manager, will be on the premises daily, from 11 to 1 o'clock, for the purpose of receiving proposals from talent of acknowledged ability in the variety and dramatic lines who may wish an engagement. Twenty young ladies from the stock and ballet are wanted."

FOURTEEN GIRLS AND THIRTEEN MEN

By April 24, according to this same journal, a "variety and vaudeville company numbering fourteen ladies and thirteen gentlemen" had been engaged. The Examiner of April 26 declared:

"This city promises to rival New York in the comparative number of buildings devoted to the drama. On Saturday evening next the Adelphi, which has been recently erected on California Street, above Kearny, will be opened to the public, after an expenditure of nearly $20,000. The auditorium is divided into an orchestra, parquette and circle, separated into nine boxes and two large divisions for stalls. There are four proscenium or stage boxes. The entire seating capacity is for about 650 persons. The upholstery is in blue cloth, leather and hangings. Elegant lace curtains and a heavy blue damask cloth are used in the boxes. The painting is white throughout, set off with gold leaf

gilding. The papering is blue, figured, and is very pleasant and tasteful in design. The general effect of the interior of the auditorium is at once cool, rich and pleasant. The stalls are a new feature in theatres in this city. They are at either end of the circle, and will accommodate sixty persons. The floor is well supported. The proprietors claim that special attention has been paid to providing means of egress in case of a panic. The main stairway is eight feet wide. At the left side of the stage there is a doorway leading into an alleyway that opens directly upon Pine Street. The company numbers fourteen females and thirteen males who have been engaged for their specialties in the variety business."

The opening itself was impressive by all variety standards, and Figaro of May 1, 1877, in reviewing the performance spread itself in an effort to be helpful:

"The new theatre on California Street, above Kearny, opened to an immense audience on Saturday night with a variety and vaudeville company . . . under the management of its lessees and proprietors, Messrs. Cogill, Cooper & Company. The programme introduced to us Miss Nellie Le Claire, Miss Emma Heath, Mr. Alex Le Claire, Mr. Fred Levantine, Mr. Lewis Clapp, who made their first appearance here -- besides many popular

gilding. The coloring is blue figured, and is very pleasing and tasteful in design. The general effect of the interior of the auditorium is one cool, rich and pleasant. The stalls are [illegible] in theatre in this city. They are at all [illegible] of the circle, and with a complete rusty [illegible]. It is well appointed. [illegible] special attention has been paid to providing means of [illegible] the main [illegible]. At the left [illegible] the stage there [illegible] with an alleyway, that opens directly upon [illegible] Street. The company numbers fourteen females and thirteen males who have been engaged for their specialties in the variety business."

The opening itself was impressive by all variety standards, and Figaro of May 1, 1877, in reviewing the performance spread itself in an effort to be helpful:

"The new theatre on California Street, above Kearny, opened to an immense audience on Saturday night with a variety and vaudeville company . . . under the management of its lessees and proprietors, Messrs. Cogill, [illegible] & Curreny. The program introduced to us Miss Nellie Le Claire, Miss Emma [illegible], Mr. Alex Le Claire, Mr. Fred Levantine, Mr. [illegible], who made their first appearance here -- [illegible] very popular

performers in the specialty and variety lines. The performances were inaugurated by Jennie Johnson reading an opening address. After which the 'Star Spangled Banner' was sung by the whole company. This was followed by the regular first part, which was particularly good. Cogill and Cooper opened the interlude in their new and original sketch 'Susan Simpson's Sister.' The popularity of the young lessees was shown by the hearty cheers which greeted their appearance on their own stage. After this every act was encored and the old favorites were warmly received. Miss Nellie Le Claire and Mr. Alex Le Claire made their first appearances, respectively, in the leading roles of the three-act drama entitled The Web of Crime and proved themselves to be competent performers. They will doubtless become great favorites. Miss Jennie Johnson, H. R. Archer, George Foster, George F. Moore, Billy Warner and others in the cast acquitted themselves well. The smoothness with which the drama was acted showed that it had been well rehearsed under Stage Manager Woodard's competent care, and augured most favorably for the prospective efficiency of the stage department of this theatre. The Adelphi is a neat, comfortable theatre, most strongly constructed -- as was well proven by the immense audience of Saturday and Sunday nights -- with a large and well appointed stage for a theatre of its class.

"No pains or expense have been spared on the part of the management to have everything in ship-shape and perfect order. The theatre is handsomely fitted up, brilliantly lighted and most abundantly ventilated. The Adelphi opens most auspiciously and with these advantages this new theatre -- with tact and energy in the management -- cannot fail to become a very popular place of amusement. The opening bill will be repeated until further notice."

BURLESQUE AND REALISM

Trips to the Moon, a burlesque that Woodard had tried out at the Pacific Theatre with considerable success some years earlier, succeeded The Web of Crime when the bill was changed on May 4, 1877. "The hits at prominent men and notable events," said Figaro on May 7, "are good and duly appreciated by the audience." During the next several weeks Woodard repeated in succession many other burlesques which had convulsed audiences at the little melodeon on Pacific Street and all of them, apparently, still elicited laughter.

But with each burlesque there was generally a realistic "play," such as Tom Bell, The Highwayman of California, which not only gave the cast an opportunity to display its range of "heavy" acting, but allowed the mechanics to create impressive scenes and stage effects. This form of sensationalism -- although inevitably bolstered by the usual variety

[illegible]

feats and circus tricks -- was emphasized at the Adelphi, and gave this melodeon a dramatic air few others of its time could equal.

The actor James M. Ward joined the company in June for a limited engagement in J. J. McCloskey's Through by Daylight. According to an advertisement in Figaro on June 8, 1877, this "sensational drama" had "the city street car accident, the concert cellar saloon, Horse-shoe Point, exterior of the Old Bowery Saloon, the single rope descent (villany defeated) and new scenery, new carpentry and new property" -- all realistically mounted on the Adelphi's small stage.

Until Buckley leased the house in August, the Adelphi produced a deluge of melodrama. Cogill and Cooper, intentionally or not, actually were operating a stock theatre, with variety thrown in for an "opener." Even before Ward's engagement ended, comedian Sid C. France was imported (probably from New York), and appeared July 16, 1877, in a piece of his own invention, Marked for Life. The event marked a new regime at the Adelphi which overshadowed all previous melodramatic realism, mechanical, histrionic and theatric. Figaro, the only journal which gave the melodeon any publicity, predicted that, since here at last was the kind of show people wanted to witness, they would come in droves and crowd the house notwithstanding the hard times.

The public did come in the predicted "droves"; for what hitherto had been considered the ultimate in exciting spectacles (such as streetcar crashes and thrilling episodes in a rock quarry amid imminent and manifold dangers), were tame in the light of what Sid C. France's facile pen provided.

Figaro reported on July 21, 1877:

> "The Adelphy has distinguished itself this week by producing a really thrilling scene in Sid C. France's play of Marked for Life. It represents a railroad train passing through a forest on fire. The illusion is complete; even the ties seem on fire. It is seldom that an effect is better put on the stage."

Some idea of the length, scope, and essential nature of Marked for Life -- which was not only typical of the Adelphi, but in the first two respects characteristic of all variety performances -- is indicated by the program published in Figaro on July 16, 1877:

ADELPHI THEATRE

607 California St., above Kearny.

Cogill, Cooper & Co., Proprietors and Business Managers

John Woodard, Stage Manager;

Hubert Schreiner, Leader of Orchestra.

A. Burnett, Machinist. J. L. Franklin, Treasurer.

This evening, July 16th.

First appearance in California of the

Great American Comedian

Mr. Sid C. France!

In the powerful and sensational drama entitled

MARKED FOR LIFE

James M. Ward, the popular actor, appears nightly

Part First

Bones, Billy Warner Tambourine, John Foster

Interlocutor, H. R. Archer

Introductory Overture . . . . . Full Band

Bell Brandon . . . . . H. R. Archer

Mother-in-Law . . . . . John Foster

When the Moon With Glory Brightens . . . John M. Davis

Monkey's Wedding . . . . . Billy Warner

Finale Quickstep . . . . . Company

Interlude

Bob Ridley . . . . . George F. Moore

And his Granny . . . . . Ed. Glover

Active Girl . . . . . Miss Kitty Hendersen

Grand production for the first time in California of the most powerful, interesting and thrilling romance ever written, entitled:

MARKED FOR LIFE

Skid, a darky true as steel	Mr. Sid C. France
Jack Tatters, poet, author and actor . .	Mr. J. M. Ward
Jack Blake, captain of a gang of outlaws	Frank Cleaves
Joe Fenwick, his companion and dupe . . .	Frank Lavarnie
Willis Hawkins, a young Southern planter	H. R. Archer
Hiram Whitby, a banker Doctor Holton	Ed. Glover
Sheriff	John Dillon
Crawling Snake Fire Cloud Barking Wolf Piute Indians	George F. Moore Henry Welston John Foster
Sing Foo	John C. Leach
Jimmy Tatters	George Morton
Engineer	Henry Woods
Watkins	D. C. Simpson
Officer	John M. Davis
Dora Whitby	Miss Jennie Johnson
Mrs. Jack Tatters	Miss Emma Heath
Mrs. Susan Jane Skid	Billie Warner
Nellie Tatters	Mollie Desmond
Fannie Anderson	Hellena Serrano
Mrs. Sing Foo	Kitty Jones

MAKING FOR LIFE

Sid, a derby type as about . . . . . Mr. Sid C. France
Jack Tatters, poet, author and actor . . Mr. J. M. Ward
Jack Blake, captain of a gang of outlaws Frank Cleaves
Joe Farwell, his companion and type . . Frank Lavarnie
Willie Hawkins, a young Southern planter H. K. Archer
Hiram Whitby, a sawyer } . . . . . Mr. Clover
Doctor Holton }
Sheriff . . . . . John Dillon
Crawling Snake } Pirate Indians . . . . . (George F. Moore
Fire Cloud } (Henry Wolston
Howling Wolf } (John Foster
Sing Foo . . . . . John C. Leach
Jimmy Tatters . . . . . George Morton
Engineer . . . . . Henry Woods
Watkins . . . . . D. C. Simpson
Officer . . . . . John M. Davis
Dora Whitby . . . . . Miss Jennie Johnson
Mrs. Jack Tatters . . . . . Miss Emma Heath
Mrs. Susan Jane Sid . . . . . Billie Warner
Nellie Tatters . . . . . Nellie Desmond
Frank Anderson . . . . . Helena Serrano
Mrs. Sing Foo . . . . . Kitty Jones

Olio

Gems of Music . . . . . Miss Helen Greyson

John Dillon, in his original Irish Gems.

An original sketch written by

GEORGE F. MOORE

Wonders of the Age

Kitty Henderson and Geo. F. Moore

Miss Carrie Lavarnie in her original character songs

To Conclude with the laughable sketch of

SAME AS LAST SEASON

Characters by Billie Warner, John Dillon,

John Foster and John C. Leach.

At the end of a riotous two-week run, Sid C. France's second opus, In the Web, was produced with a similar response that packed the house every night. But on August 6, Figaro announced:

> "We understand the popular manager Ned Buckley has purchased the Adelphi. Mr. Buckley is one of the best known men in the city, and he has the enviable reputation that everything he has taken hold of has been a success. We do not doubt that his new venture will be the same."

Concurrent with this notice another appeared, stating that Sid C. France would present during the fifth and last week of his engagement a melodrama called Dead to the World.

France remained for still another week in what was declared to be his greatest hit of all: Home from Sea, or A Living Lie, in which he played the part of a United States naval officer and was ably supported by the versatile stock company which still included actor J. M. Ward and stage manager John Woodard. However, when France, Ward, and the Messrs. Cogill and Cooper all disappeared from the boards simultaneously about mid-August, melodrama likewise vanished from the Adelphi for a while.

NED BUCKLEY TAKES OVER

When Ned Buckley took over the Adelphi in 1877 he was already an established melodeon proprietor. One of his houses, at Kearny and Pine Streets, which he had managed jointly with Bill Skeantlebury, had passed into the hands of Hockings and Peters. The other, at Sacramento and Kearny Streets, was known variously as Ned Buckley's Theatre, Buckley's Varieties, and Buckley's New Varieties. Here Buckley was appearing with a strong minstrel and variety troupe; and after acquiring the Adelphi, it is probable that he shifted performers from one house to the other as occasion demanded. At any rate, new names were introduced at the Adelphi after the middle of August; and in general, the tone of the performances became more

facetious and their structures more scanty than at any time since the theatre's beginning.

Female minstrels joined the minstrel men (who did the most vigorous turns), and presented a medley of tricks in their brief heyday on the stage. Such local burlesques, extravaganzas, burlettas, and skits as Happy Uncle John, Law and Justice, Walking for Dat Cake, Scenes on Tar Flat, O'Malley's Troubles, and The Mulcahy Twins held audiences so enthralled for the next five or six months that they soon forgot the departed glories of Sid C. France.

DEBUT OF HARRIGAN AND HART

In September, 1877, John Woodard was replaced as stage-manager of the Adelphi by George C. Thompson, a less colorful figure among the legion of variety heroes; and Harrigan and Hart, later to become a nationally famous vaudeville team, made their debut in the sketch Walking for Dat Cake. In the same month the Clodoche Troupe of "Parisian Can-Can Dancers" was brought out from Niblo's Garden in New York and featured with the already-popular gymnasts, Pauline and George Luproil, who, although not as titillating as the Clodoche ensemble, were equally sensational.

CAN-CAN CONDONED

Such were the attractions of mixed vaudeville and minstrelsy that packed this little theatre night after night. Certainly not brilliant by any reckoning, they fitted the

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

theatrical mode and temperament of the day. It is surprising to find no mention in the newspapers of moral condemnation directed against Ned Buckley for his programs. Apparently this perennially popular melodeon man produced his version of the anathematized "naughty" dance from Paris -- using authentic Parisian performers which should have made the transgression most serious indeed -- without the least criticism.

For two months the notorious can-can remained a major spectacle; variations ran through the Clodoche Troupe's entire repertory of dances, songs, ballet, and musical extravaganzas with such suggestive titles as Parisian Life, or Scenes in Paris (displaying sixteen "beautiful young ladies in solos, pas de deux"); The Challenge Dance and The Seraglio, or Palace of Pleasure. Toward the end of October, as if to gild the already gilt-burdened lily, "Miss Cecily St. Cyr, late of the original Black Crook Company of New York" was added to the Adelphi troupe. According to Figaro the "unveiling" of all this lush femininity was sufficient in itself to reward a man for attending the Adelphi. On November 5, 1877, after Buckley had engaged the minstrels Moreland and Hart (who had just concluded an engagement at Emerson's Standard Theatre on Bush Street), the same journal stated:

> "Manager Ned Buckley is proving himself to be the right man in the right place since he took charge of this theatre [the Adelphi]. The business tact and energy he has shown in his management has placed the

[illegible]

business of the theatre entirely on a new basis. Full houses and well pleased audiences are the order of things now. With such artists as Rickey and McCarthy, John Hart, A. C. Moreland, Cecily St. Cyr, and the Renolds Brothers in their acts and specialties, supported by a well organized stock company, the performances cannot fail to please the public. The new bill for this week includes, besides a capital Male and Female minstrel first part, thirteen character acts, specialty acts, farces, etc. . . . "

But Buckley's success was not entirely dependent on his galaxy of star performers. The Pacific Theatre had had just such an array of talent, as had the Bella Union and various other houses before, during, and after the Adelphi's time; and most variety actors played interchangeably at all of the melodeons which flourished and disappeared during the period from 1861 to 1906. Buckley's personality and managerial abilities were the real drawing cards; and on the last night of November he was tendered a huge benefit at which "so many volunteers offered their services that the only difficulty was how to get them on the programme."

To climax the year 1877 the Adelphi offered a special holiday piece written by J. C. Arnold and extravagantly entitled Santa Claus, or The War of the Passions -- Revenge, Hate, Jealousy, Gold and Crime. Opening on Christmas Eve, this piece proved such a tremendous hit that it was held over

well into January. Figaro announced on December 24, 1877:

> "Manager Buckley has made every effort in the production of this piece to present a characteristic holiday piece, with effective scenery, rich costumes and beautiful marches; and has even introduced a pantomime to add to its attractions. The piece has been long in preparation, and abounds in beautiful scenery, fairy transformation, elfin marches and pantomime revels. The usual male and female minstrel first part and a variety olio will precede the spectacle."

MELODRAMA AND FARCE RETURN

With the new year it became evident that melodrama and farce were to be restored to the boards and scheduled as afterpieces. The first of these performances given about mid-January, The Ticket of Leave Man, which had been a vehicle for Lotta Crabtree a decade earlier. In Lotta's former role appeared actress Marie Zoel, who failed to make a name for herself as Sam Willoughby -- or any other character -- except briefly at the Adelphi. Then came, successively Irongrip, The Halfbreed, a frontier melodrama, from the pen of Frank Lavarnie (who at the last minute changed its title to Stronghart, the Trapper); Crime, or Foiled at Last; The Bower of Beauty; Circassian Slaves, or The Turkish Harem; a nautical drama, The Fatal Ship; and many others of similar tone, most

of them written by Lavarnie, who soon proved himself a playsmith second to none in the variety business.

Lavarnie became increasingly important during 1878, and correspondingly busy. In addition to appearing each night in one or more specialities and taking the familiar role of hero in his various mysteries, melodramas, and musical sketches, he was made stage-manager of the Adelphi in February and from then on had a responsible part in directing its destiny. His stage-managing was no small job, considering the innovations of that year and the regular changes of bill. There were wrestling matches -- one of them lasting an entire week, and keeping the audience in suspense regarding the final outcome; animal acts; child stars; Saturday matinees for children; and (later) Thursday matinees for professionals of the theatre. Lavarnie seems to have been equal to the manifold duties of planning, acting, creating, and directing, for his popularity grew and his pieces gained in power; they had, as Figaro said, "the thrills of ten dime novels packed into one drama."

Ned Buckley, of course, had not been idle behind the scenes. Much of the ingeniousness of the Adelphi's program emanated directly from him, and he helped Lavarnie plan the stage effects, superintended the engaging of new talent, and at the same time managed his other melodeon on Kearny Street. In March, however, having disposed of Ned Buckley's Theatre, he took a more active and personal interest in the Adelphi, appearing there as Bones on the night of March 18. He also

sang some of his favorite numbers, conducted a burlesque "Monster Concert" at the end of the show, and in general delighted the fans with his "grotesque comicalities." Opposite Buckley, George T. Moore wielded the tambourine. Even without Lavarnie's sketch, Wealth and Poverty, his performance would have brought down the house. Buckley was a lion among minstrels of top rank and San Franciscans long had idolized him.

Though the can-can was by no means finished at the Adelphi, it was temporarily shunted into the background by Buckley's personal appearance with the company, by a lavish production of the Black Crook in April, and by a succession of various female minstrel troupes. Chief among the last were Marie D'Est's Red Stocking-Blue Garter Blondes and Mlle. Inez' Pretty Blondes in Blue and Jolly Combination. Of the former, Figaro of April 30, 1878, said:

> "Mlle. D'Est's Red Stocking Minstrels made their first appearance in this city at the Adelphi last evening. The house was overcrowded in every part. The end men were crisp and clever, and have brought with them new jokes. Miss Mabel Pearl and Miss Lou Sanford contributed two pretty songs in the first part and appeared in specialty acts in the interlude, all of which were doubly encored. Max Walhala did an excellent gymnastic act. Press Eldridge gave his song and sayings

and was called out three times. Pettit and White appeared in a new song and dance specialty that brought great applause. El Niño Eddie performed almost incredible feats on the tight-rope with and without a balance pole. The Living Pictures, the farces, and the afterpiece were all well received. The Red Stockings will prove a very attractive card for Manager Buckley there can be no doubt."

They were indeed an "attractive card" -- especially when they introduced a variation of the can-can into their routine. The troupe which succeeded them towards the middle of the year -- the Pretty Blondes in Blue and Jolly Combination -- did the same thing; and because some originality seemed to be expected of them, they performed a skit in conjunction with the dance numbers called The Naughty Blondes. That, and the reappearance of Cogill and Cooper, the debut of Jeff de Angelis, and the production of Lavarnie's latest masterpiece, Dark Clouds, or The Shadow of Guilt, highlighted the summer season and went far toward proving that Figaro's predictions in regard to this melodeon were not, as was usually the case, overstated.

BUCKLEY KNOWS HIS BUSINESS

Buckley, indeed, left no stone unturned in his efforts to conduct the Adelphi on a basis of strong popular appeal.

He admitted ladies free to his Thursday matinees for professionals; he distributed prizes frequently at his evening performances, and ran the whole gamut of variety in making up his bills. He even foraged into the field of the so-called "legitimate" theatre, presenting on September 2, 1878, John F. Sear's Magnolia, a play about the pre-war South. Figaro, pleased by this dignified innovation, commented next day: "We are glad to see that the management of the Adelphi have determined to do all they can to elevate the Variety Stage of San Francisco to the same proud position it held in the Atlantic States."

Buckley then tried his own hand at playwriting, producing Zamiel in January of 1879. But always, despite these gestures to please a more fastidious taste, the basic elements of variety were retained: the minstrel and the gymnast, the Irish comedian and the hoofer, the statuesque ballet and the rowdy can-can. Buckley was an astute melodeon man as well as the people's idol.

Zamiel, though it ran for three weeks and richly rewarded its author in money and plaudits, gave way to a piece called Sinbad, the Sailor. This was followed by a deluge of sensationalism, some new, some repetitious. Said Figaro on January 20, 1879, after announcing the Adelphi as "the only legitimate variety house in California":

> "Tonight Manager Ned Buckley will reproduce his great $50,000 Hindoo Mystery, which in the past has

He admitted Ladkin was to his Thursday matinee [illegible] pro-fessionals; he distributed prizes frequently at his evening performances, and was the whole point of varsity theatre, [illegible] his life. He even [illegible] the field of the so-called "negligible" theatre. [illegible] Gershwin's, 1974, John F. Donne's Magnolia, a play about the pre-war South. [illegible] pleased by this difficult invention, [illegible] noted next day. "We are glad to see that the management of the Adelphi have determined to do all they can to preserve the variety stage of San Francisco in the same prominent position it held in the Atlantic States."

[illegible] later found his own hand at playwriting, [illegible] Marble in January of 1877. But always, despite these ventures to [illegible] more fantastic tastes, the basic elements of variety were retained: the olio and the gymnasts, the Irish comedian and the soprano, the strongman ballet and the [illegible] comedian. Building was an active melodeon [illegible] the people's idol.

Finally, though it was for these works [illegible] recorded the author in money and plaudits, gave way to a place called Lilliano, the Pallor. This was followed by a [illegible] of [illegible], some more zoro repertoire. Said Figaro on January 21, 1879, after [illegible] the Adelphi as "the only [illegible] in Sorry house in California."

"Tourist Manager Mel Brown [illegible] produce the [illegible] 250,000 Million Mystery, [illegible] the post has

baffled the most expert. Frank Lavarnie has written a new poetic sketch for its introduction which will be given for the first time. The program will open with a first part composed of a full semi-circle of lovely blondes. The interlude is brimful of good acts by the excellent company with which the management have surrounded themselves, and the performance will terminate with a funny farce called Broken In, in which Jeff de Angelis will personate one of those comic Dutchmen for which he has become so popular."

And again on January 30, 1879:

"Adelphi Theatre -- The new delusion dance by Jeff de Angelis is worthy of special mention. He comes on the stage and actually appears to dance a jig on his hands -- head downward, with feet in the air. The delusion is the invention of Ned Buckley, and is ingenious enough to be patented."

Whether Buckley took the hint or not, he was obviously too busy hatching similar wonders for the Adelphi patrons to bother with patenting a simple arrangement of mirrors.

Next in order was a prize fight between Jack Hallinan, who had recently won a bout at Virginia City, and the local middleweight champion, Mike Donovan. "A very spirited, if friendly affair," in which no victor was declared, the pugilistic exhibition shared a week's billing with the "great

Bamford" and his gymnastic specialties, and with a revival of Mazeppa. Cecily St. Cyr played the title role on this occasion, aided by the trained horse, Wonder.

Then came the Etzeltine Sisters in their Indian Club act and double clog dance; Lottie Elliot skipping her rope of fire; Harry Le Clair, the female impersonator; and finally, on February 10, 1879, the Victoria Loftus British Blondes, an Australian troupe which began a smashing 17 weeks engagement with the extravaganza Atalanta, or The Female Athlete. These sensations were temporarily overshadowed when the ferryboat Alameda, on February 19, collided with the ferryboat El Capitan during a heavy fog. The El Capitan, with a gaping hole in her hull, sank as far as her hurricane deck, imperilling the lives of some 200 passengers. Among these were Ned Buckley, who showed himself a hero in actuality, and was rewarded next day by Figaro's free publicity:

> "Manager Buckley, of the Adelphi Theatre, was a passenger on the wrecked El Capitan yesterday. Ned, who followed the sea in his younger days, stuck to the wreck manfully, and did good service in assisting the helpless, calming the panic-stricken, and in distributing life-preservers to women and children."

GIRL SHOWS AGAIN

When the Victoria Loftus British Blondes left the Adelphi in June, Buckley brought Pauline Markham and her "jolly Pinafore crew" from New York. There followed another lengthy,

highly successful girl show which soon came to be advertised as "vaudeville." Thus, for the remainder of the year, Buckley kept his audiences well supplied with theatrical fare. He treated the company to a weekly fishing excursion. On one such occasion the Figaro critic went along, and reported on August 23, 1879:

"The Adelphi Theatre folks have been talking so much about their fishing excursions that they persuaded Figaro to go along with them on their regular weekly excursion on Thursday. The first thing to be done was to get up at 4:30 a.m. so as to reach the wharf at 5 o'clock, the hour of sailing. This was a novelty that paid for the task. There was the usual morning fog at this season of the year -- damp, cold and dismal.

"After getting all on board the tug Lottie we steamed away for the heads, anchored and caught no fish. Up anchor, and steamed for the California City fishing grounds with many a song, glee and a bright shining sun. Here we found good fishing, and abundance of rock cod and other fish were caught. At four o'clock we started on the return trip with two champagne baskets full of fish, after a pleasant and healthy day's recreation.

"Manager Buckley, who played the role of commodore for the occasion, had provided most liberally for the

[illegible]

creature comforts during the trip. Hot coffee graced the cabin stove all day, and an abundance of eatables adorned its solitary table. Everybody had fish for Friday."

The year 1880 can be described as the most brilliant in all Buckley's career. For although he appeared on the Adelphi stage only once during the year, he made the little melodeon pay for itself a hundredfold. He offered competition with every theatre in the city, and in the final bidding for popularity took second place to none. The Adelphi became ultra-sensational. Its stock soared beyond reason, and it failed to acknowledge its natural limitations. Its stage groaned with the elaborate settings and machinery of four, five, and six-act melodramas, and its seating capacity could not accommodate more than half the crowds clamoring at each performance for admittance.

The year began with an extravaganza called Mephistopheles and Queen of Snow, in which Lavarnie proved that a spectacle could be staged at the Adelphi as realistically as though its stage were that at the Grand Opera House. Jeff de Angelis, at this time a popular favorite in the company, was called upon several weeks later to play four roles -- Old Karl, Young Karl, Max, and Hans Snitzberg -- in Fred G. Maeder's One Word, while the leading lady, not to be outdone, took the parts of Gretchen, Wolf Schniderkins, Katrina Krouswitch, and Granny Wrinkles.

Inchcape Bell, which followed Maeder's four-act piece, had two outstanding melodramatic episodes: a broadsword duel between Mollie Williams and Billy White, the former playing a "dumb boy"; and a last-act shipwreck so convincingly done that some in the audience fancied the players were drowning. Effects improved; new members were added to the already-large company; and the minstrel first part gradually became a shadow of what it had been. After a series of thrillers starring Pope Cooke and James Mass, and a "conflagration" which miraculously did not get out of control and burn the house down, audiences were prepared for the Western "plays" Buckley had in store. The first of these, Joe Bowers, or California in '49, a mining camp drama, packed the Adelphi during the latter half of April despite almost continual rains.

BOUQUETS AND BENEFITS

Neither bad weather nor hard times could keep people away from Buckley's Melodeon, but they were turned away in considerable numbers for lack of seating or standing room. Said Figaro on June 11, 1880, the occasion being Frank Lavarnie's benefit:

> "Tonight Chief Mate Frank Lavarnie, who for the past three years has so ably seconded Commodore Ned Buckley in sailing the popular little [Adelphi] craft into the harbor of success, will be the recipient of a complimentary benefit tendered by the officers of the

crew, assisted by volunteers from the fleet. Frank, by his ability, strict attention to business and uniform amiability of temper, has succeeded in making many sincere friends."

It was said of Buckley himself, when he received a benefit on August 13:

"Manager Ned Buckley will be the recipient of his second annual benefit tonight, tendered to him by the Adelphi company and attaches and a large number of volunteers. The bill does not contain half the names of those who were anxious to appear for Ned's benefit. Those who were late were left 'out in the cold' per force /sic/, as the programme for the night would not permit of any unlimited extension -- the performance would have to be brought to an end sometime or other. Manager Buckley is one of the few financially prosperous managers on the Pacific Coast; if not the only one who has successfully steered safely through the reefs and quicksands of years of theatrical managership here. His manly, honorable course with all connected with him in business has become proverbial, and every one knows that 'his word is as good as his bond.' He illustrates to an eminent degree that 'honesty is the best policy' even in the theatrical business, so full of speculative, double-dealing managers, whose only ambition seems to

be to try to get the best of everything and everybody in their dealings -- even with the public, by trying to persuade people, for instance, to buy tickets for opera without singing, and drama without actors. We know that the Adelphi will hold its worth tonight, and trust that its manager may live to have many happy returns of his annual testimonial."

Another star appeared on August 23, when J. Z. Little made his debut at the Adelphi in Roving Jack, or Saved From the Wreck, supported by Ida May and Mollie Williams -- both of whom were rewarded for their good work by being cast in the next attraction, Nuggets, or Lost and Won. This was another "Western" in which practically the whole company had a chance to demonstrate its histrionic genius, with yeoman service rendered by scenic artist Fest, property man Bostwick, and machinist Terry. These three contrived a "mountain scene and cascade, with a fall of real water, and many additional and remarkable artistic excellences." The piece itself was written by a California printer, J. J. McClosky, who had made his initial attempt at acting some 25 years earlier at the American Theatre.

"Mac failed as an actor," Figaro announced familiarly on September 8, 1880, "but succeeded as a dramatist, as his numerous successful plays will testify to. Nuggets is one of his most carefully written

be to try to get the best of everything and everybody in their dealings -- even with the public, by trying to persuade people [illegible] inferiors. He buy tickets for opera without [illegible], and dress without actors. We know that the Adelphi will be the worst theatre, and that the managers may live to have many happy [illegible] in the central [illegible]."

Article [illegible] appeared in Harper's, when W. S. Little made his debut at the Adelphi in *Forting Fool*, or *Saved From the Wreck*, supported by Ida Vera and Willie [illegible] -- both of whom were recruited for this. [illegible] work by [illegible] in the [illegible] *Ten*. This was another "Boston" in which principally the whole company and a dance in [illegible] the burlesque [illegible], with veteran service [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] Mrs Doatwick, [illegible] Tracy. [illegible] "Mon Ami" scene and [illegible] with a full [illegible], [illegible] and a [illegible] applause [illegible]." The piece itself was written by a Californian [illegible], J. J. [illegible], who had made the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] earlier at the American theatre.

"Her failed to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] on September 5, 1870, "but [illegible] a 'remarkable', as the [illegible] successful piece will [illegible]. *Engage* is one of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

plays. It has plots and counterplots, quick action, many strong and individually drawn characters and is written in carefully prepared diction -- the language in many of its emotional scenes rising to the height of poetic excellence."

Having once set such a swift melodramatic pace, Ned Buckley continued it without stint in such pieces as A Terrible Test (declared to be neither a melodrama nor a border drama, but "a legitimate play"); 135, or Seven Years in Sing Sing; Welcome, or Mistaken Identity; A Mother's Crime; and Forsaken, which was the finale to that year.

RESPECTABLE IS NAME FOR ADELPHI

In midsummer of 1881 -- after another season of melodrama during which The Marble Heart was produced -- the Adelphi received a 39 word salute, attesting its respectability, from the San Francisco Post of June 18:

"Adelphi Theatre -- Although there is a bar connected with the theatre, it is one of the most respectable theatres in the city and the entertainments given are proper and ever amusing without pandering to depraved tastes. The main attractions are: C. W. Barry, Charles H. Mestayer, Elleford and Hall, Miss Cecily St. Clair, Miss Fannie Young, the Franks Brothers and Sam Marion, Miss Annie Leonard and Miss Frankie Howard."

plays. It has plot, has counterplots, quick action, many shrewd [illegible] individually drawn characters and is written in [illegible] carefully planned diction -- the language in [illegible] of its emotional [illegible] rising to the height of poetic expression."

Having once set such a swift melodramatic pace, Ned Buckley continued it without [illegible] such pieces as *A Terrible Test* (does not [illegible] a melodrama nor a horror drama, but "a [illegible]"); *Ishi, or Story of Years in Stone*; *Sing; Welcome*, *or Mistaken Identity*; *A Farmer's Crime*; and *Forgiven*, which was the title to [illegible].

BEST PLAYS TO NAME FOR ALBERTY

In midsummer of 1921 -- after another season of melodrama during which *The Marble Heart* was produced -- the Adelphi produced a 30 word [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], from the San Francisco Post [illegible]

"Adelphi Theatre -- Although [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] respectable theatres in the city are the entertainments given are proper and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to deprave [illegible]. [illegible] attractions are: O. W. Perry, Charles H. Mostayer, Villeto and Nell; Miss Dorothy St. Claire, Miss Fanny Young, the Four Brothers and Sam Morton; Miss Azalia Leonard and Miss Frankie Howard."

Whether or not this notice was occasioned by the fact that the Adelphi was advertising in the Post, it is certain that the matinee performances drew large numbers of women and children and that the emphasis remained on dramatic sensationalism rather than on girl shows throughout 1881. However, "blondes" of one kind or another were still much in evidence during the curtailed first part of the bills.

The same policy persisted in 1882 until May 20, when Buckley decided to make a combination theatre and music hall of his melodeon. The house changed character slightly, but still continued to offer a number of dramas between musical offerings and acrobatic feats, among them an adaption of Dickens' Oliver Twist, played in 1883 -- just three weeks before the Adelphi closed for repairs on January 22.

ADELPHI'S FADE-OUT

When the Adelphi reopened on February 10, newly renovated throughout at considerable cost, Buckley was no longer its owner. Its period of vitality had passed; its end already was foreshadowed. The new lessees, Clinton and Fagan, from the Elite Theatre of Portland, Oregon, kept the theatre going nearly a year as a burlesque and variety house, but their success was negligible. On January 5, 1884, the Post advertised:

> "To Let -- The Adelphi Theatre, California Street, two doors from Kearny, with fixtures, bar, etc. complete. Apply to Robert O. Oakley, 440 California Street."

The Adelphi opened again, after another renovation, under the management of James A. Brown, who announced "brilliant programmes" for the week of April 6, 1884. The James Boys, "a powerful four-act" melodrama, was followed in May by The Boy Detective, The Fatal Bond, and Jack Shepherd, along with various specialty acts. But Brown's enterprise collapsed during his production of Jack Shepherd, and no further mention of the Adelphi occurs until March 13, 1890, when the Chronicle declared:

> "Religious orders of a certain kind are much agitated over the fact that the Board of Holiness, which for a number of years occupied the old Adelphi Theatre on California Street, has virtually gone out of existence and has transferred all its properties, with the lease of the theatre, to the Salvation Army, which will soon take possession of the place."

What finally became of the theatre building is not recorded in any newspaper or other accessible source. It was listed in the city directory for 1891, and thereafter vanishes even from that meagre record.

CHAPTER VI

METROPOLITAN HALL -- THEATRE REPUBLIC

(1877-1903)

It is difficult to decide which of the names belonging to this temple of religion, music, variety, and drama -- known as Metropolitan Hall, or Temple, and the Theatre Republic -- deserves procedence. The former identified it in the minds of San Franciscans for almost a quarter of a century before it became a theatre in the orthodox sense; but its secondary title, Theatre Republic, is used in the annals of the stage.

The Metropolitan Hall-Theatre Republic began life as a church and, according to the city directory for 1877, it was one of the really "important" structures of that year. On August 5,the Chronicle announced completion of the "new Fifth-Street Baptist Church," and then described it in precise terms which stress its secular as well as its religious facilities:

> "The new temple of the Metropolitan Baptist Church at the corner of Fifth and Jessie Streets was thrown open Friday evening for inspection of the members of the press of this city. The temple is what is known as the Renaissance order of architecture, a style much in vogue

for buildings of this kind. It covers the entire lot on the northwest corner of Fifth and Jessie Streets, having a frontage of 75 feet on Fifth Street, with a depth of 125 feet . . .

"The interior appearance of the hall is at once tasteful and grand, and in many respects resembles a theatre rather than a church. It has a seating capacity of 2,500 persons, and its acoustics are said to be perfect. Two persons conversing in an ordinary tone of voice can be heard with distinctness from the stage to the gallery. Two sunburners of 108 gas jets each are suspended from the ceiling and lit by electricity, to brilliantly illuminate the room from pit to dome."

The following day the Chronicle described the dedication service, attended by "thousands of people anxious to view this chaste and beautiful house of worship" with its lofty stained-glass windows and frescoed ceiling.

The Metropolitan Hall-Theatre Republic did not remain solemnly chaste for long. A year later it was the scene of a "gala entertainment" which was definitely a variety show complete with olio, Chinese imitations, vocal gems, and afterpiece. The god of mirth and mockery, familiar in every melodeon, had taken possession for a night -- with plenty of encouragement at 50 cents a head; and a company of amateur actors, gathered for the occasion, performed under the able

direction of Lotta Chissold and W. J. Clough. Thenceforth frivolity made frequent sallies into the temple of worship, with interludes of dignified concerts, not-so-dignified lectures, and an occasional benefit by the "profession."

The hall's metamorphosis was due in part to the huge debt incurred in its construction. Attempts were made to pay the church's creditor as soon as possible; but the Reverend Isaac S. Kalloch was largely responsible. Titular head of this church, Kalloch not only established a liberal policy in matters pertaining to worship, but manifested a clerical unorthodoxy in his own conduct. While Metropolitan Temple became more familiarly known as Metropolitan Hall -- offering sanctuary to the Handel-Haydn Society, the actress Mrs. Scott-Siddons, Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll (who lectured several times on anti-religious topics), various troupes of amateur actors, tumblers, tricksters, quacks and mountebanks of all sorts -- the Reverend Isaac Kalloch interested himself in the cause of the workingman which eventually led him into politics. By the fall of 1879 he was a candidate for mayor -- "the only candidate," declares John P. Young, in San Francisco, A History of the Pacific Coast Metropolis.

During the mayoralty campaign, when it seemed probable that Kalloch would be nominated, Charles de Young of the Chronicle threatened to expose the candidate's record in the East. When Kalloch ignored the warning, de Young reprinted an article

from a Boston paper describing the proceedings of an ecclesiastical body by which Kalloch had beer unfrocked. Making no pretense of denial, Kalloch retaliated in a speech from the balcony of Metropolitan Hall attacking the character of Charles de Young's mother. Next morning, August 26, 1879, de Young evened the score; he shot and wounded Kalloch as the latter sat in his study.

The historian J. S. Hittell suggests that popular sympathy for the clergyman was instrumental in his subsequently being elected mayor. John P. Young in his book San Francisco, A History of the Pacific Coast Metropolis, asserts that this is an unfounded assumption:

> "The political condition in San Francisco at that time resembled that of a few years later when Schmitz was elected. The community generally, not merely the workingmen, were convinced that affairs were in a bad state, and the people were in a frame of mind to bring about a change, and it probably would have been effected even if the workingmen's candidate had been an entirely unimpeachable man."

After his assault on Kalloch, de Young had been charged with assault with a deadly weapon, and Kalloch's son, a Baptist minister, subsequently learned of investigations being made by the defendant in Boston and Leavenworth. Apprehensive of what might be disclosed at the trial, young Kalloch entered

the Chronicle office on the evening of April 23, 1880, and shot and killed Charles de Young.

METROPOLITAN CHANGES HANDS

The Kalloch-de Young feud, although it ended in young Kalloch's acquittal, did nothing to elevate the character of Metropolitan Hall, which still went under the guise of a church and harbored, rather brazenly at times, the "indecencies" of the melodeon. In 1884, when Frank E. Willis and Charles A. Doyle acquired a lease on the property, they made of it a forthright showhouse which they named the Metropolitan Theatre-Musee. The Daily Evening Post stated in its issue of December 13:

"With commendable enterprise Messrs. Willis and Doyle, two Eastern managers of ability, have secured the Metropolitan Hall, and will open it next Tuesday night to the public as a resort for all who seek good amusement at a small cost. They intend to conduct it in such a manner as will commend it to the public as a respectable family resort which ladies and children can visit alone. Smoking and drinking will be prohibited, and a class of entertainment provided which is free from all objectionable features. Only the best and most reputable talent will be engaged. Besides, the museum features will be instructive and interesting. Such institutions thrive immensely in Eastern cities, and their popularity

[illegible] evening of April 27, 1894, and

[illegible]

[illegible] THEATRE [illegible]

The [illegible] Young Land, although it closed for your [illegible], did nothing to elevate the character of [illegible], which still wants [illegible] a church and [illegible], rather an assembly of [illegible] "Undesirables" of [illegible]. In 1904, William [illegible] and Charles A. [illegible] acquired a lease on the property, and [illegible] which they named the [illegible] Theatre-[illegible]. The Daily Evening Post stated in its issue of December [illegible]

> "With comfortable [illegible] and [illegible] of ability, [illegible] the [illegible] might [illegible] to the public [illegible] a good stock [illegible] such a manner [illegible] as the public [illegible] and children [illegible] with [illegible] and a [illegible] all [illegible] only the best [illegible] respectable [illegible] instructive [illegible] interesting [illegible]

is constantly growing. Hence we bespeak for it the success it merits in our midst. There will be two performances daily -- except Sunday -- afternoons at 2:30, and evenings at eight o'clock."

Like the Wigwam, one of its host of contemporaries, Metropolitan Hall under the management of Willis and Doyle became a dime melodeon which featured pantomime, juvenile opera, specialty acts, and similar attractions. A museum was operated in conjunction with the show. In its slow metamorphosis from a temple of religion to a house of the drama there were many relapses. After the short tenure of Willis and Doyle, it was used by the Handel-Haydn Society for concerts in the spring of 1885; by Henry C. Dane for lectures; by the painter and cartoonist, Thomas Nast, for the same purpose in 1888; and by the Boston Quintet Club for musical soirees in 1889. Said the Chronicle on January 24, 1889:

"Architects Laver and O'Connor, Assistant Fire Engineers Riley and McKittrick, Frank G. Edwards, Chairman of the Fire Commissioners, and Supervisor Barry made a tour of inspection of the theatres yesterday, the intention being to continue the inspection from day to day until all the places of amusement have been examined . . . Metropolitan Hall, on Fifth Street, was found to be in good condition."

Nothing more is heard from the former Baptist church until March 28, 1890, when George Riddle gave a dramatic reading of Shakespeare's Tempest for the benefit of the San Francisco Teachers' Mutual Aid Society. On April 5, Riddle recited Romeo and Juliet before an appreciative audience. Mass meetings, reunions, lectures, and concerts were given at intervals through the nineties, during which time the hall was considered a "fashionable place of resort," and "resounded with music of many an immortal composer and brilliant virtuoso," including the pianist Rosenthal, who appeared there on January 3, 5, and 7, 1899.

THEATRE REPUBLIC

Suddenly, on November 16, 1902, the Chronicle published this notice of a complete change of life for Metropolitan Hall:

> "Harrington Reynolds, the well-known actor, who is to have personal direction of the stock company that is to open the new Theatre Republic the latter part of this month, has returned from New York, where he has been for the past three weeks, securing players and arranging for plays. Four of the leading members of the company came with Reynolds, while the rest are to follow within a few days. Those who are now here include Edmund Breese, who last season replaced James O'Neill in the big Boston run of Monte Cristo; Helen MacGregor; James A. Keene, a

Nothing more is heard from the Denver Repertoire Company until March [illegible], 1890 when George Rinaldo gave a dramatic reading of Shakespeare's Tempest [illegible] the auditorium of the San Francisco Conservatory. Music and Drama, [illegible] 1890, Rinaldo played Romeo and Juliet before an [illegible] audience. Mary Meshinge, [illegible], Mendoza, and [illegible] were given at intervals throughout the [illegible] during which the hall was [illegible] a "[illegible] place of [illegible]" [illegible] with music of many [illegible] composers and [illegible] various [illegible] including the [illegible] Rosalind, [illegible] on January 4, 5, and 6, 1891.

[illegible] REVIVED

Suddenly, on November 30, 1892, the [illegible] published this review of a [illegible] show of [illegible] Denver [illegible] Review:

> "[illegible] Rinaldo, the [illegible], who is [illegible] personal [illegible] [illegible] a [illegible] light in [illegible] the new Tivoli [illegible] the latter part of this month, has returned from New York, where he has been for the past three weeks [illegible] rehearsing and [illegible] for [illegible]. Some of the leading [illegible] the company have [illegible] for [illegible]. [illegible] the [illegible] will be in a few days. These are [illegible] Edward Rinaldo, who last [illegible] played James O'Neill's [illegible] Count [illegible] of Monte Cristo [illegible] Kenna, [illegible]

juvenile actor; Harry Corson Clarke, the comedian; Frederick Gilbert, a well-known character man; George De Long, Blanche Douglas, and Margaret Dale Owen."

It is apparent from this and subsequent notices in the Chronicle that when Reynolds installed his Empire Stock Company in the converted Theatre Republic, he established it as a "legitimate" playhouse rather than as a melodeon. He opened on November 29, 1902, with The Sporting Duchess, in which a San Francisco boy, James A. Keene, took the leading role. The opening was widely publicized, with much emphasis on Keene because of his local prominence; and thus launched, amid columns of salutation, the Empire Stock Company made its formidable debut on the Pacific Coast. But after one performance the critics discovered they had been carried away by their enthusiasm. The notices became cooler and briefer, dwindled from column length to a mere several lines -- such as the Chronicle's announcement on December 9:

"Beerbohm Tree's arrangement of Ouida's play of Moths was the bill last night at the Republic Theatre by the Harrington Reynolds Company, and so well given that it is to be regretted that the house was not opened with it."

Reynolds withdrew and Corson Clarke undertook the venture with a reorganized troupe known as the Ralph Stuart Stock

juvenile actor; Jane Darwell, the comedienne; Frederick Gilbert, a well-known character man; George Demong, Blanche Douglas, and Margaret Dare Owen."

It is apparent from this and subsequent reviews in the *Chronicle* that when Reynolds took over the Lincoln Street Company, a vice convicted Phoenix republican, he rehabilitated it as "highclass, pleasure-seeking theatre and a safeguard." He opened on November 4, 1907, with *Lady Sportkins Duchess*, in which a San Francisco star, Grace A. Keane, took the leading role. The opening was a sold-out affair, with much emphasis on Keane's acting of this lead "mendicant" and thus lavish, gold costume of substitution, the figure about Dunsany made the formidable fabul on the Irish Coast. But after one performance the real joe discovered that had been carried away by their enthusiasm. The reviews began caution and disbelief, and failed from column length to a mere several lines -- including the *Chronicle's* announcement on December 8:

> "Beerbohm Tree's arrangement of Barrie's play of *Mother* was the bill last night and the Republic theatre by the Lincoln Reynolds company, and so well given that it is to be regretted that the issue was not opened with it."

Reynolds withdrew and Conan Clarke understood the venture with a reconstituted group across the Ralph Stuart Stock

Company. For a while he managed to carry on with productions of Don Cesar de Bazan, The Master of Arms, Lord Strathmore, and Tolstoi's Resurrection, charging 25¢ and 50¢ admission, but apparently legitimate drama did not do well in this house. When next the Theatre Republic received columns of publicity, it was to announce Mascagni's Minstrels, who played there to capacity audiences during the latter half of March, 1903. And then, for no discoverable reason -- except that minstrelsy had outlived its heyday -- even the minstrels left, to be replaced by a musical comedy troupe which advertised in the Call of April 26:

"Theatre Republic -- This week only!
First time here! The novel musical comedy
A Circus Belle!
Depicting a Circus on the Stage.
Catchy musical numbers! Clever Specialties!
Funny Comedy!"

This production, according to the Call of April 28, was received with violent disfavor:

"The Theatre Republic was closed last evening. The opening performance of The Circus Belle on Sunday evening was attended by such riotous proceedings on the part of the audience that the management of the house, so it was reported at the office of the theatre last night, shut

Company. For a while he managed to carry on with productions of Don Cesar de Bazan, The Master of Arms, Lord Strathmore, and Tolstoi's Tsarevich, showing city and God admission, but apparently Longtimate drama did not do well in this house. Then came the Theatre Republic received columns of publicity, it was in succession Leonardia Murdoch, who played there to capacity in Hearts during the entire last of March, 1905. And then, Lorna Cleveverdello season -- except that ministerialy had contained the Royday -- ever the Lafayette left, to be replaced by a musical comedy troupe which advertised in the Mail of April 20:

"Theatre Republic -- this week only!
First time here! The novel musical comedy
A Gingue Delig!
Depicting a figure on the stage.
Gaudy models numerous! Clever specialties!
Fun! Laughs!"

-- production, according to the Mail of April 24, was reviewed by a Malcolm Mills as:

"The Lazarus Republic was closed last evening. The opening performance of The Gingue Belle on Monday evening was [illegible] by much [illegible] from the part of the audience and the management [illegible], so it was [illegible] to [illegible] of the [illegible] left [illegible]

out the A Circus Belle company. There was no great demand on the part of the public to see the performance, seemingly, for at the usual hour of opening no one seeking admittance was in sight. Just after eight o'clock the doors of the theatre were closed and the lights were put out. The play will not be repeated in the Theatre Republic."

NANCE O'NEIL IS WELCOMED HOME

At intervals during the next month the Theatre Republic was used for amateur theatricals, a Memorial Day Celebration, and a joint meeting of the G. A. R. and Spanish-American War Veterans. Its life as a theatre appeared to be ended when, on May 31, 1903, L. R. Stockwell leased it and announced a limited engagement of Nance O'Neil in The Jewess, which was to open on June 6. It was indeed a limited engagement, but not through any fault of Stockwell's or any failure on the part of "the young American tragedienne" -- if one may judge by this review of her opening performance in the Call of June 7, 1903:

"Nance O'Neil Gets a Glad Home Welcome.

"Nance O'Neil is home again and it was a right royal welcome which was accorded her at the opening night of her summer engagement at the Republic last night. The Jewess was the production chosen in which to launch this favorite California girl, but it was

out the A Cirque Belle company. There was no great demand on the part of the public to see the performance, accordingly, for at the usual hour of opening no one seeking admittance was in sight. Just after eight o'clock the doors of the theatre were closed and the lights were put out. The play will not be presented in the Theatre Royal."

LAST NIGHT IN A FLOOD OF

An interesting event took place at the Theatre Republic which is of no ordinary importance, a Memorial Day Celebration, and a joint meeting of the G. A. R. and Spanish-American War Veterans. The Lily of Lenox appeared to an packed house on May 11, 1900. Lily, accordingly, played it and announced a limited engagement of Prince O'Neil in Lay Sermon, which was to open on June 6. It was indeed a limited engagement, but not "through our fault or other's" - a failure on the part of "the young Americans Dangerfield" - if one may judge by the reader of our popular performance in the Call of June 6, 1900:

"Horace Dangerfield Gets a Glad Hand Welcome.

"Horace Dangerfield came again and it was a right royal welcome which was accorded him at the opening night of his limited engagement at the Republic last night. The house was the prettiest in town in which to launch the favorite. California girl, and it was

Nance O'Neil whom the audience came to see -- after her the play. With the yellow-haired tragedienne as Leah, The Jewess goes with a snap.

"Of course, the curse scene with the green light and slow music is the whole play. McKee Rankin makes the most of his part of Father Lorenz. It is not much, but what there is in it Rankin brings out. Agnes Rankin suffers a like restriction in Lena, but carries the part well. Charles A. Millward as Nathan and E. J. Ratcliffe as Joseph deserve mention."

THEATRE REPUBLIC BURNS DOWN

The Jewess played one night to a packed house. After the last plaudits to Nance O'Neil had died away, the curtain descended for the last time. During the early morning hours of June 7 the Theatre Republic caught fire, and before the flames could be extinguished its interior was destroyed.

In the Chronicle of June 8, 1903, a half-page photograph of the fire was accompanied by the following account:

"The Theatre Republic was completely gutted by fire yesterday morning. The fire, which had apparently been smouldering since midnight, burst into flames at 6 o'clock and the whole upper portion of the building was enveloped when the first engine arrived. By ten o'clock the fire was nearly out and the theatre ruined. The actual destruction must amount to about $40,000 and if,

Hence officially when the audience came to a -- after the play [illegible] with the yellow-haired ingenue as Leah, *The Jones* gone with a song.

Of course, the curse scene with the green light and slow music is the whole play. McKee Rankin makes the most of his part as [illegible] Lorrimer. It is not much, but what there is of it Rankin brings out. Agnes Rankin suffers a like restriction in a way, but carries the part well. Frank A. Millward as Nathan and E. L. Ratcliffe as Frank deserve mention."

THEATRE REPUBLIC BURNS DOWN

The Jones played one night to a packed house. After the last plaudit to leave the hall had died away, the curtain descended for the last time. During the early morning hours of June 7 the Theatre Republic caught fire, and before the flames could be extinguished the building was destroyed.

In the *Chronicle* of June 8, 1903, a half-page photograph of the fire was accompanied by the following account.

"The Theatre Republic was completely gutted by fire yesterday morning. The fire, which had apparently been smoldering since midnight, burst into flames at 6 o'clock and the whole upper portion of the building was enveloped when the first engine arrived. By ten o'clock the fire was [illegible] and the theatre ruined. The damage [illegible] estimated at about [illegible] [illegible],

as seems probable, the Board of Public Works proscribes the repairing of the wooden structure, the loss may reach $65,000.

"Wardrobe effects of Miss Nance O'Neil, valued by the actress at between $20,000 and $25,000, lie under tarpaulins in the dripping dressing rooms. Crossed electric wires are given as the origin.

"The building was owned by J. B. Lankershim, a millionaire property owner of Los Angeles; it was under a ten-year lease to Edward Ackerman of the California Theatre, and under a three-months' sub-lease to L. R. Stockwell, the actor-manager. With cornices shattered and window openings agape, the walls still stand. The roof is gone and all the upper woodwork of the building.

"A policeman discovered the roof ablaze a few minutes before 6 o'clock and rang the first alarm. There was no wind or it would have been almost impossible to keep the flames from spreading to the Lincoln Grammar School and other frame buildings abutting. The interior of the Republic became a great furnace.

"Miss Nance O'Neil was shocked at the news of the fire. She is eager to have her baskets and cases uncovered. In them she has the famous stage jewels of Madame Ristori, and other rare trinkets. Manager Stockwell, who re-opened the Republic with her company, has arranged to continue the engagement of six weeks at the

Alhambra beginning tonight."

Wrecking crews finally pulled down the Theatre Republic's charred remains, and it was never rebuilt.

CHAPTER VII

THE MARKET STREET THEATRE

(1883-1897)

Charter Oak Hall, occupying the second story of the Charter Oak Livery Stables at 771 Market Street where the elite kept horses and carriages, became the Market Street Theatre in 1883. Prior to its conversion by Steele and Anderson the hall apparently had no recognized theatrical standing.

Probably the earliest mention of Charter Oak Hall was that in Figaro of November 30, 1872, announcing a meeting of the Protective Order of Seals "formed of members of the minstrel profession and others for benevolent purposes." Figaro six years later advertised a benefit performance at the hall for Johnny Price, "Ethiopian Comedian"; in 1879, it announced Denis Kearney's Workingman's Party production of Pinafore. The latter is by far the most important event identified with Charter Oak Hall during its early period. Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta was playing at four major San Francisco theatres concurrently, and Kearney burlesqued it in true showman style (himself taking the part of the Admiral, with his choruses in plug hats).

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

After this brief interlude the hall reverted to its former neglect for the next two and a half years, enlivened only by an occasional ball, concert or lecture. Then, according to the Post of January 9, 1883, a theatre-minded opportunist named Kohler opened Charter Oak Hall with an exhibition of wax works:

> "Kohler's Wax Works at Charter Oak Hall have been much improved by recent additions. 150 life-size wax figures of kings, queens, presidents, and other celebrities, local and foreign, are being presented. Promenade concerts at 2 and 8 o'clock. Admission 25 cents; Children 15 cents."

The character of this exhibition may be judged from an article in the Call of May 4, 1884, deprecating the "dime museums" which had by then overrun Market Street -- or at least the neighborhood of the Market Street Theatre:

> "Dime museums and cheap shows generally are multiplying in San Francisco. The number that are now running on the south side of Market Street, near the old Jesuit Church, are offered in evidence. Trading on people's curiosity seems to be a profitable business; and a trifle out of the ordinary way has often been the foundation of a man's fortune as a side-show. There must be four or five of these curio shops in full blast at the place mentioned, and they have variety enough not to be

monotonous. If you tire of Jim McCue's trained horses and dogs, and their owner's eloquence, there are Kohler's wax works in all their ghastliness to rest the tired eye; or Jeanette in the frozen Arctic waters; or the armless women; or the Female Congress of Beauty; of the Australian bush-ranging toughs who have stretched hemp. All tastes can be satisfied in the Market Street cheap shows, and it is worth while to loiter in the vicinity when the touters are calling out the various attractions they are prepared to offer to wonder-lovers."

Not quite two months after Kohler had departed with his wax works on a tour of the Santa Clara and Salinas Valleys, the Call of March 23, 1883, announced:

"Market Street Theatre -- formerly Charter Oak Hall -- 771 Market Street, near Fourth. Steele and Anderson, proprietor; Louis Balmour, stage manager.

Saturday Evening, March 24th --

Every Evening: Saturday and Wednesday Matinees

THE WONDERFUL EGYPTIAN MYSTERY

will be produced on an elaborate scale with new and startling illusions, strong plays, new mechanical effects, new music, new costumes. Efficient Dramatic Company and Full Orchestra! Note: -- The management have leased the above hall, and at an enormous expense enlarged, refitted and thoroughly renovated it . . . Prices

[illegible]. If you like of Jim Kohler's trained horses and dogs, and their owner's clog dance, there are Kohler's own works in all their glamorious to read the stand-out or decorate in the terrace area. Wherever or the modiera woman, in the female [illegible] of Beauty; of the Natural-ist bushwhacking tomboys who have [illegible] [illegible]. All twelve number established in the Market Street cheap shows, and it is worth while to [illegible] in the [illegible] when the [illegible] are calling out the various attractions they are [illegible] to other [illegible].

[illegible] quite two months after Kohler and [illegible] reported with his [illegible] work on a [illegible] of the Santa Clara and Salinas Valleys, the [illegible] of March 23, 1889, [illegible].

"Morris Street Theatre -- formerly Chapman Oak Hall -- [illegible] Mart's [illegible] [illegible] Fourth, Steele and Adreson, proprietors; [illegible] [illegible], stage manager.

Saturday Evening, March 24th --

Every Evening; Saturday and Wednesday Matinees

THE WONDERFUL MYSTICAL MALTESE

will be [illegible] on an elaborate scale with new and startling illusions, strong [illegible], [illegible] mechanical effects, new music, new costumes. Kohler's Dramatic Company and full orchestral [illegible] -- The management have leased the above hall, and is an exclusive [illegible] enlarged, refitted and thoroughly renovated. . . . Prices

to suit the times: Admission 25¢ -- Children 15¢."

Under Steele and Anderson, the Market Street Theatre replaced its waxworks with real actors, and managed to wear the habiliments -- if not the bawdy airs -- of a genuine melodeon.

No elucidation of the Wonderful Egyptian Mystery is available, but it appears to have been an early form of burlesque replete with statuesque displays of females in flesh-colored tights, interspersed with startling mechanical effects, pictorial illusions, and dissolving scenes. It ran for one week in March, and for two weeks in April, and shared the program with a dramatic offering of Kathleen Mavourneen interpreted by Henry Osbourne and his company of Irish comedians.

On April 22, 1883, The Bashful Youth of the Rhine and Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper were staged by William Simms and Fannie Young with an entirely "new troupe of robust comedians." On such slight recommendation the Examiner of April 29 announced:

> "This place of amusement [the Market Street Theatre] now ranks with the Winter Garden and Tivoli Opera House in point of character and style of performance; and justly, too, for a better entertainment for so small an admission fee has never been given in this city. Feeling encouraged by liberal patronage, the management announced another burlesque, Pocahontas, after the public have seen enough of Cinderella."

Some sort of internal dissension intervened, however, between this intent and its accomplishment. Pocahontas was never produced; Anderson withdrew and the house closed until Steele could find another partner (one McKenney) toward the end of May, 1883. On May 30 there was "a grand reopening, with a new company, new and elegant scenery, and Dion Boucicault's play Streets of New York." On this occasion an old trick of the minstrel troupes* was tried -- the orchestra, led by L. Von Der Mahden, played outside the theatre for a whole hour prior to the performance.

Inside the theatre, Boucicault's drama must have accomplished all else necessary to an overwhelming success, for the Examiner of June 5, 1883, recorded full houses throughout the week of May 30:

> "The Streets of New York has caused the welcome sign of 'Standing Room Only' to be posted up early each evening [at the Market Street Theatre] during the past week. It will continue through the week, with a matinee on Saturday."

After The Streets of New York came a succession of farces and melodramas which included Byron's Our Boys, The Sea of Ice, and Under the Gaslight, capably produced by James M. Ward and

---

* See Minstrelsy, Vol. XIII, this series.

Carrie Clark. For a while the Market Street Theatre rode a wave of popularity, abetted by the arrest of one of its stars, the child actress, Little May Tittle. In a brief commentary dated June 16, 1883, the Post resented the incident, and at the same time implied a higher moral character to this melodeon than was evidenced by other cheap showhouses:

"A very good company has been giving Our Boys during the week to large houses at the Market Street Theatre. It would be interesting to learn why a child actress should be arrested at this theatre, while such performances are permitted at the leading ones, and the dives with their immoralities are permitted unrestrained license."

Subsequently Little May Tittle was reinstated -- whether because of such charges of discrimination or by direct legal means is not known. This did nothing to bolster the success of the house beyond a season however. It enjoyed a brief flurry of patronage in midsummer of 1883, but by autumn even this had gone and Steele had lost a second partner. In the Post of October 6 he inserted notice of another "reopening," with himself the sole proprietor:

"The Market Street Theatre -- This theatre re-opens this evening entirely renovated and redecorated, and with a thousand and one improvements in the way of exits and

[illegible] Giaur." [illegible] a [illegible] James Street Lancaster made a [illegible] way of [illegible] entirely absorbed in the [illegible] of one on its [illegible] the little [illegible], little May Tilling. In a [illegible] commentary [illegible] June 16, 1864, the Post reported the incident, and [illegible] the same time implied a [illegible] moral [illegible] to this [illegible] [illegible] was written [illegible] [illegible].

> A very good [illegible] by [illegible] Giaur during the week [illegible] of [illegible] Street theatre. It would be [illegible] to have [illegible] a child [illegible] should be [illegible] [illegible] while such performances are permitted at the [illegible], and the [illegible] water [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

Consequently little Mr. Tilling was [illegible] and [illegible] whether [illegible] such charges of [illegible] or [illegible] legal [illegible] is not known. Tilling [illegible] to believe the success of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. It appeared a total [illegible] of [illegible] in January of 1865, and [illegible], [illegible] had [illegible] and [illegible] had [illegible] performance. In [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] "[illegible]," with [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible].

> "Mr. [illegible] Street [illegible] Little [illegible] the event [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] thousand and one [illegible] [illegible] and

other conveniences. J. J. Steele is the proprietor and George Osbourne the stage manager. The romantic drama The Man of Gold will be produced with a very strong cast, with new scenery, a good orchestra and elegant costumes. The admission will be only 25¢."

A week later, in the same journal, Steele followed with another, more subtly-worded advertisement:

"The Market Street Theatre -- This popular place of amusement is in a flourishing condition, and presents a comfortable appearance. A large and elegantly fitted entrance from Market Street is only one of the many additions made by Manager Steele. The stairs are covered with a rich carpet and the walls decorated in the latest designs. Three electric lights have been placed in position and add to the convenience of the throngs who nightly visit this popular family resort . . . On Monday evening next The Ticket of Leave Man, with George Osbourne in his famous impersonation of Bob Brierly, will be produced."

The Examiner on October 14, 1883, revealed facts not quite so complimentary:

"Market Street Theatre -- This is the name of a new place of amusement, which, in a hall of moderate size, combines theatricals and refreshments. The performance

during the past week has consisted of The Man of Gold, which has been pirated boldly from The Silver King, without any improvement at the hands of the pirates."

Whether such charges were true or false, Steele made no further attempts to drag "poor bedraggled drama" across the boards after December of that year. Effie Johns and Robert McNair then appeared in The Convict, a comedy of such slight structure that not even the Post thought it worthy of critical notice. Thereafter the Market Street Theatre became a minstrel house. Its owner, in what appears to have been a last attempt to achieve success in an unfavorable environment, abolished the sale of alcoholic beverages and tobacco from his premises early in April, 1884.

H. C. Wyatt's Courtwright and Hawkins Minstrels, fresh from a successful run at the Bush Street Theatre, opened on January 14, 1884, and played almost continuously until April 12, when the Post stated:

"The Market Street Theatre -- This cozy place almost opposite the Baldwin, is gradually, through the excellent management of its proprietor J. J. Steele, beginning to take rank with the other theatres, especially in the minstrelsy and specialty line. A most commendable move has been the prohibiting of smoking and drinking in the auditorium. Ladies need now have no more delicacy in patronizing the house than in going to hear Emerson or

Reed. The company is a strong one and the bill unusually good. The California quartet and Morant, Wyatt, Holland and Wetter have been popular favorites and are known as sweet singers. The rest of the company have also recognized merit. On Monday there will be a complete change in the bill, and in addition to the numbers to be rendered by the quartet and by the Gogill Brothers, Stanley and Pixley, James Reilly, Charles Goetting and Professor Sorg's orchestra, the Callan Comedy Company make their appearance. With such a bill as is to be presented and at such popular prices, the house should be crowded each evening."

There was no further notice of the minstrels. Kelly and O'Brien's Comedy Company made its debut late in April in a piece called The Married Mashers, which terminated this brief interim of respectability and served to close the place once more. J. J. Steele, having tried every known device, gave up the Market Street venture in despair.

ROWDY MIDWAY PLAISANCE

The Market Street Theatre soon became a dive of the worst sort -- even worse, it would appear, than the "bawdy Belly Union." John J. Hallinan reopened it as the Cremorne on May 30, 1884, using it chiefly for wrestling matches and prize-fights. The newspapers gave the place little publicity during these years, but when Hallinan died in 1893, the Examiner of

November 24 thought it fitting to review the Cremorne's history in conjunction with its owner's obituary:

"A single success in the prize ring gave Hallinan a financial beginning and an opening for wealth. In Virginia City (Nevada) he opened a variety theatre, a place where everything went and where one could get any sort of a game. Hallinan was then a sport and San Francisco tempted him. He came and established a resort which, for its evil attributes, was without parallel even here. In his dissipation he contracted disease and succumbed to consumption after an illness of nearly eight years. He never lost his desire to make money or to take life as a huge joke . . .

"He came here to open a boxing school, which rapidly developed into a variety theatre and low sporting resort on Market Street, opposite Powell. In coming to this city, Hallinan had to face competition in a thriving field. Harry Maynard and Jack Maynard maintained a similar establishment and accepted with poor grace the presence of a rival.

"Hallinan settled the competition quickly and very effectively. He thrashed the Maynard Brothers on the street. Both were pugilists (as was Hallinan) and their whipping practically closed their career. The patronage which had been given to them went to Hallinan. The

forenoon of thought. All during the while [illegible] accompanied [illegible] the warmth of colour [illegible]

[illegible] the people [illegible] successful [illegible] [illegible] contributions [illegible] even [illegible]. In his [illegible] life [illegible] success and [illegible] hopeful [illegible] never [illegible]

"The [illegible] which [illegible], developed [illegible] and Scott [illegible] o Market hotel [illegible] the Hall [illegible] Henry [illegible] the [illegible]

"Hellmuth [illegible] the [illegible]

roughs and rowdies who had congregated on Pine Street drifted to Market Street.

"Hallinan's place (a saloon) was too small. He moved down the street, where his Cremorne, under different names but the same character, has since remained. He made his resort popular with a class of patrons whose money flowed freely. The history of the place is not a pleasant one. It is a record of immorality, thefts, outrages, murders. But it made money for its owner. Hallinan could now indulge his passion for gambling. He played faro-bank, tried his luck at poker, dipped occasionally into the shallows of the stock market, bet his money on horse races and fighters. He always tried, however, to make others guess to win his money. He went east and brought back a wife, who conducted a lodging house while he maintained his sporting resort.

"He schemed in every way to make his establishment popular. He tried to connect the names of prominent pugilists and wrestlers with it. He gave exhibitions which attracted crowds and his attendants did the rest.

"Two years ago Hallinan's financial star began to set. The crusade of the citizens against such resorts as his gave him a great deal of trouble, and although he continued to maintain it, the place had lost prestige.

"Its daring immorality had sunk to vulgarity and its power to make money was lost. His health was failing

and he soon knew that he suffered from consumption . . . "

POLICE PLAY LAST ACT

When his health failed in 1893 Hallinan turned over the house to Edward Homan, who ran it under the name Midway Plaisance and substituted "hoochy-coochy" dancers -- or "torso-tossers and hip-wavers," as Variety called them -- for his predecessor's muscular fare.

From a modern source, The Barbary Coast by Herbert Asbury, one gets a picture of the Midway Plaisance, under Homan's regime:

"Some of the most noted cooch artists of the day appeared at the Midway Plaisance, among them the Girl in Blue and the original Little Egypt, who first danced in San Francisco in 1897, a few years after her triumphs in the Streets of Cairo shown at the first Chicago World's Fair. The admission charge at the Midway Plaisance was ten cents, slightly lower than at the Bella Union, and it was tougher in every way; its shows were bawdier, and virtue among its female entertainers was considered very detrimental to the best interests of the establishment. Like practically all the other melodeons, it had a mezzanine floor cut up into booths, before which hung heavy curtains. A visitor who engaged a booth for the evening was entertained between acts

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

by the female performers, and his conduct was not questioned so long as he continued to buy liquor."

Finally the Midway Plaisance was closed by the police, and the building in which it had been located was razed to make room for a new and taller structure.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WIGWAM

(1884-1886)[95]

"Another popular place of amusement was the Wigwam, a great barn-like structure at Geary and Stockton Streets. It had been erected in 1884 by the Dirigo Club, a famous Republican organization that worked in vain to elect James G. Blaine and John A. Logan president and vice-president of the United States.

"Gus Walter took over the building at the conclusion of the campaign. Tommy Leary was the stage manager, later filling a like position at the Tivoli for John Kreling. At the Wigwam Alice Nielsen trilled her way to fame and fortune, graduating to the Tivoli, then to the Bostonia, and finally to grand opera. Gilbert and Goldie, Weber and Fields, Flynn and Walker, Gus Bruno, Ben and Adeline Cotton in a skit called Marked for Life, Meyer Cohn, in later years a song plugger for Charles K. Harris of 'After the Ball' fame, and countless others were variety stars at the Wigwam."

Some 30 years after its demolition, a reminiscent playgoer writing for Pacific Monthly thus tried to distinguish

CHAPTER VIII

THE WIGWAM

(1884-1928)

"Another popular place of amusement was the Wigwam, a great barn-like structure at Geary and Brockton Streets. It had been erected in 1884 by the Olympic Club, a famous Republican organization that worked in vain to elect James G. Blaine and John A. Logan president and vice-president of the United States.

"Gus Walker took over the building at the conclusion of the campaign. Tommy Leary was the stage manager, later filling a like position at the Tivoli for John Kelling. At the Wigwam Alice Nielsen trilled her way to fame and fortune, graduating to the Tivoli, then to the Bostonia, and finally to grand opera. Gilbert and Goldie, Weber and Fields, Flynn and Walker, Gus Bruno, Dan and Adeline Gotham in a sketch called Married for Life, Meyer Cohn, in later years a song plugger for Charles K. Harris of 'A Ter the Ball' fame, and countless others were variety stars at the Wigwam."

Some 30 years after its demolition, a reminiscence playwright writing in Pacific Monthly stars tried to distinguish

the Wigwam from other houses of the kind. But, like similar reminiscences, this one creates a true general impression at the expense of several errors of fact. Gustav Walter took over the Wigwam at least a year later than the date implied, and Alice Nielsen, as far as can be learned from newspaper reports, did not appear there at any time in its 11 years of widely-publicized existence. The writer's suggestion, however, that Walter's establishment was a kind of inferior replica of the Tivoli, playing host to variety stars then unknown in San Francisco, is fairly well substantiated.

The Wigwam appears to have been more closely related to the melodeons than to the Tivoli, even though Walter called it a concert garden in his official press releases. In the city's hierarchy of the theatres it ranked slightly above the houses of bawdy reputation to which it was linked by virtue of policy and price; definitely beneath those more expensive "garden resorts" to which it was allied by title. From the beginning it set out to be irresistible and irrepressible, blatant and dignified, flamboyant and restrained, flaunting all manner of spectacles before the public view at 10¢ to 25¢ a person.

After the presidential campaign of 1884 the Wigwam successively was converted into a banquet hall, bazaar, poultry showroom, prizefight arena, theatre and circus ground. A company playing under the direction of Edward Barrett briefly

contributed a proper theatrical atmosphere to the "great barn-like structure" in 1885; then came Walter Morosco's Royal Russian Circus, and Fryer's Circus, with its spectacular and highly successful menagerie shows. The Wigwam had entered the cycle of its popularity. Night after night it was crowded with 2,000 or more clamant spectators.

While Fryer's Circus, with its innumerable wonders, was still the current attraction, city inspectors declared the Wigwam unsafe. The Argonaut of May 25, 1885, gives the story:

> "The inspectors next repaired to the Wigwam Theatre. This is a one-story brick structure seating about 2,000 persons. The roof is of corrugated iron, and on two sides there are streets, while on the other two sides there are open spaces. In case of a fire the house could be emptied in two minutes.
>
> "Strangely enough, elements of danger have been introduced for no apparent reason, except, perhaps, a consideration for economy, and instead of being safe, as it could have been from the first, the theatre is pronounced dangerous. The entire auditorium is covered by a ceiling of cotton cloth, which is ornamented with stringers and festoons of light, inflammable material. The proscenium wall is of wood instead of brick, and upstairs there are too many seats in the rows. The proprietors, Messrs. Meyer Bros., are anxious to have the

theatre safe and to conform to the law, and will soon follow the suggestion of the experts.

"Recently they provided themselves with appliances for putting out fire, but their hose is too small and will have to be changed for the regular 2½ inch hose. When the contemplated changes are made the Wigwam will be as safe as could be desired. It is very important that it should be, as it holds immense audiences. On Sunday night 3,000 persons visited the place."

As early as August 5, 1884, before the foundation had been laid, the Daily Evening Post gave more than one hint that the proposed building would not pass inspection. It cited specifications, dimensions, and cost figures supplied by the Republican Party, with advance notice that the building was to be erected hastily, cheaply, and from materials largely donated by or bought at discount from Republican merchants. The article said in part:

"The building is to be 100 x 120 feet with twelve-inch brick walls and corrugated iron roof. The stage will be 35 x 50 feet, and there will be two committee rooms, each 20 x 25 feet. The building will be lighted by gas and electric bulbs. The main entrance will be on Geary Street, where there will be two other smaller places of entrance and exit. . .

"All modern conveniences will be provided, including a sink with bright tin cup attachments for the thirsty.

The latter is intended to be used in opposition to the sideboard full of bottles and red liquor at the Democratic headquarters across the street. The estimated cost of the edifice is $5,500, which includes furniture. The inside will be rough and whitewashed, and unless it is found that the absence of a ceiling interferes with the distribution of sound, no ceiling will be provided. Twenty days hence the vicinity of Geary and Stockton Streets will be a lively one, where the political pot will boil continually."

GUSTAV WALTER TAKES OVER

By the time Gustav Walter leased the Wigwam, in the autumn of 1885, the improvements recommended three months earlier had been made. But these were negligible compared to the alterations Walter himself undertook to render the place attractive as well as safe. Tearing out the sink "with bright tin cup attachments" he installed a sumptuous bar; remodeled, re-decorated and frescoed the auditorium, and built a new stage. Then, fortified by his experience with three previous "resorts" -- the Fountain, a basement melodeon at Kearny and Sutter Streets, acquired in 1874; the Vienna Gardens at Sutter and Stockton Streets, opened in 1881; and the Telegraph Hill Observatory and Concert Hall, established in 1884 -- Walter

advertised the opening of his fourth and most grandiose enterprise, with pomp and fanfare, in the Daily Evening Post, August 20, 1885:

"WIGWAM CONCERT GARDEN -- Cor. Geary

and Stockton Sts.

Gustav Walter & Co. . . . . Proprietors.

(Gustav Walter, formerly proprietor of the Fountain, Vienna Gardens, and other popular resorts.)

The largest, best appointed, and most perfectly ventilated Concert Hall in America. The Hall is remodeled, redecorated and frescoed in the latest style. Entirely new stage, new scenery, etc.

GRAND OPENING!

Saturday Evening August 22nd

Extraordinary attractions! Everything new!

4 Grand Opening Performances 4

Saturday, Sunday, Sunday Afternoon, and Monday

August 22nd, 23rd, 24th

ADMISSION FREE!"

Although Walter neglected to mention what stars, if any, appeared on his initial bill (repeated for two weeks with suitable accompanying publicity), the Wasp and News Letter of

September 5 declared "the performances are of exceptional merit and the whole tone of the place is refined and pleasant." The publication's choice of words was curious, considering the quantities of liquor dispensed during performances -- bartenders and perspiring waiters struggled between the rows of seats -- and the inevitable altercations between drinkers and non-drinkers. Whatever else it lacked, the Wigwam had an oversupply of patrons -- all intent on surfeiting themselves in one manner or another at these extraordinary free-admission performances. Never before had San Franciscans been so privileged; never before had any theatre in the city opened its doors indiscriminately and maintained such a policy for two full weeks.

Walter, indeed, had tried out a precedent hitherto confined to the lowliest saloons -- a fact which demonstrated his business acumen and revealed the school in which he learned it. His former enterprises -- each a springboard to more ambitious plans -- were all "entertainment bars" dignified only by their names and surroundings, and invested somehow with airs of owlish propriety. The Wigwam could not escape this influence, but being many times larger than the previous "gardens," it proved less susceptible to control. Brasher elements got the upper hand, and its "respectability" became a nominal shield for boisterous conviviality.

[illegible] "believed the performance was of exceptional merit and the whole tone of the piece is refined and pleasant." The publication [illegible] choice of words was curious, considering the quantities of liquor dispensed during performances -- hard liquor, [illegible] beer [illegible] between the rows of seats -- [illegible] between drinkers and performers [illegible] the Wigwam had an overtaxed or [illegible] rather [illegible] themselves [illegible] performances. [illegible] but Ben Greer [illegible] been so privately [illegible] rather [illegible] therefore in the city [illegible] its [illegible] and maintenance [illegible] a policy for two [illegible].

But [illegible] had [illegible] a [illegible] indirect confined [illegible] language [illegible] the business [illegible] which he learned it. The Greer [illegible] more amateurs [illegible] "[illegible] only by their [illegible] and [illegible] with [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] facilities, [illegible] "performance," [illegible] proved less [illegible] elements for the [illegible] "[illegible] rational [illegible] [illegible].

SPECTACLE AND VARIETY

The Wigwam was nearly always overcrowded, even when 10¢ and 25¢ admissions were charged. Its stage bristled with spectacles, with daring and sensational acts, with all of the curios and extravagances of variety. In September, Gilbert Sarony, the burlesque artist, was billed with a trio of vocalists described in the press as Emma Middleton, "operatic balladist"; Mamie Dampierre, "queen of song and dance"; Ida Eisner de Marion, "Vienna waltz and concert singer". Augmenting these were Master Leonard Cohen, "the boy mesmerist"; Mlle. La Selle, "the water queen and champion lady swimmer of the world"; and the Phoites Burlesque Company, a dozen or more mimic, pantomime, ballet, and acrobatic performers reputed to have been "European sensations" before making their appearance in the United States.

Billed first in "Les Scenes Humoresque, Grand Act Fantastique, Le Grand Ballet," the Phoites troupe during its several months' engagement also presented forthright, if outworn, English titles, such as Humpty-Dumpty on a Farm and Love Under Difficulties. With their amusing French accents, their nasal intonations, and obvious skill, they held the Wigwam's patrons spellbound and earned for themselves and the management solid reputations.

In August, 1886, Bonlon and McGinley's Specialty, Comedy, and Concert Company, enhanced by a "sextette band," arrived to head a monster program which included not only Mauritis

and Odell's Happy Coons and Mlle. Suaretti's Troupe of Aerial Wonders, but the usual array of scintillating performers and acts.

Then the Dirigo Club demanded the use of its old headquarters during A. A. Sargent's campaign for United States Senator. In spite of his lease, Walter acquiesced. He promised (in the Chronicle of September 16, 1886) a greater show than ever when he reopened:

> "The management announces that the Wigwam Concert Garden will be closed for performances from Monday, September 20th, and will be reopened with entire new novelties direct from Europe on November 6, 1886. Mr. Gustav Walter will start for Europe in a few days and bring out the strongest musical attraction ever brought to this country."

SENSATIONS FROM EUROPE

The troupe playing at the Wigwam when it suspended operations included Marshall's Japanese Tourists, Jugglers, Equilibrists, Acrobats, Tumblers, Gymnasts and Prestidigitators -- together with the "Great Little All Right and the Beautiful and Daring Female Gymnast, Miss Gusso Onego Yang Yea, all dressed in beautiful and brilliant native costumes." It is difficult to imagine a more spectacular program, but Walter sailed to Europe, returned on schedule, and triumphantly advertised in the Chronicle of November 2:

"WIGWAM GARDEN THEATRE -- GRAND REOPENING!

Saturday November 6, 1886

Extraordinary novelties brought here especially at enormous expense! Acts never witnessed here! The Latest Parisian Sensation, The Vanishing Lady, Beautier de Kolta's Marvellous Illusion, the Instantaneous Disappearance of a Lady!

Professor Adolph Seenean's

Cremation! Cremation!

A Lady actually set on fire and burned up before your eyes!

Europe's Greatest Sensation

Electra! Electra!

or Dreaming and Walking in mid-air!

Signor St. Belmo, the Man Fly! Leaping through a Heart of Sharp Daggers!

Burtine, the Arabian Juggler! The 3 Adonises! Marvellous Gymnasts! Acrobats!

The Celebrated San Francisco Quartet: with John C. Miller, the famous basso profundo; Miss Lucille Hall, comic singer and danseuse; Miss Bertie Sanger, vocalist; William Baker, artistic lightning changes; and others make their first appearance.

FOUR GRAND OPENING PERFORMANCES

Saturday - Sunday - afternoon and evening

- Monday November 6th, 7th and 8th"

GENESIS OF THE ORPHEUM

The prices remained at their original figure when the Wigwam reopened. It prospered with foreign imports while home talent went begging for engagements. Along with its phenomenal success came tidings of yet another enterprise, the Orpheum, which was nameless when the Chronicle of November 26, 1886, made this announcement:

> "The Wigwam continues to do a large business with novelties. The best sign of prosperity is that the proprietors are about to build a new place opposite the Alcazar big enough to hold 4,000 people."

In his imagination Walter already saw the Orpheum as his summit of achievement; but the Wigwam was paying for it and he did not forget that fact. Melodrama and grand opera now were added to the regular variety bills. Just before the close of the year "a Mr. Mason's" comedy, Josh Whitcomb and another called Half an Hour with Judge Louderback were presented on the same program with "scenes from Il Trovatore." The latter featured bona fide stars from the German and English Opera Company, who played the scenes with none of the burlesqueing usual in melodeon grand opera. The Chronicle on

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

January 1, 1887, recorded the success of this combination program:

> "One of the most notable features of the year has been the development of cheap amusements of a better kind. The places where admission is ten cents have risen above customary ideas. The Wigwam gives scenes from grand opera, sandwiched in with entertaining specialties of all kinds. A tendency, too, has arisen to put on good dramas at cheap prices, and the crowds would seem to show that good things are as much appreciated in resorts of the poorer classes as in those of the higher. The enormous numbers that attend make the enterprise pay. This has made a serious inroad on the gallery audiences of the better theatres."

WIGWAM, A LESSER ORPHEUM

But an even bolder maneuver was under way when Walter established a booking agency in New York which sent to the Pacific Coast such vaudeville and variety stars as M. Forest Chene, violin virtuoso; Lulu Powers, comic opera soprano; the Oro Brothers, Chinese impersonators; McGraw and Arlington, Irish comedians; George H. Wood, satirist playwright-actor; Jolly Nash, Cool Burgess, Eddie Foy, George Wessels, and Weber and Fields. Said the Chronicle (February 27, 1887) on hearing of the New York Agency:

January 1, 1957, he wrote the success of our combination program:

> One of the most notable features of the year has been the development of [illegible] entertainment of a better kind. The large [illegible] subdivision in ten years have taken about [illegible] customary ideas. The Midwest gives success [illegible] years established by well [illegible] building specialists of all ethnic [illegible] a tendency [illegible] citizen to [illegible] cheap prices, and [illegible] crowds would [illegible] after that point [illegible] are so much appreciated [illegible] of the greater [illegible] in the [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] make the entertainment [illegible] Thus [illegible] on the gallery [illegible] the very [illegible].

Without a Legal Opinion

But [illegible] for [illegible] and [illegible] way when Walter [illegible] a [illegible] [illegible] New York [illegible] back to the Pocono Lake and [illegible] [illegible] Marie M. Forest [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] opera company: the [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] Kellam and Arlington, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] playwright-actor: [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] Fox, [illegible] Cossella, and Weber and [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] 27, 1957) on behalf of the New York Agency:

"The new departure on the part of Gus Walter in establishing an agency in the East for procuring attractions is likely to pay. The novelties that have come and are coming are likely to raise the entertainments at the Wigwam to a higher level than hitherto; and in its special line this place proposes to bid for the custom of the leisure public."

The Wigwam profits mounted incredibly and Walter, a German immigrant who had started with many handicaps beside an empty purse, launched the Orpheum on its long and successful career with perfect self-confidence. For two years, until 1890, he owned both houses, leasing the Wigwam finally to Charles Meyer, who continued Walter's tactics and policy without notable deviation for a period of three years.

Although ostensibly rivals, both the Orpheum and the Wigwam offered the same kind of bills; both recruited their stars in Walter's agency, and frequently exchanged acts. It is probable that Walter arranged with Meyer to use the Wigwam as a proving ground for those attractions he intended later to stage at the Orpheum.

The Wigwam's popularity waxed rather than waned. The same old sensations -- interspersed with burlesque of Eastern flavor modified to fit local conditions -- and comic operas which included nearly the whole Gilbert and Sullivan repertory still made an irresistible appeal to the dime and quarter

"[illegible] on the [illegible] establishing [illegible] in the East [illegible] presuming three- [illegible] The novelties [illegible] come [illegible] treatments [illegible] figure [illegible] and in [illegible] proposed to him [illegible] of the [illegible] public."

The [illegible] proposal [illegible] and Wallmoden a Ger- man [illegible] provided with many [illegible] besides an [illegible] successful [illegible] until [illegible] and policy [illegible] times.

Although [illegible] Brunswick and the [illegible] at the same [illegible] It is prob- [illegible] figure as a [illegible] later to [illegible]

[illegible] was not. The [illegible] of Hanover [illegible] operas [illegible] repertory [illegible]

crowds. These audiences were so amenable to spectacular illusions that the Examiner offered the following suggestion, on June 11, 1893:

"The dime museum is entering into San Francisco drama with an astonishing rapidity. The Wigwam is crowded with admirers of a pugilistic kangaroo, and ladies who adore Patti and Albani and who rush to New York for a first night of Henry Irving, have been flocking furtively to the shrine of the marsupial. The next freak show we are to have at the Wigwam is a celebrated Miss Derondo who will waltz about the stage with eleven crocodiles. Her crowning act, so the Eastern papers say, is to place her head between the jaws of the largest of her crawling friends. This is supposed to cause a thrill of horror among the audience. Two of the hideous beasts stand erect on their tails and dance a quadrille with the fair Derondo. Would it not be a good idea for the sake of dramatic art in San Francisco, to place all the kangaroos and all the prizefighters and all the alligators in a single pit? Let the day be the Fourth of July and let their appetites be well sharpened beforehand!"

The Wigwam ignored the suggestion. The Call of July 2, 1893, carried an announcement of further activities:

"Charles Meyer's Wigwam must have a managing element in its affairs that is as full of energy as a dynamo. The bill for the present week is a marvel in the way of new operatic stars and new variety performers. In the first place Fred Urban puts on Marriage by Lantern Light, a new comic opera in one act, with an entirely new distribution; and then comes in regular procession a baker's dozen of novel specialties by new people -- each a specimen of skill, or physical training, or of the art in some peculiar line. The management has concluded to retain Omene, the Turkish dancer, for another week. There will be a matinee here on Tuesday, July 4."

Whatever the merits of these performances, there was certainly a dynamic energy shown when Charles Meyer presented the disparate viewpoints of opera, melodrama, burlesque, and sensation acts on a single bill. Fra Diavolo, The Beggar Student, A Trip to Africa, The Mascot -- sung in colloquial English -- had to contend for a season with animal attractions, acrobatics, and even "an Eskimo Village from the Arctic, consisting of eleven people, five dogs, and the largest collection of curios ever brought from the frozen zone." But when Colonel Daniel Boone and Millie Carlotta arrived with their unique ensemble -- "a large den of forest-bold lions" -- they capped the climax of sensationalism.

Late in 1893, Charles Meyer died. The Call of December 31 delivered these tidings to anxious Wigwam patrons:

"The widow of Charles Meyer, late proprietor of the Wigwam, succeeds to the ownership of that place, and, in conducting it, will be aided by her sons as business managers. The same variety of attractions will be furnished nightly as usual."

Thereafter Albert Meyer assumed control of the house, while Charles' second son (never mentioned by name) performed the offices of accountant, factotum, and general advisor. For nearly a year the Wigwam wore its crown of supremacy among the melodeons with undiminished bravado. The Meyers staged a burlesque of Pinafore, called A Lass That Loved A Sailor. They followed this with a Chanticleer String Band, with a standing offer of $500 to any one who could prove the "roosters" were not alive; presented the comedians Flynn and Walker in their famous sketch Columbus at the Midwinter; and on April 29, 1894, after a series of "Caprine Paradoxes," featuring Professor Sherman's $10,000 herd of educated goats, announced in the Call:

"Albert Meyer, the manager of the Wigwam -- usually a specialty theatre -- will make a new departure this week by starting his program with a three-act comedy -- the title and cast of which would lead one to suppose

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

that the author, Frank Dumont, who also gave birth to The Rainbow and The Nabobs, had seized upon and dramatically embalmed a local subject. Our Married Men is a very suggestive title, and for subject matter there is no more prolific source than San Francisco. Clara Belle is a prominent name in the cast (played by Violet St. Clair) and 'the cause of all the trouble.' A score or more of specialties follow the comedy."

THE TIDE BEGINS TO EBB

Our Married Men, evidently a comedy of manners, was the first and last three-act play to make its appearance. Either Frank Dumont ran out of ideas, or the Wigwam's patrons disclaimed interest in such fare. Gradually, through the last months of 1894, patronage for even spectacle shows began to drop alarmingly. The Wigwam, despite its bravado and ostentation, was no longer paying. First news of its failure came on January 20, 1895, when the Examiner proclaimed without any previous warning: "Gustav Walter of the Orpheum has become proprietor of the Wigwam and the first program under his management will be given tomorrow evening." A week later the Chronicle stated:

"The Wigwam has swung into popularity already. The program for this week is announced to be Mahara's Mammoth Colored Minstrels, thirty-five performers, of which the Southern press speaks very cordially. The

first part is said to be very strong, and the olio very entertaining."

THE WIGWAM FOLDS UP

But the Wigwam had become a white elephant for Walter. After one more engagement, he closed it in disgust. The Post of April 23, 1895, made his reasons quite clear:

"The Wigwam, at the southeast corner of Geary and Stockton Streets, is closed, and Adele Curi, the leading lady, is now on her way to New York. After the performance on Sunday night Gustav Walter of the Orpheum and Albert Meyer, manager of the Wigwam, both of whom are interested in the now darkened playhouse, came to the conclusion that it would be folly to keep it open longer. The burlesques given by the local artists at the Wigwam did not appeal to the purses of theatre-goers in San Francisco.

"One of the plays produced at the place last week was called High Fly. In one of the acts a ball is batted from the stage into the audience. One night a jockey at the Bay District track who was sitting near the orchestra caught the sphere and punctured it. Another ball was substituted and that, too, was destroyed. On the following night the same jockey caught the ball as it was flying over the heads of the spectators and tore it to pieces. He was arrested and tried before Police

first part is sad. It is very strong, and the girls very entertaining."

THE WIGWAM CLOSES UP

But the Wigwam had become white elephant for Baldwin, either one more unpopular or else too in disrepute. The Post of April 16, 1895, made the announcement:

"The Wigwam, at the northwest corner of Geary and Stockton streets, is closed, and Adolph Spreckels, the leading lady, is now on her way to New York. After the performance on Sunday night the Grafter Minstrels of the Olympian and Alcazar Keyes, manager of the Olympian, both of whom are interested in the new burlesque, phoned some to the conclusion that it would be folly to keep it open longer. The burlesques given by the local artists at the Wigwam did not appeal to the taste of theatre-goers in San Francisco.

"One of the plays produced at the place last week was called Hi-Ky-Ky. In a scene of the opera a bull fighter from the arena [illegible] audience. One night a jockey at the Bay District track [illegible] the operatic company in the opera and [illegible]. Another bull was substituted and [illegible] escaped. On the following night the same jockey [illegible] as he was riding over the heads of the audience and there it disappeared. He was arrested and [illegible] fine

Judge Campbell. His punishment was a fine which he could not pay, and he is now serving a short sentence for the misdemeanor. From that night attendance at the Wigwam fell away until there was scarcely enough money in the box office to pay the performers. All the actors and performers were paid in full yesterday afternoon. Harry Constantine, a female impersonator who had played one night at the house said: 'We got our money all right. I suppose the play did not take and that is all there is about it. There was no trouble between the artists and manager Meyer. He kept faith with all of us . . . something that is not always done by managers of losing playhouses.'

"Gustav Walter of the Orpheum had this to say: 'The fact of the matter is, San Francisco will not patronize home talent. I don't blame the people much, for many of the people we have had working at the Wigwam have been unsteady in their hours and upon their pins. The Orpheum and the Wigwam have been working in the same circuit, but we found that it did not pay us to transfer from the Orpheum to the other theatre the higher-priced artists we brought from the East. There was but one thing to do from a business standpoint and that was to close the Wigwam's doors. Local talent in the old burlesques has proved a failure, and the Wigwam patronage was not strong enough, it seems, to pay the salaries of Eastern artists.'

"The Wigwam, which for many years commanded a large share of vaudeville patronage in this city, was built several years ago by the Republican Party as a hall in which to hold its political meetings, and the aggressive utterances of many of its leaders on the Coast have rung in the great auditorium. It is not believed the building will again be reopened as a playhouse. Many attractions at the Wigwam will be seen at the Orpheum this week."

Not only did the Wigwam never reopen as a playhouse, it never reopened as anything else. Sometime prior to the spring of 1896, when the city directory of that year went to press, the building was razed to make way for the City of Paris Dry Goods Company's establishment, and the Wigwam's only perpetuation was in its name, bestowed on a theatre in the Mission district.

CHAPTER IX

THE BIJOU THEATRE

(1888-1894)

On August 4, 1888, the Evening Post announced the completion of a "new" theatre on Market Street, opposite Grant Avenue, which was to be opened that evening for inspection by the press. But the Bijou, although expensively and luxuriously furnished according to the standards of that day, was new only inside. The building housing it had been standing for several years, had been remodeled at an enormous cost by Colonel Isaac Trumbo and R. P. Thomas, and had been leased to Billy Emerson, "King of them All."* who intended to make the Bijou a temple of minstrelsy. Said the Post in its lengthy description of this theatre:

> "The original plans, which did not satisfy Mr. Trumbo, have been somewhat altered and, it can be safely said, no better arranged place of amusement exists on the Coast . . .
>
> "The main entrance -- some fifty feet in depth -- is one of the most beautiful in the city. The floor is

* See Vol. XIII, Minstrelsy, this series.

carpeted through the center with a rich crimson velvet Moquette carpet on each side of which is a two-foot border of inlaid woods of oak and black walnut. Upon the sides of entrance and hall is a wainscoting of terra cotta color, three feet in height . . . Above this, to the height of six feet, is a relief in tinted green and gold of web or comb pattern . . .

"The ceiling is of light green tint handsomely frescoed and divided off into sections of four beautiful arches in each of which are placed four incandescent lights capable of throwing a brilliant light throughout the entire entrance. Two large glass doors separate the entrance from the foyer. Upon either side of the foyer are broad stairways leading to the balcony and gallery. On either side of the foyer, also, are the entrances to the dress circle which is the handsomest part of the house. The main body, to appearances, is about the size of the Standard Theatre and has a seating capacity of 500. The floor has a pitch of 3/8 of an inch to the foot and the seats, which are of the latest model of folding opera chairs, are so arranged that the view of the stage is not obscured by those occupying seats immediately in front.

"The stage has a frontage of 35 feet and a depth of 25 feet. The limited space on the stage is made up below, where a large room has been built and contains seven dressing rooms . . .

[illegible]

[illegible]

"The curtain is one of the finest ever hung. Valued at $10,000, insured for $5,000 in the Bankers' and Merchants' Insurance Company [it] is a representation of the Battle of Lookout Mountain, which has been exhibited all over the country. Proprietors of the Bijou have secured a two-year lease of the painting, which will be an attraction in itself.

"The balcony is arranged in the same manner as the dress circle, with handsome crimson velvet carpets, and seats 250 persons, not counting extra seats which ushers find place for when the house is crowded.

"Lighting is managed behind stage where numerous electric buttons can be pressed -- any section of the house can immediately be lighted by gas or electricity. In the center of the ceiling is a 72 inch Carona light and large reflectors. On gallery, balcony and dress circle are eight three-pronged jets; one burns gas, the others the incandescent light, same as used in the Baldwin . . .

"Besides fire hose and flood pipes on the stage, there is a fire-proof drop curtain which can be let down at a moment's notice and prevent spread of flames . . . There is no doubt that the opening of the new Bijou Theatre will be attended with grand success -- no reason why, under the popular management of Billy Emerson, it should not receive a large fashionable patronage."

Although elegant enough to arouse such enthusiasm from the Post, the Bijou was destined to a rather brief and inelegant career, ending sadly during the panic of 1893 as a shelter for the homeless.

EMERSON MINUS HIGH "C"

Emerson opened on August 5, 1888, with his minstrel company and received a jubilant ovation. The Post declared that it surpassed the demonstration tendered Patti, the previous spring, when people stayed up all night in their eagerness to buy tickets for the opera star's concert -- and, incidentally, smashed a plate-glass window at Sherman and Clay's music store. Nothing of this sort occurred at the Bijou, but a number of huge floral offerings proclaimed Emerson "the Prince of Minstrels" at the top of the ladder of success. These, according to a waggish observer, had been contributed by the "softer sex . . . and to do him justice, Emerson looked disgusted at this girly girl gush in the flower line; so did other people."

With one or two exceptions, the show stood every critical test by which a minstrel performance was judged. The "king" went through his entire repertoire of songs; tried his voice out on the old familiar burlesques, on German opera, on dialect pieces. "But," said the Post correspondent next day, "he made no attempt to tag that high "C" which made him so famous years ago. In fact, the great William's voice is not so clear as it used to be, although he has his old time fund of mimicry

and is still about 90% better than any other minstrel on the stage." The rest of the company was neither very good nor very bad. As long as the people had Emerson, even without his high "C", they were apparently satisfied.

On August 18, 1888, the Post reported full houses at the Bijou.

> "The Bijou is now certain to be as permanent an addition to our regular amusement places as it is a welcome one. It has already stood the test of ample trial -- people like it and will patronize it when there is a reasonably good show there. Emerson's minstrels constitute a reasonably good show when Emerson works as hard as he has done since the house opened, but there is room for improvement. The orchestra is not all that a music loving community could ask for . . . Perhaps it would be too much to expect to find a good orchestra in such a pretty house, amd much of the company is quite clever. One change had to be made during the week because a couple of Irish song and dance gentlemen found they were not able to struggle with a deck load of whiskey and an acrobatic act simultaneously. The patronage of the house has been very large, the transient trade alone being a large item."

BIJOU'S FORTUNE FLAGS

The people did not have Emerson long; after the first month or so his name dropped out of the casts and the company

[illegible] still about [illegible] than any other minstrel on the [illegible]." The rest of the company was neither [illegible] nor [illegible]. As [illegible] as the people had Emerson, [illegible] without [illegible], they were apparently satisfied.

On August [illegible], the [illegible] reported [illegible] at the [illegible].

"The [illegible] to be a permanent an [illegible] to our [illegible] amusement places. It is a welcome one. [illegible] already attracted [illegible] angle [illegible] -- people [illegible] will patronize it when there in a measure [illegible] show there. Emerson's minstrels constitute a [illegible] show that [illegible] works as [illegible] the house opened, but there is [illegible]. The [illegible] all that [illegible] . . . . . Perhaps it would be [illegible] to expect [illegible] minstrels [illegible] worthy [illegible] quite [illegible] be- [illegible] found [illegible] not [illegible] with a dark [illegible] Key and [illegible] society. The [illegible] of the [illegible] large, [illegible] made [illegible] a large [illegible]..."

[illegible]

The [illegible] first [illegible]

had to carry on without him. A female impersonator laconically known as "Leon" practically constituted the show during Emerson's absences. He performed remarkable feats of imitation in skits variously titled A Voyage in a Balloon (supposedly depicting a birdseye view of the terrain between San Francisco and Washington), Jessie Street Coons, The Mystery of a Handsome Cat, and The Skating Rink. Then McIntyre and Heath appeared in November to help things along with their Golden Colored Wedding.

None of these attractions, however, sufficed to restore the Bijou's flagging fortunes. Whereupon Messrs. Trumbo and Thomas, and an associate not hitherto mentioned -- one Mr. Houghton -- immediately notified the surprised minstrel king that he had become "a half-proprietor" of the Bijou -- lock, stock, and building. The reason for this became apparent when the minstrels began demanding their salaries which, under terms of an agreement made in the lease, were to be guaranteed by the owners of the building before they could collect their share of the profits. On November 20, Trumbo and his partners shifted the entire responsibility on Emerson with an official notice submitted to all employees (and reproduced in the Post of that date) as follows:

"You are hereby notified that the undersigned will not be responsible for any salaries which may become due for any services which you may hereafter perform at the

had to carry on without him. A female impersonator laconically known as "Leon" practically constituted the show during Emerson's absence. He performed remarkable feats of imitation in skits variously titled A Voyage in a Balloon (supposedly depicting a cross-bay view of the journey between San Francisco and Washington), Jenkins Street Scene, The Mystery of a Hand-some Cat, and The Skating Rink. Then McIntyre and Heath appeared in November to roll along with their Golden Jubilee Wedding.

None of these skits mattered, however, sufficed to restore the Bijou's flagging fortunes. Wednesday Matinee, Trumbo and Thomas, and an associate act thereafter constituted -- one Mr. Houghton -- immediately retitled the unpopular whatever King that he had become "a bit-puncturer" of the Bijou -- look, stock, and building. The years for this became apparent when the vaudeville began demanding their salaries which, under terms of an agreement made in the fancy, were to be guaranteed by the owners of the house before they could collect their share of the profits. On November 21, Trumbo and his partners billed the entire troupe cancellation on Saturday with an official notice, published to all employees (and reproduced in the Post of that date) as follows:

"You are hereby notified that the undersigned will not be responsible for any salaries which may become due for any services which you may render after the 21st

Bijou Theatre, under the employment of Mr. William Emerson, or any other person.

Very respectfully,

Trumbo, Houghton & Thomas."

Emerson, when shown a copy of the notice, was as surprised as the men to whom it was addressed. He gave his assurance, nevertheless, that the salaries would be forthcoming at the specified date. The Post article continues:

"This did not satisfy some of the men, especially some of the members of the orchestra, and the majority of them quit and announced their intention of not going on last evening. Emerson tried to persuade them to return, but failed, and as a result, when the curtain rose at 8:45 last evening, the stage presented a deserted appearance, there being only five out of the usual eleven seated around. They were Lorraine, Delorme, Whitmark, Somers, and Kushy. The orchestra numbered but four pieces -- a cornet, trombone, clarinet and bass drum. Besides these there was placed an upright piano on the stage.

"After a short explanation by Lorraine of the situation, the performance began, the first part consisting of singing accompanied by the piano. The first part being over, all hands turned to and assisted in moving the piano and scenes for the second part, much to the

amusement of the audience. The entire programme was made up as they went along, even Billy Emerson himself going on the stage and amusing the audience for half an hour. This was kept up until 10 o'clock, all the actors doing their share of scene shifting and the laying and taking up of carpets, with the exception of Delorme and Lorraine, the heavyweights, who were detailed to handle the piano, while two of the ushers raised and lowered the curtain. The men did their new line of work so well as to excite loud applause from the audience, who left at the close of the performance well satisfied. Emerson was delighted, and after the show was over exclaimed to the men: 'You're bricks, every one of you, and you can draw double pay for the balance of the week!' And he invited them out to have a drink. Tonight a good performance is promised and outside talent will be engaged."

PLAYING BY CANDLELIGHT

Thus began the quarrel which destroyed minstrelsy at the Bijou. Emerson considered that he had been discriminated against and refused to release his "partners" from their agreement unless they paid over a sum of money sufficient to buy him out. The partners retaliated by attempting to force him out. They summoned the renegade employees, gave them their overdue salaries on condition none of them would work at the theatre again under Emerson's employment, and ordered the gas

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

and electricity turned off in the house. Next evening the show opened with candles and Japanese lanterns for illumination. The Post of November 22, 1888, joked:

> "Bijou Theatre -- About the usual number of people strolled in to see the first original fun that has been seen on a minstrel stage in this city for several years. The candles and the performance came to an end at about the same time and the spectators went away in good humor. Emerson says the agony will be repeated tonight, and that he is going to give a show if he has to do it with his contract in one hand and a kerosene lamp in the other."

Trumbo's attorney obtained a court injunction which prevented Emerson from giving further performances until the dispute has been settled. After a period of costly litigation which terminated in mid-January, 1889, both sides agreed to a settlement out of court. The Bijou reopened on January 21, with Emerson once more making personal appearances at every performance in his original character of Moriarity.

It became evident, however, that Emerson had no intention of remaining at this troublesome theatre longer than was necessary to gather a company and prepare for a tour of the Northwest. When he departed, early in February, the Bijou became a variety house in the strictest sense. It offered everything from musical comedy to opera, including a dramatic

season of several weeks during which Edwin Thorne played in The Right Man, then a recent New York success.

ILL LUCK DOGS THE BIJOU

On December 29, 1889, after another period of idleness, the Chronicle stated:

"Bijou Opera House -- Another theatre that seems to carry a spell of ill luck upon it. It was built for a comedy, comic opera, or minstrel theatre. It is a compact, comfortable little place, but so far it does not seem to have 'caught on.' It was opened on January 19th with Billy Emerson and a minstrel company. It did a good business while Emerson played, but falling out with his partners who, being shrewd business men, made the usual mistake of knowing too much, and gave Billy a contract which obliged them to pay, but did not oblige him to pay, the arrangement broke up in some disorder. A specialty show took it with Kennedy, the mesmerist, and made little money. Then there came along Ned Thorne, who had a play which he thought would set the town on fire. The play was The Right Man, but Thorne was the wrong man apparently. He stepped down and out. Ben Cotton took it for a brief 'flyer.' Then Lewis Morrison, having from long playing of the devil in Faust acquired an idea of the original's powers, bloomed out with a chestnut to begin with. Chestnut or novelty, it did not

seem to matter. He played his short season and got out. It stood vacant a long time.

"Then three weeks ago Campobello saw the vista of fame and money open to him and started grand opera. But grand opera at 75 cents was not the kind of entertainment people believed in and he succumbed. Several less important attractions have had their hour, but none stayed. Yet it is hard to see why the Bijou should not draw with a proper show. It is a good house to sing or act in, and for a light comic opera it is peculiarly fitted.

Notwithstanding the Chronicle's lament, ill luck continued to haunt the Bijou. Samuel Johnstone took over on February 8, 1891, but was happy to relinquish his lease within a month to H. L. Leavitt, whereupon the Call of March 15, 1891, announced, concurrent with a change of name:

"The Casino /formerly the Bijou/ -- Under this new name the Bijou will again enter the list of places of amusement. It will be devoted to vaudeville and burlesque, and maintained as a place of family resort. While the performances will be of a high character of excellence -- the best artists being engaged -- varied, lively and humorous, and even grotesque, no coarseness, or any action approaching it will be allowed on the stage.

"The re-christened house will open tomorrow evening with the classical burlesque of Venus and Adonis, as illustrated in Shakespeare's poem."

CHRISTIAN MISSION SHELTER

The watchword "Vivacity Without Vulgarity" which Leavitt now applied to the Bijou also signalized its quick return to the doldrums. There was one more classical burlesque -- Pasha Pasha -- before it dropped out of the theatre columns again. In the latter half of 1891 it was utilized by various amateur companies, and in 1892 was opened for another trial by Loraine Hollis, who intended to produce comedies and society dramas. But two or three weeks sufficed to convince Miss Hollis that she could not make the Bijou pay. She presented a piece called The Tigress and another called Forget-Me-Not during the month of February, then abandoned the house. It was used for amateur theatricals for another short period late that year. One of the plays trailed across its boards was called Never Despair. The Bijou stood desolate again, despaired of, apparently, even by the amateurs.

When next heard from, in 1893, this ill-fated playhouse had become a shelter for the homeless, with a canvas stretched across its foyer bearing the legend:

"CHRISTIAN UNION MISSION

All are invited."

Said the Chronicle of February 9 in explanation:

"The auditorium where once the jokes of famous minstrels revived old play-going memories or started new ripples of laughter has been converted into a house of praise and prayer. The nucleus of a mighty movement towards caring for the guest unwanted was started by the erection of sixty cots, but now about 300 find shelter in the building. Some of them occupy the galleries and private boxes. In another part of the building a small number of women find refuge. Such are the hard times today manifested on the great main artery of trades and traffic in San Francisco.

Before the end of 1893, however, the Bijou had undergone one more transformation. It passed its last days as the Eden Musee, housing a collection of "realistic" wax works which "portrayed scenes and incidents made famous in history." It was razed sometime in 1894, as far as can be learned.

CHAPTER X

FISCHER'S THEATRE

(1900-1906)

On March 19, 1900, F. A. Fischer threw open the doors of his new concert house at 122 O'Farrell Street, between Powell and Stockton Streets. Six years later this house burned down, never to be rebuilt, but in its brief career it made itself a landmark in San Francisco memories -- although not as a concert house. Fischer planned to bring the noblest music to all for the cost of one dime, and probably would have scoffed at the idea that his name would be remembered chiefly in connection with two "German" clowns named Kolb and Dill.

Fischer's was a handsome house, as the Bulletin of March 18, 1900, described it:

> "The building is a two-story structure in Renaissance style of architecture, with a frontage faced with a buff-colored brick and terra cotta. Entrance to it is made through three spacious arches which lead into a semi-circular vestibule finished in polished mahogany, and a ceramic tile floor of artistic design. From this vestibule there is ingress to the ladies' cafe on the

right, and to a similar department for men on the left, while the center opens to the grand foyer which has a rich paneled ceiling with a brilliant display of incandescent lights spaced in its decorated plastic arches. The sides are wainscoted with highly polished Tennessee marble and a neatly moulded capping upon which rests a finish of polished mahogany panel work elaborately carved. In the panels are beveled plate mirrors which reflect the entire foyer and its artistic ceiling. The floor, in keeping with the vestibule, is of a special design in ceramic tile, while the doors leading to and from the foyer are double-swinging in character and set with beveled plate 'art glass ' . . .

"The auditorium, worth the price of admission every day in the year to view its magnificent works of art, is 52 x 75 feet and 45 feet high, with the galleries already referred to, above on either side and extending over the foyer and lobby. There is not a point down or upstairs from which a full view of the stage is not obtained."

Among the most admired of Fischer's effects were the paneled walls of the auditorium, each of which exhibited a lighted medallion of a great composer. The ceiling of the gentlemen's cafe displayed the nude figures of three maidens. The stage was good-sized: 52 x 25 feet, and 52 feet high; the proscenium was 20 feet wide and 25 feet high. George Mooser was named as

stage manager and August Hinrichs as orchestra conductor. It was expected that the patronage of Fischer's two cafes would more than make up for any deficiency in the price of admission.

HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL OPENING

The proprietor, already a standard-bearer of culture at his old Oberon Hall, ruled that gentility was to be the order of the day at Fischer's. The first concert featured nothing more violent than former members of the Lambardi Italian Opera Company -- the Signori Badarocco and Vargas, and Signorini Barducci and Pollettini -- in the fourth act of Verdi's Il Trovatore. Furthermore, it was announced that the house was to be devoted entirely to music and would "encourage and foster home talent." Only true music lovers were desired at Fischer's, and the balcony was to be reserved exclusively for ladies and their escorts so that "the fair sex will be as secure from the possibility of insult as in the privacy of their homes." This did not speak much for local manners, and evidently the policy was appreciated, for the Argonaut of March 26, 1900, reported that nearly 1,800 people were turned away on opening night.

Fischer was true to his word throughout most of the opening year, featuring the Lambardi troupe in excerpts from such easily assimilated grand operas as La Boheme, Mignon, Cavalleria Rusticana, La Favorita, La Forza del Destino, Rigoletto,

Martha, Faust and Lucia, punctuated by restful concert selections under the baton of Conductor Hinrichs. Refreshments being the main source of income, programs were calculated to set easily on the digestive system, and this policy seems to have been successful for some months. But toward the end of summer, novelty cautiously crept into the genteel halls with such performers as Baby Ruth Rowland, Deets and Don, Fox and Long, the Berlin Sisters, Cogill and Cooper, and others more at home in vaudeville houses than concert halls. However, Fischer's Concert Hall still buttressed its name with musical programs.

Music began to play a smaller and smaller part at the Concert House: jugglers, "singing soubrettes," "sketch artists," trapeze performers, "Oriental necromancers," and all the potpourri of vaudeville gradually transferred Fischer's gallery of culture into the most indefinite of entertainment resorts. Finally, on February 24, 1902, Fischer capitulated, called the house Fischer's Theatre, and opened with an "English music novelty" entitled The French Maid. Prices were 25¢, 50¢ and 75¢. The Chronicle of February 25 reported a full house and discovered that Madame Pilar Morin, star of the piece, compared very favorably with the famous Anna Held. The writer complained that the house did not hold many people; he could not know that the theatre was soon to be put to a use which demanded just such intimacy. On March 17 Pilar Morin made another hit in Little Christopher.

KOLB AND DILL

On April 7, 1902, Fischer's theatre entered the phase by which it is best remembered. Kolb and Dill opened in Fiddle-Dee-Dee with Maude Amber and Barney Bernard, the first of a long series of burlesques of the Weber and Fields type. For five years the team had been making its Twenty-Ninth Street Music Hall the center of amusement activity in New York, and their fame had spread. San Franciscans had never been able to witness these burlesques, though Weber and Fields had made their first real hit in San Francisco in 1889. Since there was no prospect of their leaving New York for some time, the management of Fischer's substituted the German-dialect team, Kolb and Dill, for Weber and Fields, Maude Amber for the beautiful Lillian Russell, and Barney Bernard to reproduce the Jewish smirks and mispronunciations of David Warfield. The experiment was more than justified.*

BURLESQUE AND SLAPSTICK

For 18 months after the production of Fiddle-Dee-Dee, Kolb, Dill and Company made Fischer's Theatre patrons chortle with foolery almost identical to that offered by New York's Twenty-Ninth Street Music Hall -- and for the bargain prices of "Two to six-bits." Perhaps Maude Amber was not quite so lovely as Lillian Russell; perhaps she did not make the spine

---

* See Vol. XIV, Burlesque, of this series.

tingle quite so deliciously as she sang John Stromberg's "Come Down Ma Evenin' Star"; but San Franciscans liked her. Perhaps Barney Bernard could not screw up his face with quite the comical pathos that distinguished Warfield, nor could Kolb and Dill ever be anything but distinguished mimics of the originals, but they rolled the local gentry in the aisles, and continued to do so for years after Fischer's Theatre was rubble and ashes. From April, 1902, through September, 1903, Fischer's was the center of frolic and satiric mischief as there followed in uninterrupted order Pousse Cafe, Hurly Burly, Whirl-I-Gig, The Geezer, Barbara Fidgety, Hoity Toity, Helter Skelter, Twirly Whirly, Under the Red Globe, Quo Vass Iss?, and The Con Curers -- all of them broad burlesques of current "masterpieces." There was certainly nothing subtle about them -- their humor was featured by bone-crushing puns and ardent kicks in the seat of the trousers -- but their boisterous and healthy sense of the ridiculous must have been a relief from the sentimentalism of the age which was about to die.

Others at Fischer's must not be forgotten: Winfield Blake, the "De Wolf Hopper" of the company; dancers Flossie Hope and Gertie Emerson; singers Harry Hermsen, Charlotte Vidal, Hal de Forrest, and Olive Vail; and above all the producer of these lucrative inanities, S. H. Friedlander.

AFTER 1903 -- WHAT?

With the close of The Con Curers, October 5, 1903, Fischer's finally broke away from the Weber and Fields monopoly

[illegible] Bromberg's "Come Down, Ma Evening" [illegible] Perhaps [illegible] Dorothy Parker [illegible] quite the com- [illegible] could fall and fail over [illegible] but [illegible] stories of two [illegible] and [illegible] Fitzgerald's Tender is the Night was rushed [illegible] for years. [illegible] Fitzgerald's Tender was rushed and [illegible] April, 1934, through September, 1935, Fitzgerald was [illegible] Crack-Up [illegible] as true [illegible] followed by [illegible] Lucky Jim, Burnt Bulb, Walt- [illegible], The Dreamer, Parnassus [illegible] it, Golden Slipper, Twenty Thirty, Buddy, The Red [illegible], Who Was Jack?, and The Our Dreams [illegible] of these [illegible] backgrounds of current "wea- [illegible]." [illegible] about them -- [illegible] humor [illegible] and student [illegible] in the [illegible] -- [illegible] in [illegible] and [illegible] of [illegible] Fitzgerald [illegible] from [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] for life.

[illegible] Wintfield [illegible] of [illegible] company; [illegible] Tissie [illegible] Lemma x, Graduate [illegible] Corner, [illegible] above all the pro- [illegible] Lundquist [illegible].

[illegible]

[illegible] Lion Hunter, October 3, 1937, [illegible] Fitzgerald [illegible] from the Lower and Middle economic

to offer a new musical comedy, The Paraders. The Argonaut of October 12, 1903, called it "an agreeable change," which doubtless it was; nevertheless it was the beginning of the end for the old Fischer company. Kolb and Dill remained for some time, but with the opening of Judson Brusie's local piece, I. O. U., on December 2, 1903, Flossie Hope and Gertie Emerson were replaced by the Althea Sisters, and in Barney Bernard's traditional place as "the Hebrew" was Allen Curtis. There were also two new players, Georgia O'Ramey, soubrette, and Ben T. Dillon, comedian. Further dissolution came with the opening on January 13, 1904, of another piece of local origin, The Beauty Shop, by J. C. Crawford, in which Maude Amber and Winfield Blake were replaced by Helen Russell and John Peachey. Only Kolb and Dill remained. They soon made their last appearance, on February 22, 1904, in Will Carleton's Roly-Poly. On May 3, 1904, after a disappointing season of musical comedy, Fischer's closed "for alterations."

SCIENCE CREEPS IN

The Argonaut for May 2, 1904, announcing the theatre's closing, spoke in wishful terms of great days ahead:

> "President Fischer and Stage Director Jones have gone East to secure the best singers and actors available. The policy of the house will be changed as far as the plays are concerned. Nothing but the funniest of burlesque will be offered. No less than six well-known

writers are at work upon new subjects, and three are nearing completion that are said to excel any of the Weber and Fields successes . . ."

The "new subjects" may have been all the Argonaut said they were -- but unfortunately, the public did not concur. First on the list was Judson Brusie's U. S., which opened on May 30, 1904, with all the new replacements -- Ben Dillon, Helen Russell, Nellie Lynch, Allen Curtis, Rice, Cady, Bobby North, Georgia O'Ramey, and Edna Aug. An item in the Argonaut of June 13, 1904, concerning this run mentions the "Radium Dance" in which "girls in pyjama costume appear on a darkened stage and appear to radiate light." Among the "hit" songs was "My Coo-Coo Baby."

Then came The Lucky Stone, on July 11, 1904, offering a number of new people, among them, one, Nora Bayes, a soubrette," singing "Follow the Crowd on Sunday." Nora Bayes, born Emma Goldstein, was to become a great figure in vaudeville. The temperamental Nora is remembered for her chief song, "Shine On, Harvest Moon," written by her husband, Jack Norworth.

In the rest of Fischer's career there was little of interest. An advertisement from the Evening Post of May 1, 1905, bills Tony Lubelski as general manager, and Henry Cahen as business manager. The theatre announces as its feature attraction "the man who mystified Hermann," one, Howard Thurston, "world's master magician." Admission was reduced to 10¢ and 20¢.

FINALE -- 1906

The history of Fischer's degenerates into miscellaneous acts. On April 18, 1906, the great San Francisco earthquake and fire turned the house into a heap of ashes. A later item in the Examiner of October 11, 1906, headed "Fischer's Theatre," began:

> "Upon the old site of the Fischer Theatre on O'Farrell Street, near Powell, the Fischer-Rebman Theatre company will erect a $75,000 hotel . . .
>
> "'We had intended to rebuild,' said Manager Henry Cahen of the company, 'but the 50-foot frontage was too narrow to conform to the theatre law which requires 10 foot exits on each side. We have secured another site for Fischer's Theatre and will soon begin the erection of a permanent structure . . .'"

But the only "permanence" Fischer's Theatre ever attained lay in impermanent memory.

CHAPTER XI

THE MAJESTIC

(1904-1906)

The life span of the Majestic falls naturally into two periods: the period of its construction and that of its actual career. The construction of the modern, fireproof building at Market and Larkin Streets took almost 20 months, and the theatre had been in operation little more than that when it was destroyed by the earthquake of April 18, 1906.

When the Majestic opened on April 18, 1904, it was still incomplete. Ashton Stevens wrote in the Examiner of April 19, 1904: " . . . the architect had miscalculated the time required for building a modern fireproof playhouse, and it was only by managerial grit in the face of almost uncompromising obstacles that the curtain was rung up last night -- just four weeks later than Mrs. Fiske's first-night at the Grand Opera House, where fortunately another independent management was only too glad to give house room to the most distinguished actress in the United States . . . " From which it would appear that H. W. Bishop, lessee of the Majestic had been even more sanguine than the architect and had tentatively scheduled Mrs. Fiske for his new playhouse at least a month before its actual opening.

Having missed one opportunity, however, Bishop was determined not to miss another. He signed a contract with James K. Hackett guaranteeing "house room" to Isabel Irving, a star only less exalted than Mrs. Fiske herself, and fulfilled his contract to the letter by opening the Majestic before it was completed. This, together with its "failure to make history" (in Ashton Stevens' words) during the advent of Mrs. Fiske, gave the theatre an air of early disappointment which foreshadowed its brief, frustrated existence. On May 9, 1904, Sarah Bernhardt also was scheduled to appear at the Majestic; but because of its unfinished state her engagement was transferred to Bishop's Ye Liberty Playhouse in Oakland.

GALA OPENING NIGHT

But while it did exist, the Majestic seems to have lived up to its name. It was a house dedicated to drama and sophisticated comedy, pledged to reasonable prices, and committed to a standard of excellence with which the theatrical trust could not interfere. Seldom did it fall below this standard, and never did it stoop to garishness or relax its dignity. Even the opening, as reported by Ashton Stevens in the Examiner of April 19, 1904, manages to leave an impression of the Majestic's essential character, although bare brick and iron were visible in the auditorium amid a temporary decorative scheme of foliage.

Having missed one opportunity, [illegible] Mr. [illegible] was never since met to see [illegible] with James K. Hackett [illegible] Irving, a [illegible] less [illegible] the Mrs. Fiske herself, and fulfilled his contract [illegible] opening [illegible] before it was completed. [illegible] to make history [illegible] during [illegible] of Mrs. F[illegible], [illegible] early disappointment which fore-[illegible] existence. On May [illegible], 1904, [illegible] scheduled to appear at the Majestic [illegible] management was trans-ferred [illegible] in Oakland.

[illegible]

[illegible] have lived [illegible] and sophis-[illegible] prices [illegible] committed [illegible] all below [illegible] dignity. [illegible] Examiner [illegible] the Majes-tic [illegible] and iron were [illegible]

"Belatedly, prematurely, but delightfully, the Majestic Theatre was opened for the first time last night by the Mayor, Miss Isabel Irving and her company in a dramatization of The Crisis, and one of the best natured audiences that San Francisco has ever turned out, new theatre or old, unfinished or finished. Manager H. W. Bishop, for whom the new playhouse was built by the William Ede Company, kept his pledge with manager James K. Hackett, whose attraction, Miss Irving in The Crisis, was shown as per contract in the Majestic Theatre on Monday night, April 18, 1904. An independent theatre for independent attractions, says the programme, and who knows but some vital local theatrical history may one of these days be traced back to that date . . .

"None but the clairvoyant could have popped his eyes at the makeshift finish of the Majestic last night and told what the theatre really is destined to look like. I am not a clairvoyant. I could see the rough structure of a round, compact, substantial little theatre that shall no doubt still be new when Market Street, near Ninth, is regarded as a down-town location. It is builded to last, and I don't know but the absence of the gilding and gingerbread only served to point to the solidity of the thing.

"Under the strongest electrical display I have seen in any auditorium, everything was as white as plaster --

indeed everything in sight was plaster, or brick and iron, save the stretches of red carpet temporarily running down the aisles, the palms and other greenery that made the entrance and much of the lower floor and boxes look like the groundwork for a flower show, and the chairs of green and mahogany, that are in place for just two weeks.

"For after Miss Irving's fortnight's engagement, the chairs go out, the scaffolding goes up again, and the contractors put back their men at the work of completing the decoration. This will take at least three months, and the six weeks engagement of Mr. Hackett himself, which was to have followed Miss Irving's, was last night definitely postponed indefinitely. The contractors want their money, which will not be forthcoming till the theatre is completed; meantime they are paying the insurance.

"Such sordid details! But if I must be permitted to 'write up' the first nights of the new showhouse, I must bring back the news, and while no doubt a part of that should consist of a brilliant description of the new theatre, I am, as I say, no clairvoyant. The best I can imagine about the Majestic is that it will be easily the coziest and possibly the handsomest theatre in San Francisco -- perhaps as handsome as the Grand Opera House would be if its owner would spend forty or fifty

[illegible]

thousands in decoration. For sheer structure the Grand is hard to beat.

"Mayor Schmitz' dedicatory remarks were more than the usual formality. He said, of course: 'Majestic in name, let us hope that it will ever stand for what is majestic in art.' In such circumstances that would have been a very hard thing not to say . . . "

STARRING ISABEL IRVING

There follows a paragraph of laudatory remarks directed at Alfred Bouvier, credited with first conceiving the idea of a first-class theatre on the Majestic's site; and then:

"Miss Irving ushered it /the play/ very prettily by breaking a bottle of California champagne over a mound of native yellow flowers and saying: 'I christen thee Majestic.' Then the thoroughly California curtain that is painted after one of Latimer's best 'redwoods' gave way to the photographers, who very swiftly executed a smell-less and smokeless flashlight of an audience that had no difficulty in looking pleasant, although the hour was 9 . . .

"It was, indeed, Miss Irving's effortless sublimation of a rather flimsy character that made the purely theatrical end of last night's opening a success. Every member of the company but herself overestimated the seating capacity of the house (which is not over 1,700

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

and snugly packed at that) and underestimated the admirable acoustics. They shouted. They pitched their performances in Grand Opera House key. Exaggeration was the watchword. But there is hope for better things henceforth in the fact that this fault was unanimous, with the exception of Miss Irving . . . "

The prices for this performance were $1.50, $1, and 50¢; the play was Winston Churchill's dramatization of his own novel, The Crisis. The performance was notable chiefly for the charms of Isabel Irving, who had begun her stage career when little more than a child in Augustin Daly's company, had played engagements for Charles Frohman, and had been John Drew's leading lady in several notable New York successes. For two weeks Isabel Irving packed the Majestic every night "with her sublimation of a rather flimsy character", then, her engagement over, she went on with her tour, leaving the unfinished house to the contractors and their workmen.

FORMAL OPENING

Some three months later, on September 3, 1904, The Majestic had its "formal" opening. Said the Argonaut of August 29:

"San Francisco's handsome new theatre, the Majestic, on Market Street, opposite Larkin Street, will formally open on Saturday evening September 3rd, with an elaborate production of F. Marion Crawford's historical romance, In the Palace of the King, which was presented

here with great success by Viola Allen. The production will be given by the Majestic Stock Company, the leading lady being Grace Reals, who for several seasons appeared in principal roles at the Dearborn Theatre in Chicago. She has also been starring in many attractions. J. H. Gilmoure is to be the leading man, and others will be Richard Thornton and Joseph Callaghan. Henry Stockbridge will appear in the light comedy roles. Eleanor Gordon is also a member of the Majestic Company. Robert Morris will stage the production. H. W. Bishop, who also conducts the Ye Liberty Playhouse in Oakland, is lessee and proprietor of the Majestic, and Oliver Morosco of the Burbank Theatre of Los Angeles will have the general management."

Judging by press reports, Bishop had gathered a strong company and intended to present a different play each week, with "bargain matinees" on Thursdays. So great was the advance sale of tickets that In the Palace of the King was held over a second week; it was followed by The Altar of Friendship, Captain Bassington, The Henrietta, A Japanese Nightingale (dramatized from Onoto Watanna's novel of that name), Hearts Aflame, and The Taming of Helen, each of which ran a single week. On November 26, 1904, the Argonaut announced:

"The Taming of Helen, one of the most entertaining and cleverly produced plays that has been offered at the

Majestic Theatre, will bring a successful week to a close with the performance of tomorrow, Sunday, evening. In Mizzoura by Augustus Thomas, will be the offering during next week, commencing with Monday evening. It is one of the best of Augustus Thomas' stage productions, wherein American life and character are so realistically pictured. It deals with the people of Pike County, Missouri, and ranks as one of the most heart-appealing, humorous and sentimental of this class of productions. The Majestic's revival will be on the most elaborate order, with full scenic embellishment, complete cast, and will be equal in every way to the premiere of the play in New York. J. H. Gilmoure in this production will portray the character role of Jim Radburn, the Sheriff, which is an entirely different line from that in which he has been seen in this city. Howard Gould will present the part of Sam Fowler, while Adele Block takes the part of Kate Vernon. The other members of Oliver Morosco's well-balanced stock organization will be assigned to acceptable roles. The Senator, the comedy made famous by W. H. Crane, is in preparation, and will follow In Mizzoura."

POPULAR PLAYS AND PRICES

The above is typical of nearly a hundred such notices, showing that the Majestic specialized in former New York successes. It was a popular house from the start; its dramaturgy

achieved and maintained a uniformly high level, demonstrated in a series of such plays as the Ella Wheeler Wilcox drama, Mizpah; William Gillette's comedy, All the Comforts of Home; Hoyt's farce-comedy, A Contented Woman; and, in mid-June, 1905, G. M. S. McLellan's Leah Kleschna -- which "made history," as Ashton Stevens would have said, with Mrs. Fiske in the title role. But the Argonaut, more conservative, merely stated on June 12:

> "The second and last week of Mrs. Fiske and the Manhattan Company in Leah Kleschna at the Majestic Theatre commences next Monday night. Mrs. Fiske is surrounded by a group of players that include John Mason, George Arliss, Charles Cartwright, William B. Mack, Claus Bogel, Edward Donnelly, Monroe Salisbury, John Emerson, Charles Terry, Frank Eastwood, Emily Stevens, Mary Maddon, and Gertrude Graham. The production from a scenic standpoint is notable. The management of the Majestic announced to follow the Fiske engagement A Piney Ridge, a rural drama by David Higgins, in which he starred throughout the Eastern States for the last five years."

Jack London's The Sea Wolf also came to the Majestic's boards that year in what was probably a premiere of the famous novel in drama form. An Oakland man, Joseph Noel, adapted the story with close fidelity to plot, preserving its original atmosphere and characterization; and Morosco cooperated by

[illegible]

assigning Frank MacVickers, his best character actor, to the role of Wolf Larsen. This was an event of considerable local significance, yet The Argonaut apathetically announced that The Sea Wolf would play the week of September 10 and then went on to herald the next week's production, an Augustus Thomas play called Alabama. In the Alabama cast was Reginald Travers, future manager of San Francisco's first little theatre, The Players Club, which he organized in 1912.

OUTSTANDING SUCCESSES

To these and many similar offerings, Majestic patrons reacted with pleasure if not with enthusiasm. But when an Australian troupe presented a melodrama titled Sweet Nell of Old Drury, tumult broke forth. The piece became an instant hit and played four record-smashing weeks, before going on to Los Angeles. The Post of March 8, 1906, in an effervescent notice heralding The Bold Sojer Boy, the Majestic's current attraction, took time out to announce:

> "Mr. Musgrove, the great Australian impresario, was so pleased with the success of Sweet Nell of Old Drury at the Majestic Theatre that he has written for more time and may return to the city in a few weeks, prior to his departure for the East."

Two days later the Post was able to add a cordial postscript to its tidings of March 8:

assigning Frank MacVichie, his best character actor, to the role of Duff Larson. This was an event of considerable local significance, as the Argonaut sportsheetically announced that The Sea Gull would play the week of September 10 and then went on to herald the work was a production, as Augustus Thomas play called Alabama. In the Alabama cast was Reginald Travers, future manager of San Francisco's first little theatre, The Players Club, which he organized in 1912.

OUT-TOWN'S SUCCESS

To these and many similar offerings, Majestic patrons responded with pleasure if not with overwhelming. But when an Australian troupe presented a melodrama titled Sweet Nell of Old Drury, tumult broke forth. The piece became an instant hit and played four record-breaking weeks, before going on to Los Angeles. The Post of March 1, 1914, in an effervescent notice heralding The Old Soldier Song, the melodrama's current attraction, took time out to say some more:

> "Mr. Lennox Pawle's great Australian impersonation, was so closely tied up with the success of Sweet Nell of Old Drury at the Majestic Theatre that no mention written for more time and may return to this city in a few weeks, prior to his departure for the East."

Two days later the Post was able to add a cordial postscript to the blurbing of March 8:

"Since leaving the city the Musgrove Australian Players, headed by the magnetic actress Nellie Stewart, have been meeting with a series of sensational successes in Southern California.

"In Los Angeles, where they were to play three nights, the houses were so big that the management arranged for them to play a return engagement of an entire week. There have been so many inquiries at the Majestic as to the possibility of a return engagement that Manager Bishop has prevailed upon Mr. Musgrove to return here for two weeks. On Monday night, March 19, this magnificent organization will again appear in their beautiful production. Sweet Nell of Old Drury, with the same magnificent details that characterized its former production here, is one of the most exquisite theatrical performances ever seen in this city. Seats will be ready next Thursday morning."

Sweet Nell of Old Drury and its particular bright female star became the cynosure of the Majestic's publicity. Columns of print were devoted to Nellie Stewart; her stage presence was excessively praised; her hair, her eyes, her fine walking were subject to innumerable panegyrics; her voice was eulogized; her least gesture was held up to admiration as if it were the pinnacle of Thespian achievement. By the time the company finally arrived to play a season of 12 nights and

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

four matinees, the gentlemen of the press could search their lexicon of laudatory epithets in vain for new expressions with which to glorify further either production or actress. Notwithstanding, the Post of March 31, 1906, in a voluminous review inspired by Miss Stewart's performance of Camille -- at a special request matinee during which she and the company abandoned Sweet Nell for the moment -- could still fan the flames of its extravagant admiration:

"Miss Nellie Stewart is an actress who has the infinite capacity for taking pains; she has proved this beyond the peradventure of a doubt by her interpretation of Camille, which was produced yesterday afternoon at the Majestic. Miss Nellie Stewart, who is becoming more and more a favorite with San Francisco audiences, is unquestionably a genius. The more her work is examined, the more clearly is it seen that this charming actress leaves no stone unturned in order to accomplish the best work. In makeup, in dress, in action, in voice, Miss Stewart pays an attention to detail which is both inspiring and convincing. In our Sahara of dramatic talent it is rarely that one meets with an actress so thoroughly accomplished and earnest as Miss Stewart . . .

"But in our opinion the last act of Miss Stewart far transcends in realistic art the work of Sarah Bernhardt, even before the grandmother's period of the great

French actress had arrived. The last of Miss Stewart's Camille may be the highest kind of theatricalism, which is in reality the highest kind of art. Art is only the expression of emotion, and Miss Stewart's art carries with it conviction even to the most unintellectual audience. The theatricalism of Miss Stewart is a theatricalism which is absolutely necessary to paint the story that the author had in mind. In reality, Camille is theatrical from beginning to end . . . "

END OF THE MAJESTIC

Two more plays came to The Majestic's boards: Bronson Howard's war drama Shenandoah, presented during the week of April 3, with two companies of state militia participating in the production as supers; and De Souchet's farce-comedy Who Goes There?, starring Walter K. Perkins who a few years previously had been highly successful in similar pieces at the Grand Opera House. Perkins had been announced for an engagement of several weeks at the termination of which Martin V. Merle's Light Eternal was scheduled. But on April 18, 1906, San Francisco was shaken by a catastrophic earthquake, and the Majestic collapsed.

The News of April 18 confirmed the finality of its end in these words: "The Majestic Theatre is almost a complete wreck, the rear end, on the 9th Street side, having fallen out, while the roof caved into the auditorium of the building."

Afterwards there was some talk of rebuilding, but this never materialized. San Francisco's "finest theatre" and one of its shortest lived had definitely passed into limbo.

CHAPTER XII

THE CHUTES

(1895-1911)

The Chutes, on Haight Street between Clayton and Cole Streets, opened on November 2, 1895, offering as its only attraction a "shoot the chutes," a boat on rollers which, it was claimed, attained the speed of a mile a minute as it dropped from a 60-foot tower into an artificial lake. Shooting the chutes was a popular sport in the nineties. The Chronicle of November 18 asserted that on the previous day 13,634 patrons had paid the 10¢ admission charge to the Chutes. Variety was added on Thanksgiving Day, when "Professor" Markesburg made a balloon ascension and parachute drop of 5,000 feet,

Balloon ascensions and parachute drops became regular features at the Chutes. Professor Markesburg, who hung by his teeth while descending, soon had a competitor, one Mr. Earleston, who dropped 5,000 feet hanging by his toes. But the professor had the last word: he made the drop suspended by his heels, releasing carrier pigeons as he fell, and triumphantly walked off the field uninjured!

The Chutes was now well on its way to becoming the successor to those gardens so popular in the seventies and eighties

CHAPTER XII:

THE CHUTES

(1906-1913)

The Chutes, on Madison Street between Clayton and Cole Streets, opened on November 5, 1906, offering as its only attraction a "shoot the chutes," a boat on rollers which, it was claimed, accelerated the speed of a mile a minute as it dropped from a 50-foot tower into an artificial lake. Shooting the chutes was a popular event in the nineties. The Chronicle of November 10 was rated best on the previous day 15,654 patrons had paid the 10¢ admission charge to the Chutes. Variety was added on Thanksgiving Day when "Professor" Marksbury made a balloon ascent w and parachute drop of 5,000 feet.

Balloon ascensions and parachute drops became regular features at the Chutes. Professor Marksbury, who hung by his teeth while descending, soon had a competitor, one Mr. Earlsdon, who dropped 5,000 feet hanging by his toes. But the professor had the last word: he made the drop suspended by his teeth, releasing carrier pigeons as he fell, and triumphantly walked off to [illegible] applause!

The Chutes was now well on its way to decorating the amusement zones of popular in the seventies and eighties

and the predecessor of amusement parks. Charles L. Ackermann was advertised as its president; Edward P. Levy, its manager.

On July 4, 1896, the Chutes announced a "grand opening" with the "greatest scenic railway on earth" to thrill those to whom the original "Shoot the Chutes" had become tame. It was announced that the "highest salaried artists ever brought to America" would appear in a new casino. These stars included the then-famous Sissieretta Jones, better known as the Black Patti; Aragon, "queen of the high wire"; the Marlo-Dunham family, "world's greatest aerialists"; Professor Fred Macart's Baboon, Dog, and Monkey Circus; water fireworks; and the Russian Court Orchestra, under direction of Julie Simonoff. Into this assortment of miracles children were admitted for 5¢ and given a free ride apiece on the merry-go-round for good measure.

RUBY ROBERT

In the Chutes' opening year one Captain Beach, the "Man Fish," ate, drank, and smoked under water; Antonio Pirri, from the Chutes at Milan, Italy, rode a "safety" bicycle down the chutes into the lake -- and immediately was surpassed by "Arion," who pumped his bicycle over a live trolley wire sixty feet above the lake. And to show that balloonists and cyclists were not the only courageous ones, Albert Richards electrified the crowds by diving 60 feet into two feet of water. But the year's greatest attraction occurred in December, when Bob "Ruby

Robert" Fitzsimmons, world's heavyweight champion boxer, illustrated his famous shift and "one-two" in exhibition bouts with Jack Stengler and Dan Hickey. Robert (Bob) Prometheus Fitzsimmons was called "Ruby Robert" because his first name was Robert and he had red hair. "Ruby" in sports slang was synonymous with "red."

THE CHUTES FREE THEATRE

Cycling, diving, balloon ascensions, parachute-jumping, wire-crawling, and fire-eating alternated with pugilistic exhibitions by Jim Corbett, Jimmy Barry, and Jim Jeffries. Patriotic holidays such as the Fourth of July, St. Patrick's Day, and Washington's Birthday were well exploited by the management, and Haight Street saw some startling sights indeed in those late, sunny days of a dying century.

On June 27, 1897, the Chutes entered the more circumscribed field called theatrical; the advertisement in the Chronicle for that day announced that "the Chutes Free Theatre (formerly the Casino)" would be open every afternoon and evening. The theatre at first featured only indoor versions of the events occurring in the open air, such as "Adjie" and her performing lions, the European jugglers, and acrobatic comedians Rand and Duch. The Chutes Theatre could better be described at this time as a miniature circus, though late in 1897 the "20th Century Bloomer Minstrels" gave a burlesque of Mascotte.

Offerings for the next year varied little from those which had gone before, though fewer outdoor attractions were featured. There were trapeze artists such as Oro, Rice and Oro; the midget Chiquita, called the "Cuban atom," only 26 inches tall; Irish comedians, contortionists, strong men, animal acts, fat men, buck-and-wing dancers, popular singers; Pearl Hight "the American Anna Held"; and on a higher scale the young violinist Pietro Marino, advertised as the favorite pupil of the great Ysaye. But as yet there were no purely dramatic presentations.

Early in 1899 the Chutes presented two sensations which eclipsed the usual run of variety offerings: an exhibition of the Passion Play at Oberammergau on Edison's cinematograph -- an early, crude motion picture machine, which in itself probably excited more interest than the actual play; and the famous "Little Egypt," who tingled spines with her "kootchy-koo" dance. The Examiner of March 19, 1899, announced rapturously that Little Egypt had danced before the Khedive of Egypt himself "with startling success," had traveled over the greater part of the world, and spoke seven languages. The lady's linguistic ability had little to do with making her the Sally Rand of her time.

CHILD LABOR AND THE LAW

The variety of entertainment offered at the Chutes was not unappreciated. According to the Examiner of May 2, 1899,

Offerings for the new year varied little from those which had gone before, though fewer outdoor attractions were featured. There were burnese [illegible] such as Gro, Rice and Grog; the mid-[illegible] quite, called [illegible] "Guinea grass," only 26 inches tall; [illegible] concertinas, contortionists, [illegible] men, [illegible] men, bull-and-[illegible] dancers, popular singers, Pearl Hight "the American Anne Bolo"; and on a higher scale the young violinist Pietro Morino, advertised as the favorite pupil of the great Ysaye. But on yet there were purely dramatic presentations.

Early in 1896 the Lumiere brothers had two sensations which eclipsed the usual run of vaudeville. Offered as an exhibition of the Kinetoscope, Edison's cinematographic -- an early, crude motion picture machine, which in itself probably contained more interest than actual play; and the famous "Little Coyne," who tangled spines with her "contortion" dance. The Examiner of March [illegible], announced regularly that Little Coyne had done [illegible] the Dragoive of Egypt in spite of "with startling [illegible]," and "travelled over the greater part of the world, and [illegible] languages. The lady's lingustic ability, indeed, had little to do with making her the daily Fad of her time.

CHICAGO LAWYER AND THE LAW

The vaudeville [illegible] Chicago was not suppressed. According [illegible] Examiner of May 2, 1896,

more than 20,000 people visited the Haight Street resort on May Day. Professor Markesburg, still convinced that the balloon was here to stay, added a lofty note to the occasion by landing safely on near-by Buena Vista Heights. Unfortunately, his balloon wound up in San Francisco Bay.

Three weeks later Manager Edward P. Levy found himself under arrest for violating the ordinance against employment and exhibition of minors. The arrest seems to have been lightly taken, however, for September 12 found the Examiner gushing over the cuteness of three little pickaninnies attired in Hawaiian grass skirts. And on October 10 a midget singer called Major Mite delighted crowds by a "telephone duet" act with Baby Ruth Roland (later to thrill a younger generation with her daring exploits in movie serials). Manager Levy was so contemptuous of the law that he staged an act in November in which Major Mite, dressed as a policeman, arrested two little Negro boys twice his size who were engaged in a "crap game."

During the early months of 1900 the Chutes, with no change of policy, continued the usual round of novelties, vaudeville specialties, balloon ascensions, and prize fight exhibitions. In mid-July an Eastern dancer, La Lista, appeared in "La Danse de Nuit" and "The Lily of the Nile." In early August the Chutes began in a small way to justify its name as a theatre, presenting a series of sketches, one-act comedies, and burlesques; among these were A Lightning Striker, a one-act comedy with

more than 20,000 people [illegible] the Hartlift Street resort on May Day. Professor Marksbury, still convinced that the balloon was here to stay, added a [illegible] to the occasion by [illegible] safely on water-by Grace Vista Heights. Unfortunately, the balloon wound up in San Francisco Bay.

Three weeks later Manager Edward [illegible] Levy found himself under arrest for violating the ordinance against employment and exhibition of animals. The arrest seems to have been [illegible] however, for September 12 found the Examiner quoting [illegible] of the little proximities editor [illegible] Hawaiian [illegible] charts. And on October 10 a midget singer called [illegible] "telephone duet" act with Max Lutz [illegible] Harry [illegible] a number per region [illegible] Manager Levy was [illegible] not in November [illegible] dropped [illegible], arrested two little [illegible] the [illegible] engaged in a "crap game."

During the [illegible] of 1[illegible] the Dunlap, with no change of policy, continued its usual round of novelties, vaudeville specialties, ballroom accompanying, and the light exhibitions. In mid-July an Eastern [illegible] La [illegible] "La Danse de Mort" and "[illegible] of the [illegible] Joseph Augustus Ke Clutus [illegible] in a small [illegible] to [illegible] theatre, [illegible] a [illegible] and burlesques; [illegible] these were [illegible] with [illegible]

Boggs and Hayward, and a travesty, Opera in a Kitchen, in which a Chicago team, Williams and Bissell, made their first appearance on the Pacific Coast.

NORA BAYES

Other features of 1900 were The Fairy Godmother, with Arnold Grazier and Helen Calahan; Mr. and Mrs. Harry Jackson in A Bachelor's Home; Wise and Milton's burlesque of Uncle Tom's Cabin and The Parson's Chicken; Isabel Henderson and George Evers in A Visit to a Widow; and the production by Harry Watson and Sadie Clayton of A Game of Chance. In the notices for November 18, 1900, is a name as bright as her "Harvest Moon" -- that of Nora Bayes, one of the greatest of all feminine vaudeville singers. Nora had just finished a week's engagement at the Orpheum, and her appearance at the Chutes was a sure sign that this resort was prospering. The year and the century were rounded out by the appearance of Natalie de Angelis and by a holiday production of Ten Days in Fairyland by a juvenile company.

The management of the Chutes showed little awareness of the new century during the following year and a half, offering the same type of entertainment that had proved popular in the old century. The billboards for 1901 advertised such attractions as Johnny Walen, in "an original specialty, the Dancing Drum Major"; the Golden West Trio -- Oro, Bernard and Oro; the Alcedos in a comedy sketch, On Parade; the buck-and-wing boys, Swor, McCreery and Swor in A Rag-Time Reception;

a comedy, A Summer Dream, with Kerr and Wilshire, "direct from New York"; Murphy and Hart; and the "English serio-comics" in Broken Hearts. The Chutes continued to profit, and on Christmas Day, 1901, managers Ackermann and Levy erected a giant Christmas tree bearing a present for every child in the audience.

THE OLD CHUTES SHUTS DOWN

From January to March, 1902, the Chutes offered little variation from its standard, the management being too intent on grander efforts to exert its ingenuity. The billings included a cat and dog act, a lady cyclist, performing bears, acrobats, aerial artists, dancers, monologist Billy Bryant, equilibrists, Alf Holt, comedian, and the Fitzpatricks in the comedy Matrimonial Venture. Then, on March 16, the Chronicle carried the following announcement:

> "The present Chutes will close its gates after tonight, having had a remarkably successful season, and established itself as public amusement. The management, finding the grounds too small to accommodate the large crowds, have purchased a new site north of the Park, opposite the museum, which is rapidly being converted into one of the most beautiful pleasure resorts in America. It will be thrown open to the public on May 1st."

The new Chutes, facing Golden Gate Park from Fulton Street between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, was opened as scheduled on May Day, 1902, "bigger and better" than ever. Its accent on size was stressed by the opening-day attraction -- "Colonel Edward Beupre, the French Giant, Absolutely the Largest Man on Earth -- 7 Foot, 10½ Inches In His Stockings." The new theatre auditorium was claimed to have a seating capacity of 4,000. Movies of a sort were offered, but these were side-line curiosities. The change seems to have proved successful, and the Chutes continued to be a paying institution for several years.

In spite of its new proportions the Chutes operated at its old prices (10¢ for adults and 5¢ for children), and did not enlarge the scope of its programs to a great extent. During the next two years the same cycle of vaudeville players and lion tamers, ice skaters, freaks, and frights vied with the new zoo for popular interest. Few names on the Chutes programs mean much to today's reader: the Petching Brothers, in their "Musical Flower Garden"; the Wilton Brothers, triple horizontal bar comedians; Tom Almond, Australian ice-skater and eccentric dancer; George Gorman, comedian; Frances Keppler, dancer; Fred Stuber, banjoist; Coley and Maurice Grant, colored comedians. All of these were Orpheum players and all appeared during the first month of the new resort's existence. Other attractions producing a steady flow of gate receipts were Sadie Hart, in a "novelty song and change act"; incubator

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

babies and musical pigs; Kocian, the Bohemian violinist; Captain Kendricks and "Sultan, the untamable lion"; "the wonderful scenic waterway"; and a realistic reproduction of the Johnstown Flood. But what was really memorable about the Chutes and places like it cannot be reproduced: the good-natured, jostling holiday crowds, the cries of children, the pale blue sky of late afternoon and the encroaching fog, the feeling of festivity as old as the market places of history.

No show of any dimensions was performed until December 18, 1904. On this date the Chutes offered Bothwell Browne's Japanese musical extravaganza, Princess Fan Tan, one of the currently popular productions, which required 300 children in the cast. This piece, purporting to derive from an old Japanese legend, was sufficiently spectacular and pseudo-romantic to draw crowds throughout the Christmas and New Year holidays. So successful was it that in May, 1905, the Chutes produced another trick from Browne's hat -- Cleopatra Up To Date, with Mr. Browne himself as Egypt's Queen. This production, on a slightly smaller scale, required 200 children, and the public showed a proper sense of balance by allowing it a mere eight-day run, with a four-day revival. Princess Fan Tan was back in the spotlight late in 1905, this time sharing honors with "Ruby Robert" Fitzsimmons and Bothwell Browne's Gaiety Girls in a burlesque called Twirly Wirly.

DRAMA AT THE CHUTES

In 1905 something a little out of the ordinary had come to the Chutes. Following Montgomery, Stone, and Cantor in a musical burlesque, John T. Shick and Company began on Lincoln's Birthday a season of dramatic comedies. This season, the first of its kind at the resort, proved surprisingly popular and ran into May, augmented by the regular variety acts and the concessions, chief of which was the new Circle Swing. Among the comedies presented by the Shick Company were A Secret Panel, My Wife's Mother, Jasper, Over the Garden Wall, Is Marriage a Failure? and The Irish Jubilee.

An even more radical departure was taken on May 20, 1905, when Herbert B. Chelsey appeared for a week in a straight drama, The Third Generation. The experiment, however, seems to have lacked encouragement, for after that week no more was heard of such nonsense. More in order that summer was the exhibition of "Chiquita, the Living Doll," and Annie Redline ("She is as Broad as She is Long"). Meanwhile the Johnstown Flood continued to rise and the Circle Swing whirled its shrieking occupants round and round, many feet above those puzzled patrons who were groping "Down the Flume" amidst a maze of mirrors. This was the Chutes in 1905.

Dread 1906 was to interrupt the happy career of the Chutes -- as it did the whole life of the city -- but not in this case with destruction and death. Until the catastrophe of April 18 the Chutes was going its merry round, with Bothwell

Browne's Gaiety Girls as the main attractions in such frivolities as The Merry Strikers, Quo Vadis a la Mode, and Happy School Days. For the balance of that year there was no Chutes, though the Fulton Street resort was far out of reach of the fire and suffered no serious damage from the earthquake. The Orpheum, whose building had been demolished, moved into the ample Chutes playhouse and continued there until January 20, 1907, when it moved into temporary quarters at Fillmore and Ellis Streets.

THE CHUTES ITSELF AGAIN: AL JOLSON

On January 21, 1907, the Chutes itself reopened, its prices now raised to 10¢ and 25¢. After its taste of higher things, it would have been too much to ask of the management to go back to the old nickel-and-dime status, though the concessions and zoo were still open at the old prices. Included on the opening bill was an obscure performer, described by the Evening Post of January 22, 1907, as a "witty black-faced performer." His name was Al Jolson.

In 1907 Al Jolson was only one clever performer among many, and they were all obscured by the excitement San Franciscans were experiencing over a place where they had spent happy days before nature went topsy-turvy on them, and where they optimistically expected to spend many more. The Gaiety Girls were there and the Circle Swing. There were peanuts and popcorn and beer, and a great $50,000 ice-skating rink, opened

on February 9, 1907. But a change of management at the Chutes Theatre was forthcoming, and with it a change of policy. Although this applied only to the theatre and not to the resort, the Chutes never was to be quite the same.

A performer dear to the hearts of San Franciscans, Alice Nielsen of the old Tivoli, graced the Chutes on March 22, 1907, appearing with the San Carlos Opera Company in La Boheme. The Chronicle of March 23 disapproved of such a "great bare barn of a place like the Chutes Theatre" for the display of Miss Nielsen's charms, vocal and otherwise, complaining that the occasional roars of Wallace the Lion unpleasantly punctuated the performance. But in spite of the "picnic surroundings" the critic was forced to admit that "Alice Nielsen came into her royal own" in the estimation of several thousand charmed opera-goers.

On April 6, 1907, almost a year after the fire, this announcement appeared in the Evening Post:

> "The Chutes Theatre opens today under the direction of H. W. Bishop and Will L. Greenbaum with a strong dramatic troupe which bids fair to make this one of the standard and popular playhouses of this city. The company is an exceptionally good one for a popular priced stock house and the stage is adequate for any big spectacular or scenic production. The opening bill is the comedy-drama How Baxter Butted In. There are a number

of clever specialties introduced demonstrating the versatility of these players, and a chorus assists in the rendition of some of these numbers.

"Ramsay Wallace, the leading man, is an exceptionally pleasant singer and introduces a new automobile song. Miss Thornton does that eccentric piece of work, 'Cheer Up, Mary,' and Miss Irene Outtrin, one of the most popular of the Bishop players, has been spared from that manager's Oakland company for this special production and is singing her own composition, 'Little Sweetheart Mine.' Charles Sellon, the stage director, comes from the East with a lot of new ideas. A special feature is the orchestral music under the direction of Mr. Hoff, formerly conductor of the opera company at Pelman Gardens, St. Louis. It is the intention of the management to produce the best class of melodramas and big spectacular and military plays."

Prices, which included admission to the Chutes ground and rink, were jumped to 20¢, 35¢, and 50¢, and all seats were reserved.

Catastrophe, with a touch of the ludicrous, haunted the opening days of the newer, nobler Chutes. A man named Charles Rohn, while attempting to crawl from one car to another on the scenic railway, was thrown free of the train and left hanging by his heels, screaming, as thousands watched tremulously. The machinery was stopped and the man extricated,

but the Call of April 17, 1907, reported that he had suffered a fractured skull and was expected to die. Such events could hardly revive the old carefree spirit of "before the fire."

In attempting to compete with the so-called legitimate theatres in their own field, the Chutes was taking advantage of the fact that few theatres had been rebuilt since the fire, and that those operating were doing so in makeshift houses. The management may have believed that the Chutes, untouched and at its old stand -- however distant from the theatrical center -- would have more traditional appeal than a standard theatre in an unaccustomed location; but it unfortunately did not take into account the psychological importance of habit. San Franciscans thought of the Chutes as a pleasure resort and place of casual variety shows -- "Something different every minute, folks!" -- and could not conceive of it as the home of straight "theatre."

WILL KING

The Chutes, under Bishop and Greenbaum, put on all the traditional theatre fare -- Bronson Howard's Shenandoah, Owen Davis' Nellie the Beautiful Cloak Model, In Arkansas, The James Boys of Missouri -- with such popular actors as Leslie Morosco and Ramsay Wallace; but they still could not impress the public with the idea that the Chutes was a theatre. The summer months found a dearth of patrons, with the Chutes again relying on its concessions, zoo, and ice-skating rink, and its

main theatre attractions limited to motion pictures and "illustrated songs." Balloon ascensions again were featured, the main protagonists being "Professors" James W. Price and Virgil Moore. During early fall, vaudeville acts were again prominent, with at least one performer remembered by San Franciscans today -- Will King, "the Hebrew impersonator," whose name adorns a popular coffee shop in the Richmond district.

The big attraction of 1907 was the colossal "Coney Island spectacle" Fighting the Flames, or The Fireman's Christmas Eve, one of those "realistic" shows which had delighted the patrons of Morosco's Grand Opera House a few years earlier. All the paraphernalia of an actual fire was exhibited -- real fire-engines, ladders, hooks, hoses -- and the thrilling moment of the show was heroine Sylvia Barrett's four-story leap into a net. Fighting the Flames, sharing the spotlight with various vaudeville acts and motion pictures, held public attention for several weeks.

DANCING AT THE CHUTES

The Chutes again closed for alterations early in 1908, and did not reopen until May Day. Among its new features, according to the Chronicle of April 5, 1908, were "electric automobiles, which run on an elevated half-mile track, a miniature electric railway for children around the flume, journey around the world in a boat-touring car, and Klein's electrical theatre." It was advertised that ladies and little girls

[illegible] motion pictures and "illustrated [illegible]." [illegible] assured us again were featured, as [illegible] "[illegible] Dance" [illegible] Vitagraph Hours. During early, [illegible] vaudeville acts were [illegible] prominent, [illegible] "[illegible] Famous Among the Famous" [illegible] Lee Frances-[illegible] -- Will Dick, "The Fabulous Impersonator," who [illegible] [illegible] -- Bloomers District.

The big [illegible] 1909 was [illegible] "Coney Island [illegible] Lighting on Fire," or The Eliseanel Christmas Eve, [illegible] "Kalisia" scene which had delighted the audience at Koster's [illegible] years earlier. All the paraphernalia [illegible] normal life was exhibited -- real fire-engines, [illegible], [illegible] -- and the thrilling moment [illegible] "Pain's Pompeii's four-story leap into [illegible]. [illegible] Pompeii, [illegible] the spectacle with various [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] public [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

DANCING & THE [illegible]

The Dance [illegible] closed for [illegible] early in 1909, and did not [illegible] until May [illegible]. A [illegible] the new features, according to the [illegible] of April [illegible], 1909, were "electric automobiles, [illegible] run on a [illegible] electric track, a mimic [illegible] railway [illegible] around the world [illegible] and Kinetic electrical theatre." It was advertised that [illegible] little girls

would be provided free skates by the management, and that a new dancing pavilion would be open every afternoon and evening. Among the early variety features offered in the renovated theatre were the three Wyatt Sisters; Howe and Edwards, comedians; Travelle, "king of all shadowgraphists"; Irene Hobson in a comedy skit, Just from Syracuse; May Archer, a soprano; the four Brown brothers and Doc Kealy in musical comedy acts; and Lucille Tilton, a female baritone! Admission was again on the nickel-and-dime scale.

That the Chutes on its former plan was as popular as ever is testified by the Chronicle report of May 10, 1908, that 50,000 persons had visited the resort the preceding week. Good vaudeville acts, many fresh from Orpheum engagements, included Elizabeth Vigoureux and Louis A. Imhaus in a sketch called R. U. I. (Imhaus had vreated the role of Passepartout in the original production of Jules Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days); Fred Sosman, famous singing comedian; Walter Perkins in The Man from Macy's; Maude Sutton and company in Cinderella; and Hallen and Fuller in a sketch by George M. Cohan, Election Bets.

The 1908 brand of entertainment at the Chutes varied little from week to week; the only difference in succeeding reviews was in the names of the performers. The main novelties were the concessions, among them The Great Wave, The Human Laundry, and other freak attractions. Balloon ascensions continued to draw, and national holidays brought the usual fireworks and patriotic speeches. But perhaps the biggest lure

was the skating rink, which was patronized night and day. The ice-skating craze during this period equalled the cycling rage of a few years before. Of all types of entertainment during the early century, this novelty probably was most prized.

Amateur nights were a prominent feature, but it is the professionals whose names are best remembered: True Boardman and Company in a one-act play, The Way of the West; J. C. Nugent in the comedy sketches, The Rounder and The Absent-Minded Beggar; and Pearl Hickman in The Twins. But during early 1909 mention of vaudeville is conspicuously absent from the Chutes' advertisements, which are devoted mostly to the skating rink. The management probably was intent on plans for its new Fillmore site. According to the Chronicle of April 8, 1909:

> "The lease made by the Chutes Realty Company with the Fillmore Arcade Company, March 1st, has been recorded. Under its terms the Chutes Company has leased the eastern 312' 6" on the block bounded by Fillmore, Webster, Eddy and Turk streets, for a period of forty months at a total rental of $30,000. This lease covers only the vacant land, the two story building known as the arcade, which faces Fillmore street, being excepted. It is spoken of as one of the signs that Fillmore street is going to be one of the important centers of San Francisco for a long time to come and especially as an amusement center."

THE FILLMORE CHUTES

Bastille Day, July 14, 1909, was selected as opening day on the new site, the advertisement in the Chronicle of July 11 boasting garishly of "San Francisco's Half-Million Funnery -- Everything New but the Name. A Solid Block of Joy Right in the Heart of Things . . . " Admission was 10¢. Policy at the new resort stressed outdoor entertainment, featuring such "daredevils" as "Desperado," a seeming-maniac who dove from a 70-foot tower, struck a polished wooden chute, and slid 25 feet without damage; "Demon," who at the top of the chutes set his bicycle afire and pedaled furiously on his wheeled torch into the waters of the artificial lake; and the high-divers, "Towers," and "Florence." A regular attraction was the showing of motion pictures, which were projected across the lake onto an outdoor screen while the orchestra cajoled the audience into the proper mood. A large cafe provided refreshments.

Freak entertainment and physical sensation were the ruling passions at the new Chutes. One of the diversions was the elephant ride; another, the appearances of heavyweight-champion Jack Johnson and middleweight-champion Al Kaufman and Stanley Ketchell in exhibition fights. A horrible way to make a living was suggested by German athlete Marino, who allowed a 70 horsepower automobile loaded with seven passengers to ride over him while he took nourishment. Music was provided in the special pavilion by the California State Band under the direction of George H. Bennett. There was no theatre

at the Chutes in 1909; the closest approach to one was the "Nickelless Nickelodeon," seating 400, which was opened on September 19 and exhibited motion pictures.

The Chutes could hardly have used its old name legitimately without its former concessions and "Coney Island Novelties" -- the "Human Roulette Wheel," the "Helter-Skelter," the Scenic Railway, and the "Double Whirl." Tragedy resulted from this last device on September 18 when 19-year old Edith Bevell was killed and a man named Haviside injured in a fall from one of the cars. The engineer testified before a coroner's jury that he stopped immediately when so ordered, but the jury, reported the Chronicle of October 2, 1909, thought otherwise and found the Chutes Company directly responsible for the accident. The jury recommended that the Board of Supervisors pass an ordinance providing that competent engineers be employed to inspect all such mechanical devices. The results of this recommendation were not disclosed.

Evidently the public demanded more from the Chutes than the new resort was giving, for on December 5, 1909, the Chronicle announced that the park would close for a month while a zoo and a class "A" theatre seating 1,600 were being completed. Also to be added was an aquarium stocked by the State Fish and Game Commission which would be the city's first aquarium since the days of Woodward's Gardens. The grandiose title of the improved resort was the Chutes-Zoo-Aquarium-Vaudeville Theatre. It was opened with a speech by Mayor-elect P. H.

McCarthy at 7 o'clock on New Year's Eve, 1909, and the year 1910 was ushered in merrily and noisily by a huge crowd which was allowed admittance to the grounds free of charge. The Chronicle of January 2, 1910, pronounced the occasion an unqualified success:

> "There is but one verdict in regard to the new and rejuvenated Chutes, thrown open to the public on New Year's Eve, and that is that a finer and more attractive pleasure resort could not be well imagined. With its scores of attractions, its compactness is one of its chief charms, and it takes the old-timers back to the days of the Haight Street Chutes, which was opened in 1895 and was the amazement of visitors for a number of years . . . "

Since the Chutes had moved from Haight Street less than eight years before, it is unusual that the Chronicle "old-timer" wrote so reminiscently of the original. But the catastrophe of 1906 had marked the end of an era. The Chutes-Zoo-Aquarium-Theatre was regarded as something of an anachronism, and for all its fanfare and new contraptions it was not to exist long.

Vaudeville acts, small-time and big, were again a regular feature, as were the old Thursday night amateur shows. Popular artists who had completed engagements at the Orpheum or Pantages Theatres could count on an extra week at the Chutes.

[illegible] year 1.10 was [illegible] which [illegible] The [illegible] un- [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

John Golden, later a well-known Broadway producer, and his musical comedy troupe played a brief Chutes engagement in April, 1909, and Melbourne MacDowell lifted the place into the lofty realm of the "legitimate" when he appeared the following month with Virginia Drew Trescott in the one-act play, The Sheriff and the Widow. The Chronicle of January 4, 1910, mentioned the showing of a motion picture adapted from James Fenimore Cooper's Leather Stocking Tales.

SOPHIE TUCKER ENTERTAINS

In 1910 a vaudevillian as talented and highly paid as Junie McCree was followed by prize-fighter Bob Fitzsimmons and his wife, who made as big a hit as their professional predecessor. Sophie Tucker, now "the last of the red-hot mammas," stepped onto the same stage with a crew of hoofers, song-and-dance men, and acrobats; and Jack London, imbued with the idea that "Ruby Robert" could act as well as he could hit, wrote a piece called Her Brother's Clothes which gave the prizefighter another triumphant week at the Chutes. An old ringman, John L. Sullivan, in October attempted to amuse audiences with his impressions of the recent Jeffries-Johnson fight at Reno, Nevada, and put on the gloves with his old-time antagonist, Jake Kilrain, though it is probably that a solid blow would have killed the two of them. Sophie Tucker returned in late November for another week, and was acclaimed "queen of the coon shouters." She was the last performer of note to appear at the Chutes.

SHUT DOWN AND REOPENING

Early in March, 1911, the Chutes ceased to advertise. No further newspaper mention is made of it until May 23, 1911, when the following notice appeared in the Chronicle:

"The grounds of the Chutes, which have been closed for some months were thrown open for the summer season yesterday and visitors to the Fillmore-street pleasure resort were surprised and gratified at the many improvements installed by the management. The water Chutes have been taken down, although the tower from which the boats used to glide still stands and is utilized as a point of observation.

"The lake has been filled up, and that part of the park which it primarily occupied has been transformed into a beautiful lawn and garden. A large music shell, built with a strict regard for acoustics, has been constructed on the Webster street end of the grounds and every afternoon and evening a military band of thirty pieces, under the direction of George W. Bennett, discourses classical and popular selections, and to lend variety to the concerts, Mme. de Witt, a soprano, gives vocal solos . . . "

The zoo and most of the concessions remained at the reopened Chutes. An addition was a reproduction of the Panama Canal which, in accord with the spirit of the age, was accounted not only novel but highly educational. Vaudeville

shows and amateur nights were continued, but the Chutes without the "shoot the chutes" had lost claim to its name. Were it not for the loss of life and property involved, the catastrophe announced in the Chronicle of May 29, 1911, might have been considered a fitting demise:

> "A fire originating in the Chutes restaurant at one o'clock this morning destroyed the Fillmore street side of the Chutes property, many stores, endangered the lives of over a hundred people, caused serious if not fatal injuries to several and a property loss running into many thousands . . . "

The Chronicle of the following day announced three dead, seven injured, and one missing, and estimated the property loss at somewhere between $200,000 and $250,000. Irving Ackermann, president of the Chutes Company, was quoted as saying that the theatre proper could have been opened that night were it not for the loss of the main entrance. The Chronicle said the theatre had been gutted before firemen arrived. Several other buildings and concessions had been partially or entirely destroyed. Most of the improvements were insured, but policies had not been transferred yet on several new structures.

ONE NIGHT STAND

In spite of his staggering financial loss, Ackermann remained optimistic, and on June 4 advertised in the Chronicle with admirable restraint that the Chutes was "only a little

bit scorched" and would soon be reopened permanently with "fun for young and old." A news item in the same paper mentioned the Chutes' reopening on June 3 "for one big time before complete restoration of the grounds is effected."

Unfortunately, this "complete restoration" was not undertaken. The Chutes vanished from the life of San Francisco, in which it had so long played a pleasant part. No further advertisements appeared in any newspaper and the city directory of 1911 lists the Chutes for the last time.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GROVE STREET THEATRE

(1892-1895)

"This week Oliver Twist. Next week Rosedale."

Such was the masterpiece of brevity that greeted readers of the Call's theatrical section on September 22, 1892. Here was palatable entertainment at prices neither prohibitive nor beneath the dignity of a not-too-substantial pocketbook: the Grove Street Theatre made its appeal to the man of average means, to the democrat addicted to drama rather than variety or vaudeville, to the citizens who would willingly travel as far as the "suburbs" in the interests of economy. In those days the region of the present Civic Center was outside the limit of the city's theatre district. The establishment thus advertised by Messrs. E. S. Haswell and E. J. Holden stood on Grove Street between Polk and Van Ness, and The Grove Street Theatre had been open for six months before the announcement of Oliver Twist and Rosedale.

Haswell and Holden ran a thoroughly undistinguished house, maintained therein for two years or so an undistinguished stock company, and staged a series of undistinguished plays at prices ranging from 10¢ to 50¢. It began with no fanfare whatever

and no publicity except the following uninspired notice in the Call on March 20, 1892:

"The Grove Street Theatre is the name of a new place of amusement about to be opened in the Western Addition with the following company: Darrel Vinton, leading man; W. J. Ellerford and Cyril Young, formerly at the Alcazar, comedians; P. J. Duggan, from the Princess Theatre, Melbourne; Miss Anita Fallon, leading lady; Miss Jessie Norton, soubrette; and Miss Eleanor Leah, of New York; Mr. E. J. Holden, 'heavy.'"

Beyond this there is no indication of when, or in what circumstances, the Grove opened. But such a theatre, judged by its location alone, must have been a daring enterprise. Time, perseverance, sensational attractions, indefatigable industry, and patience on the part of its owners were required to get publicity. The Call of April 3, 1892, remarked that "The Grove Theatre, near the Mechanics' Pavilion, appears to be growing in importance. Strogoff was quite a success there last week, and now the managers talk of making many improvements in the interior."

Rosedale, Strogoff, and other melodramas must have kindled a responsive warmth on the part of public and press alike, for the Call declared on October 2:

"This whirlpool of politics, generally considered at this particular time a maelstrom which swallows up

every other interest, does not seem to affect the Grove Street Theatre. Every night this popular and convenient place of amusement is crowded to the doors. Last week was devoted to Rosedale, and all things considered, the company gave Lester Wallack's composite play a fair showing. The Grove is one of the best appointed theatres in this city as regards exits (aggregating sixty-two feet), ventilation and fire hose. The house has a four inch pipe, connecting directly with the Spring Valley Water Company's water main. Entering some of our theatres, a visitor may be said, in view of the general inattention to precautionary measures by their janitorial managers, to carry his life in his hand. While smoking and drinking are strictly prohibited in the auditorium of the Grove, the managers, in order to accommodate those who patronize the theatre, have leased an annex and fitted it up neatly, where refreshments can be had at all times and a quiet cigar indulged in."

Notices became increasingly frequent. By November the theatre's place was so assured that Haswell and Holden proceeded with their projected alterations, extending the gallery along both side walls to form a "regulation horseshoe." This change, besides adding a formal arrangement to the interior, provided an increased seating capacity, accommodating some 2,300 persons "without crowding any one." The principle applied here already had been tried out with excellent results by Gustav

Walter at The Wigwam, by Walter Morosco at Union Hall, and by several lesser-known managers of variety houses. The results of this improvement were gratifying and, during productions of Hazel Kirke, Chispa, The Shaugraun, Money Bags, The Streets of New York, The Wages of Sin, and Woman Against Woman, a standing-room-only sign was displayed at the box office every night.

SHAKESPEARE SHARES ACCLAIM

At the climax of 29 weeks of overwhelming successes -- during which the original company had profited by the addition of newcomers, including James M. Ward and Kate Dalgleish -- Shakespeare's Richard III came to the boards. Said the Call on Decmeber 9, 1892:

> "The combined efforts of Boreas and J. Pluvius during the week did not deter the patrons of the flourishing Grove Street Theatre from turning out en masse to witness the performance of Richard III. This conglomerate tragedy, part Shakespeare, part Colley Cibber, has had, no doubt, more important interpreters; but certainly, even in the palmy days of the old Globe, which the divine William managed himself, more enthusiasm could not have been shown than was manifested on the occasion of the Grove's production. Mr. Vinton did fairly as Gloster, afterward the king, but is not fitted for such exacting roles as this is. The members of the company gave intelligent support. Especially was this the case with

E. J. Holden as Richmond. It is to be regretted that this gentleman received a painful but not serious wound in the thigh during the combat in the battle of Bosworth scene. Edged tools should be handled carefully, even in mimic warfare.

"Elaborate preparations are being made at this theatre for the elaborate production of the fairy tale Cinderella as a spectacle to be run throughout the Christmas holidays."

THREE WEEKS OF CINDERELLA

Although Richard III was by far the most substantial production yet staged at the Grove, it could hardly compare in pomp and theatrical circumstances with the production of Cinderella. Weeks in advance the costumers were busy preparing suitable finery for a cast of 64. The property man constructed, among other wonders, a "fairy godmother's coach" said to have been a work of great artistry as well as mechanical skill. The actors were drilled in their parts relentlessly until no detail of action or speech lacked perfection. Then, on December 26, 1892, the entire company paraded in costume through the streets -- led by a 15-piece band and accompanied by some 20 private carriages and Cinderella's coach-and-four. The fairy-tale spectacle made such a hit, inside and outside the theatre, that it was continued a week beyond its scheduled fortnight run. Said the Call of January 15, 1893:

"The three weeks run of Cinderella, or rather twenty-six performances, belongs to the exceptional cases in the annals of our local stage. Over 35,000 people witnessed this brilliant spectacle during the holiday time. In all probability -- the success of the management in the spectacular has been so great -- the patrons of the Grove Street will at midsummer be treated to another gorgeous scenic display called The Angel of Midnight, recently purchased, and this will be followed by revivals of The Sheep's Foot, Yellow Hat, and Red Gnome.

"Meantime, commencing tomorrow evening, Miss Georgie Woodthorpe will star for one week in Mme. Celeste's famous melodrama, The French Spy. The piece has the merit of age, at least, as a version of it was played at the Bowery Theatre, New York, as long ago as 1832, with a Miss Waring as Mathilde. From this date the bill at the Grove Street will be changed weekly as heretofore."

CONCRETE REALISM

The succeeding melodramas and their mountings indicate that the activities of the stage crew were as strenuous as those of the actors: they were called upon to create fires, train wrecks, sawmills with loose timber flying about, and even "a panoramic view of New York Harbor, with real rowboats, a steam launch and police patrol boats." All these effects

were presented so realistically that often the audience burst into applause for the scenery itself.

In February of 1893, simultaneously with its production at three other showhouses, Uncle Tom's Cabin came to the boards, with a cast of 21 and an army of jubilee singers and "cotton pickers" who delighted the patrons with their groupings on the stage. Nevertheless, said the Call of February 5, 1893:

> "Probably the only sound business reason for the revival of this worn and improbable melodrama is that put forward by Stockwell, not in favor of the piece itself, but that he has secured the services of the colored pugilist, [Peter] Jackson, to personate a Negro slave noted for his fidelity, piety and faithful discharge of all his duties. The Grove Street management has selected for a similar position a colored actor named Harry Hamden, who was born with the book, it is said, and has been slavery's frightful example all his life."

There is evidence here that the Grove Street Theatre management, despite its avowed policy, was emulating the sort of sensationalism common to the melodeons. Uncle Tom's Cabin succeeded despite the obvious trumpery. Without being either too clear or too critical, the Call of February 19 commented:

> "As predicted by an advance article in the Call, the 11th matinee of Uncle Tom's Cabin at the Grove Street

Theatre has proved a great success and worthily so. The management evinced judgement and enterprise in the production . . .

"This [Sunday] afternoon the German Stock Company will appear in A Kingdom For a Child. This is a new venture and one that ought to command the attention of German-speaking theatre-goers. Tomorrow evening, February 20, the great Bronson Howard comedy, The Banker's Daughter, will be produced with Mr. Frank Holleston in the lead, and a carefully selected company of ladies and gentlemen in support."

CLOSINGS AND OPENINGS

Whether the house continued popular for the remainder of the year is questionable. A notice in the Call of January 7, 1894, stated "The Grove Street Theatre will be closed till further notice," and the reason advanced by this journal was simply "too many partners."

Haswell and Holden, however, patched up their differences and reopened the Grove on January 28, 1894, with James M. Ward and Carrie Clarke Ward in a piece called Shamus O'Brien. An entirely new company, included Fanny Young and J. H. Todd, who also acted as stage manager. For a while it appeared that their prospects for a successful new period were unusually good, inasmuch as the theatre was packed nightly during the run of Shamus O'Brien; but early in April the reorganized playhouse abruptly closed again. The Call of April 10 reported:

"It is understood that Mr. Gustav Walter, proprietor of the present prosperous Orpheum music hall, has purchased the Grove Street place of amusement and will run it in connection with his establishment on O'Farrell Street; that is, the people appearing at the Orpheum will, by means of rapid hack transit, do a turn at the Grove the same evening."

The Call announcement implies that the Grove at last had become a variety or vaudeville house; and since Gustav Walter had taken it over one would expect it to flourish, as did every other enterprise he had undertaken. Such, however, was not the case. After a May engagement of Richard and Pringle's Georgia Minstrels which was fairly successful, box-office receipts dropped off alarmingly. Endeavoring to bolster them, Walter instituted another series of melodrama -- May Blossom, Monte Cristo, An Irish Exile -- starring the old favorites Darrel Vinton and Kate Dalgleish. But 1894-96 were depression years; attendance at all theatres decreased, and the Grove, despite low admission prices, suffered along with the rest.

LAST EXCITING SCENE

Nothing could avert the Grove's descent into oblivion. One evening a deputy sheriff arrived at the theatre just before curtain time and attached the evening's receipts, whereupon the Call on September 1, 1895, came out with this comment:

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

"There was a scene of excitement at the Grove Street Theatre last night. Deputy Sheriff Appel, accompanied by Attorney E. M. Cummings, swooped down upon the box office with a writ of attachment and secured all the receipts, amounting to $25. The attaches of the theatre learned of the raid upon the box office, but too late to prevent the minions of the law from grabbing the receipts.

"The manager begged the deputy sheriff to leave enough to enable the members of the company to get their breakfast, and after consulting with Attorney Cummings he acceded to the request. What led to the seizure was some trouble over the bar connected with the theatre. Recently E. F. Lydon purchased an interest in the bar for $85. The manager, after allowing him to take possession for a day or two, threw him out. He endeavored to get a return of the $85 without success, so he secured a writ of attachment, which was executed last night. The next scene will be enacted in the Justice's court, as Lydon has entered suit against the management for recovery of the $85 and damages."

The curtain rose the night of September 1 in spite of this brush with the law, but it is not known how many nights it rose thereafter. Sometime between September and December of 1895 it closed, and when it reopened on June 20, 1896,

under a different management, it had become the Park Theatre. As the Park it had a brief and indeterminate career. How or when the building was destroyed has not been recorded. The City Hall now stands on its site.

CHAPTER XIV

MINOR VARIETY HOUSES

A profusion of melodeons, music halls, and variety theatres deserve cataloguing in this volume for the sake of completeness. Such houses are grouped here because no single house is sufficiently important to deserve a chapter of its own--many have left no historical records beyond their names.

Dashaway Hall, on the south side of Post Street between Kearny and Dupont Streets, was built in 1861. Two circumstances contribute interest to its otherwise dull story. It was named after the Dashaway Association, founded on New Year's day, 1859, by 14 volunteer firemen who decided to join the water-wagon brigade, and according to the Bulletin of November 6, 1861, "dashed away, first for six months and finally forever, the cup that poisons all who handle it." The motto of the house, "Death to King Alcohol," was inscribed on a pennant which floated from the flagstaff, and the hall was ceremoniously inaugurated by no less a personage than Governor John G. Downey, who laid its cornerstone on November 6, 1861, using a silver trowel. Apart from being a temperance hall, with upstairs rooms for the care of reformed and reforming drunkards, Dashaway Hall's only claim to histrionic dignity lay in

the fact that it was the scene of innumerable plays given by the Dashaway Amateur Dramatic Association, whose members frequently were accused in the press of manhandling Shakespeare. Being, like all the halls of its kind, a social gathering place, the Dashaway also served for lectures, concerts, and "Promenade balls." Its usefulness was terminated by old age in 1893.

THE HIPPOTHEATRON

One of the many examples of theatrical impermanence during the period from 1861 to the fire and earthquake of 1906 was the Hippotheatron, a huge tent-pavilion erected at Seventh and Mission Streets in 1864. It lasted only a few months, underwent several changes of name -- New Hippodrome Pavilion, Wilson's Hippodrome, Palace Opera House -- and was owned by a man named Wilson, who staged therein at least one circus performance and some variety shows. The People's Palace (believed to have been at Eddy and Mason Streets) seems to have been the Hippotheatron's only rival. It lasted until 1897 when, said the Post of January 9, "Professor Gleason, the famous horse tamer, gave his concluding exhibitions there."

CANTERBURY HALL

In 1868 the city directory listed Chapman's Hall, 26 Montgomery Street; Harmony Hall, corner of Montgomery and Sacramento Streets; Lyceum Music Hall, adjoining the Eureka Theatre; McCue's Hall, 246 Third Street; San Francisco Volks Hall,

corner of Kearny and Sutter Streets; and Brook's Canterbury Hall, corner of Pacific and Kearny Streets. Only the last is more than a name; it received several notices in Figaro which indicate it must have been a variety theatre of some promise, and was described on March 6, 1869, as "the spacious hall in the basement of No. 824 Kearny." It apparently specialized in comedy, farce burlesque, songs, dances, tableaux vivants, etc. Ned Bingham managed the Canterbury; admission was free. On one occasion the house received considerable notoriety when Rose Bingham danced the can-can on its stage.

CHINESE THEATRES

Said the Daily Dramatic Chronicle on June 20, 1868:

> "The Chinese Theatre situated on Jackson Street [between Kearny and Grant Ave.] was the scene of a first class Celestial pow-wow-row last Thursday night. Captain Douglas was on hand, but not being well up in the Chinese lingo it was impossible for him to arrive at a clear understanding of the cause of the 'wumpus.' He had no trouble, however, in understanding that hitting a man on the head with an iron bar was equivalent to an assault with a deadly weapon, and forthwith arrested Ah Him for having indulged in the pastime of scalping Ah Pek with such a weapon."

This must have referred to what was listed in the city directory of that year as The New Theatre. With The Grand,

814 Washington Street, and The Royal, 836 Washington, it brought the total of Oriental theatres flourishing at the time to three. They were all frequently patronized by Americans.

VARIETIES, COMIQUE, ATHENAEUM

In 1870 Ned Buckley took over a building called Victoria Hall, at Pine and Kearny Streets, renamed it Buckley's Varieties, and opened it as a minstrel house. It was soon rivaled by the Theatre Comique, on Kearny Street, between Washington and Jackson, under the joint proprietorship of Johnny Tuers and C. Brooks -- both minstrels with considerable popular following. Buckley's house seems to have been extremely short-lived, but the Comique -- featuring such stars as De Angelis, Jake Wallace, Jimmy Murphy, Lizzie Harmon and Rose Durand -- continued to flourish until 1872, when Figaro on September 26 announced:

> "Elsewhere will be found the opening of a new place of amusement devoted to the variety business under the title San Francisco Athenaeum. The hall, formerly known as the Theatre Comique, on Kearny Street, between Washington and Jackson, has been leased by Mr. J. Church, and has been fitted up very neatly and comfortably for that purpose. The opening will be on Saturday night. A good variety company has been engaged, with Harry Thompson as stage manager, J. Church, manager and Charles Seymour as business manager."

206 Washington Street, and The Royal, 806 Washington, I thought the title of outdated theatres flourishing at the time to have. The, more so, frequently patronized by Americans.

VAUDEVILLE COMES ATHENAEUM

In 1890 the Beckley took over a building called Victoria Hall at Pine and Cherry Streets, renamed it Beckley's Varieties, and opened it as a vaudeville house. It was soon leased by the Theatre Company to Henry Burgess, between Washington and Jackson, under the joint ownership of Johnny Tuers and C. Brown -- both attractively with considerable popular following. Burgess's house seems to have been extremely short-lived, but the Company -- featuring such stars as De Angelis, Jake Wallace, Tony Hunsky, Lizzie Hanson and Rose Durand -- continued to flourish until 1892, when Figaro on September 26 announced:

"Blackburn will close down the opening of a new place of amusement devoted to the variety classes under the title Athenaeum. The hall, formerly known as the Theatre Comique, on Cherry Street, between Washington and Jackson, has been leased by Mr. J. Church, and has been fitted up very neatly and comfortably for that purpose. The opening will be on Saturday night. A good variety company has been engaged, with Harry Thompson as stage manager, J. Church, manager and Charles Seymour as business manager."

The destiny of Church's Athenaeum is a mystery, but one further item in Figaro on March 18, 1880, shows that the Theatre Comique was revived, at least in name, by Willig and Browne at some unspecified date prior to this notice:

> "Continual changes of faces and specialties are what the people want, and managers Willig and Browne make it a point to please their patrons. This week the specialty acts are The Two Pompeys, The Outcasts, and Chinese Servants, concluding with the original can-can. On Saturday evening Johnny Tuers, the old-time popular favorite, will make his appearance, and on Monday evening Louis Braham will appear. Six Kanaka dancers from Honolulu are also engaged and will shortly appear."

THE GREAT OXFORD

An advertisement in Figaro on May 30, 1870, indicates the character of The Great Oxford Theatre:

> "Under the management of Charley Vincent, who is sole proprietor, the Oxford, at the corner of Sutter and Kearny, has become one of the most popular places of amusement in town. The Oxford is regularly licensed for musical and theatrical performances -- paying $500 a year -- and has secured some of the best local talent, making up together a company of over twenty performers."

From other Figaro notices it is plain that the Great Oxford was popular during the short time it existed, there being

The destiny of Lorch's Athenaeum is a mystery, but one further clue in *Figaro* on March 6, 1870, shows that the Theatre Comique was really a music hall, by Willig and Browne at some unknown time prior to it is noticed:

> "Positively, concerts of voices and specialities are what the people want, and managers Willig and Browne make it a point to please their patrons. This week the specialty acts are *Les Two Lorenzos*, *The Cabbagets*, and *Chinese Serenade*, concluding with the original can-can. On Saturday evening *Jenny Lind*, the old-time popular favorite, will make her appearance, and on Monday evening Lotta Braham will appear. Six Female dancers from Honolulu are also engaged and will shortly appear."

THE GRAND OXFORD

An advertisement in *Figaro* on May 30, 1870, indicates the character of the Grand Oxford Theatre:

> "Under the management of Charley Vincent, who is sole proprietor, the Oxford, at the corner of Butter and Kearny, has become one of the most popular places of amusement in town. The Oxford is regularly licensed for musical and theatrical performances -- paying $500 a year -- and has secured some of the best local talent, making up together a company of over twenty performers."

From other *Figaro* notices it is plain that the Grand Oxford was popular during the short time it existed, there being

occasions when "hundreds of persons were unable to obtain admission." Admission prices, as in the case of most melodeons, were 10¢ and 15¢ and the bills were composite affairs embracing the whole range of variety. Of this theatre Figaro on June 28, 1870, went on to say:

> "It matters little whether times are dull or lively, the Oxford is always crowded. How Vincent manages to give such an entertainment and employ some twenty-six or twenty-seven artists, and still charge only fifteen cents admission, is a mystery, but somehow he does it. It must certainly be confessed that his performers are no 'slouches.' Miss Rose Vincent in the dance is excellent; Jake Wallace on the banjo is inimitable; Vincent himself is unapproachable; and -- for further particulars see programme."

But the Great Oxford also had a brush with the law, as shown in Figaro of December 23, 1870:

> "There seems to be something very peculiar in the proceedings taken against Charles Vincent of the Great Oxford Theatre -- something that would seem to indicate that a malicious or interested party is at the bottom of the affair. Yesterday Vincent's case, charged with selling liquors in the same building where theatrical entertainments are given, came up before Judge Sawyer, and that magistrate dismissed the complaint, stating his

occasions when "hundreds of persons were unable to obtain admission." Admittedly prices, as in the case of most melodramas, were 10¢ and 15¢ and the film was comparable artistic embarrassment while remaining [illegible]. Of this theatre Figaro on June 26, 1909, went on to say:

"It is not an little whether women are dull or lively, the orchestra is always out tune. How Vincent manages to close such an out-standing and popular home twenty-six hours weekly seems [illegible]. And still charge only fifteen cents admission. It is a mystery, but somehow he does it. It must certainly be confessed that his performers are no [illegible]. Miss Rose Vincent in the dance is excellent; [illegible] on the banjo is tantalizing; Vincent himself is inappreciable; and -- for further particulars see programme."

But the great Oxford also had a break with the law, as above in Figaro of December 26, 1909:

"There seems to be something very peculiar in the proceedings taken against Charles Vincent of the Great Oxford Theatre -- something that would seem to indicate that a malicious or interested party is at the bottom of the affair. Yesterday Vincent's case, charged with selling liquors in the same building where theatrical entertainments are given, came before Judge Sawyer, and that gentleman dismissed the accusation, stating his

reasons for doing so in a sensible and well-considered extemporaneous opinion.

"He said he had examined the premises of the Oxford, and it was his opinion that the managers are not violating the law, but evading it, for the saloon was attached to it on the same principle as saloons are attached to the California and Alhambra Theatres. He would therefore dismiss the defendants. But no sooner had Judge Sawyer disposed of the case than Vincent was again arrested for the same offense (another night being charged as time of violating the law) upon a warrant issued by Judge Stanley. The officer who made the arrest informed Vincent that he would have to close his place of amusement, until the case was decided, or else incur a very heavy penalty. We shall have occasion to allude to this matter more fully hereafter. So far as we are in possession of the facts, we cannot resist the conclusion that there is some other motive than a disinterested desire to promote the ends of justice mixed up in the matter. An animus has been revealed that is strongly suggestive of personal malice, and the deliberate intention to persecute."

It developed that not only Vincent was arrested, but all his employees as well. Said Figaro on December 27, four days later:

reasons for duties as it is possible are well-considered exemplarsmanship epithet.

"He said he had examined the grievance of Tom Jones, and it was his opinion that the managers are violating the law. But really, if for one reason was attached to the balloon, balloons are attached to elevation and Hinsdale Theatre. He would therefore strongly in judgments. But no sooner had Judge Sayer disposed of the case of Vincent was again arrested for the same offense (another night he was charged as idle of [illegible] law) upon a warrant issued by Justice Stanley. The officer who made the arrest had served Vincent, when he would have no close his place of assembly, until the case was decided, or else incur a very heavy penalty. He shall have occasion to refuse in this matter more fully hereafter. So far as we are in the reason of his [illegible], we cannot resist the conclusion that there is none other motive than a disinterested desire to promote the ends of justice mixed up in the matter. An attempt has been revealed that is strongly suggestive of personal malice, and the deliberate intention to persecute."

It developed that not only Vincent was arrested, but all his employees as well. Said Tiepro on December 27, [illegible] days later:

"Is it justice or persecution? We say nothing against the arrest of the proprietor of the Oxford Theatre to test the question whether he is violating the law, but why arrest all the unfortunate employees in subordinate situations before the test is complete? These poor unfortunate people who earn a scanty living at the theatre during these bitter hard times are arrested in a crowd, and ordered into prison unless they can give bail in the sum of $500 each. No charge of improper or immoral conduct is made in these cases, however. The sole charge is that the theatre is so constructed that there is a side entrance from the hallway or lobby by which the audience can pass into an adjoining saloon without first going into the street. The employer's arrest, in order to have this matter passed upon, cannot be objected to; but the arrest of his property men and other employees strongly resembles an act of persecution."

Whether it was ever determined that some malicious party or parties was behind this affair cannot be discovered; but in any case the Great Oxford benefitted by the publicity -- even though the patrons had to be content with ginger pop in lieu of strong drink. Shortly thereafter Figaro discontinued advertising this house for a period of two years, and when a last isolated notice appeared, on January 1, 1872, the Great Oxford was in the hands of Miss Amelie Dean. Its ultimate fate is unknown.

"[illegible]

against the [illegible] proprietor of the Oxford [illegible] are to test the question whether [illegible] is violating the law, but [illegible] also [illegible] engaged in a [illegible] [illegible] employed. These [illegible] [illegible] very living at the [illegible] the [illegible] arrest. In [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] consented that they [illegible] policy by which the audience [illegible] acting action without first [illegible] the employee's arrest, in order [illegible] passed upon, cannot be objected to [illegible] of his property men and other employees strongly [illegible] of prosecution."

Whether it was ever determined that some malicious party or parties had behind the affair cannot be discovered; but in any case the Great Oxford benefitted by the publicity -- even though the prisoner [illegible] pop in lieu of [illegible] [illegible] intrigued adver- [illegible] [illegible] and was [illegible] the [illegible] the Great Oxford was in the hands of [illegible]. [illegible] fate is unknown.

THE NEW LYCEUM

Late in 1875, Englehardt and Gardner opened the New Lyceum Theatre at Kearny and Sacramento Streets, announcing in Figaro on November 20:

> "This new variety theatre opens this evening with a full company of excellence. Among the attractions on the inaugural programme are a Highland Fling by Miss Georgie Brooks, a banjo solo by Miss Cherry Belle, Matt Kelly in 'La Statue Blanche,' Charley King with his banjo, the farce of The Merry Cobbler, Miss Emma Cooper with a violin solo and the sketch of 'I Duo Prestiditatori.' Harry Thompson will deliver the opening address."

The New Lyceum was only four months old, however, when it changed hands, coming into the possession of Messrs. Hocking and Peters, who renamed it Dopson's Variety Hall and dedicated it to minstrelsy. It is possible that a man named H. Dopson put up funds for the purchase and remained behind the scenes during Hocking and Peters' 15 months tenure; after a brief period of closure, Dopson took the house over and ran it as a first-class "minstrel and variety" theatre from July, 1876, until the end of that year, when all notices and advertisements ceased.

EGYPTIAN HALL

In 1875 there were two other houses; Grand Central Hall (presumably owned by the Lytton Dramatic Club), address unknown;

[illegible]

[illegible] long church and another across the [illegible] Lyme-
[illegible] of Lorrey and Jeremiah Brown [illegible] for [illegible]
[illegible]

"[illegible] church
[illegible]
[illegible] by Isaac
[illegible] Jacob [illegible] Daniel Daily, Jacob
[illegible] Samuel Daniel [illegible] who be-
[illegible] Lyme Cove upper with
[illegible] Freethinkers [illegible]
[illegible] Adjourn."

[illegible] Lyme [illegible] 1845. However when
[illegible] Congregationalists, [illegible] of Disciples. Hook-
[illegible] and Kilham [illegible] Hill and [illegible]
[illegible] to [illegible] relay. [illegible] a man named H.
[illegible] Kilham [illegible] and [illegible] behind the
[illegible] for [illegible] months [illegible]. After a
[illegible] [illegible] over [illegible] man
[illegible] Methodists [illegible] Thursday, [illegible] from July,
[illegible] when [illegible] cover-
[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] 1875 there were [illegible] Baptist
[illegible] [illegible] unknown.

and the New Olympic Theatre, at the corner of Third and Mission Streets. The first of these may have been a hall for private theatricals, but the second was undoubtedly a melodeon. In 1877 the following houses opened: the Liverpool Star Varieties, corner of Pacific and Sansome Streets; the Exotic Gardens, on Mission opposite Woodward's Gardens; Wood's Museum, at 522 California Street, and Egyptian Hall. This last named place, at 22 Geary Street, has left a meager record; it specialized in "strange startling, weird, incomprehensible, ghostlike, and mysterious" performances. According to Figaro of February 17, 1877:

> "This place of amusement is to be opened tonight with novel attractions. The hall is at 22 Geary Street, a few doors west of Kearny, and extending thence to Morton Street, having a frontage on both streets. The stage will occupy the Morton Street end of the hall, and that frontage will be used for stage purposes only. Egyptian Hall, like Pacific and Platt's Hall, will be provided with chairs in place of fixed seats. The entertainment will consist of dramatic and other performances, in which the latest London sensation, the production of weird and ghost-like forms, will be introduced. The manner in which they are produced is incomprehensible but their effect is said to be most startling. The opening piece will be Haunted Man, to be followed by an adaptation of

Faust, concluding with the laughable sketch of the Mysterious Inn, in which a numerous quantity of spooks will play the very deuce with Mr. Timid. In New York, London and Melbourne this class of entertainment, both from its mystery and humor, largely appealed to a family patronage, and several rows of front chairs will be reserved for ladies and their escorts. The price of admission is 50 cents."

During February and March similar notices appeared in both Figaro and the Post; then Egyptian Hall, as far as the record is concerned, was no more.

ST. ANN'S REST

Started in 1879 and doomed to a life of indefinite duration were: Tenth Street Hall, at Tenth and Howard Streets; New Lincoln Varieties, 818 Pacific Street; Scott's Varieties, Sacramento and Kearny Streets; Arcade Minstrel Hall, 108 Third Street; and Church's Athenaeum, at 25 Geary Street. Beginning the same year, but somewhat different in character, was St. Ann's Rest, at Eddy and Powell Streets. Smith and Butler were the owners of this enterprising establishment. According to Figaro of August 11, 1879, it was "so arranged that popular opera bouffe and comic opera can be given. A new stage has been erected by T. Andrews and some excellent scenery painted by G. W. Bell. The auditorium is made comfortable and inviting. The opening is announced for tomorrow (Tuesday) evening,

when Eichberg's charming comic opera The Doctor of Alcantara will be given with an artistic cast seldom equalled: Harry Gates, the excellent tenor, as Carlos; the doctor, T. Casselli; Don Pompaso, Alfred Henderson."

THE CENTRAL

The following were established between 1879 and 1884: Niblo's Garden, at Hayes and Laguna; The Odeon, 105 Dupont Street; The Eureka Music Hall, 527 Kearny; Central Garden, at the junction of Point Lobos Avenue, Central Avenue and Geary Street; The Atlantic Gardens, on Bay Street, between Powell and Mason; Blair's Hall (address unknown); The Standard Dime Museum, 807 Market Street; and Yellowstone Kit's Indian Wigwam, 817 Market Street.

The Central Theatre on Market Street near Eighth, a so-called legitimate theatre owned by Belasco and Thrall (later Belasco and Meyer), opened December 22, 1900. It specialized in a garish type of melodrama which earned it the sobriquet "the Bucket of Blood." In many respects the Central was like the Grove Street Theatre: it had a stock company, its admission prices were 10¢, 20¢, and 30¢, with matinees on Saturdays and Sundays; and it had a relatively brief life, nine years. A sample of its offerings would include such titles as: A Working Girl's Wrongs, No Wedding Bells For Her, Why Women Sin, Way Down East, The Old Homestead, Shore Acres, and, surprisingly, Faust.

The Central cast varied little during the theatre's existence. Herschel Mayall seems to have been the leading man for some five years; then Theodore Tamble succeeded him. The leading women were Edna Ellsmere, Juliet Crosby -- who had the advantage of being a native daughter -- and Grace Hopkins. James Corrigan played the comedy roles and Henry Shumer, the heavy.

The Central was noted for its scenic and property effects, for spectacles and sensations like this one reported in the Post of February 18, 1905:

> "He [the property man] has accomplished what many imitators have tried and failed -- that is of getting a locomotive on the stage that is lifelike and real In one scene the engine is used to cross the stage at full speed, shedding a shower of sparks, dashing through a mass of seething flames amid the deafening roar of whistles and the clanging of bells."

Occasionally, however, the Central resorted to pure variety. Said the Post of January 7, 1905:

> "At the Central Theatre next Monday night a decided novelty will be offered its patrons in the shape of a real old-time minstrel show. Musical jokes, songs, specialties, farces will hold sway. Danny Halifax will sing 'The Other Page Is Missing But You'll Have To Guess The Rest'; Ernest Howell, 'Teasing'; Herschel Mayall,

'Back To Baltimore'; and all the other members of the company will contribute to the evening's enjoyment by song or joke. Henry Shumer, the man who earns the gallery hisses, will sing 'Come Back, Baby' and will do several other things that should show his talent for comedy. Weston and Trau, the celebrated eccentries, will do a turn, and the Central Theatre boys' choir will be heard in ballads."

The house also made its contribution to special occasions, such as the Fourth of July. On that day in 1905, Chattanooga was presented. Said the Post's announcement of this play:

"The piece, as is well known, was taken from the blood-stained pages of history, dealing with events that happened in the most beautiful valley in the world where homes were desecrated in the furious tread of war; where heroes were made in a day and then wiped from existence by a cruel bullet; where noble women sacrificed noble husbands, sweethearts and brothers to the inexorable demands of war . . . The scenic investure will be far above the ordinary and will present, among other views, the Chattanooga Valley, the Bowling Green in Old Kentucky, the bridges which were bathed in heroes' blood, and the old mill by the river which was afterwards converted into one of the most formidable powder houses in

the world. The mad dash of a hundred brave cavalrymen as they sweep on to victory under the protecting banner of the Stars and Stripes is one of the greatest battle scenes ever produced on any stage."

Such was the kind of melodrama usually produced at the Central, although one interesting variation is glimpsed from this advertisement which appeared in the Post of May 16, 1905: "Tonight and all this week A Human Slave, showing misfortunes of a workingman and a terrible strike, with disastrous results." Belasco and Meyer did not advertise in the rival Bulletin -- a fact stated in an article accompanying the foregoing advertisement.

Animals, Camille, Monte Carlo, Tomboy Girl, Too Proud to Beg, and The Minister's Son were staged at the Central before Belasco and Meyer relinquished the house in November, 1905, to H. V. Bishop, owner of the Majestic. Under Bishop the policy of the house remained unchanged, but the company seems to have broken up, and Landers Stevens was engaged as leading man. Landers was a brother of Ashton Stevens, at that time the dramatic critic of the Examiner and probably the most feared reviewer on the Pacific Coast. It was generally understood that if a production could get a kind word from Stevens its success was practically assured. He habitually reviewed performances by his brother with ruthless savagery, without revealing their relationship, and this may have contributed

to the waning popularity of the Central. This playhouse escaped destruction in the fire and earthquake of 1906, but survived poorly from the standpoint of gate receipts. Melodrama had lost its appeal, and the Central had nothing further to give. Said the Chronicle on July 5, 1909:

> "Into the limbo of things forgotten has gone the rough-and-ready thriller of our youth; not so much our youth, at that, when you think about it. Jack Dalton is a corpse. He lies hidden in the wreckage of false situations, stilted heroics, claptrap flubdub. Melodrama, as the cheaper houses know it, has been socked with a club and then kicked in the head . . . The few final faint gasps came here in San Francisco only within the last year. The Central, which used to stand 'em up and pack 'em in before the fire with such works of art as The Queen of the White Slaves, Why Girls Leave Home, and that nifty exponent of frenzied dramaturgy, Bertha the Sewing Machine Girl, had to turn traitor at last."

In "turning traitor" the Central had become a house of opera and minstrelsy. Sometime during that year, without further notice, it quietly closed and the building was razed.

- - - -

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Asbury, Herbert. The Barbary Coast, An Informal History of the San Francisco Underworld. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1933).

Dana, Julian. The Man Who Built San Francisco (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936).

Eldredge, Zoeth Skinner. Beginnings of San Francisco (New York: The Century History Company, 1915).

Greene, Clay M. Newspaper Contributions, scrapbook. In possession of Mrs. Clay M. Greene, San Francisco.

Hart, Jerome A. In Our Second Century (San Francisco: Pioneer Press, 1931).

Jefferson, Joseph. The Autobiography of Jefferson (New York: The Century Company, 1897).

Lloyd, Benjamin E. Lights and Shades in San Francisco (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Company, 1876).

McCabe, John. "McCabe's Journal, 1849-1882," manuscript. In Sutro Branch of the California State Library, San Francisco

Neville, Amelia. The Fantastic City (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1932).

Odell, George C. D. Annals of the New York Stage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936).

Rourke, Constance. Troupers of the Gold Coast, or The Rise of Lotta Crabtree. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928).

Young, John P. San Francisco, a History of the Pacific Coast Metropolis. (San Francisco: S.J. Clark Publishing Company). Volume II.

Work Projects Administration. Theatre Research Project. Burlesque, San Francisco Theatre Research Series, Vol. XIV (San Francisco, 1939).

_____. Tom Maguire, San Francisco Theatre Research Series, Vol. II. (San Francisco, 1938).

_____ Minstrelsy, San Francisco Theatre Research Series, Vol. XIII (San Francisco, 1939).

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

(Published in San Francisco)

Alta California
American Courier
Argonaut
Bulletin
Call
Chronicle
Daily Dramatic Chronicle
Daily Dramatic Review
Examiner
Figaro
Golden Era
News
Pacific Monthly
Post
Variety
Wasp and News Letter

INDEX

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

INDEX (Cont'd)

E R R A T A -- FAMOUS PLAYHOUSES, Part 3, Vol. XVII

PAGE	LINE	IN TEXT:	SHOULD READ:
25	19	comtumacious	contumacious
36	24	first a series	first of a series
51	12	Hallie	Hattie
52	5	a man ho	a man who
71	15	January, The Ticket	January, revived The Ticket
112	3	(1884 - 1886)	(1884 - 1896)
122	9	Seenean's	Seeman's
124	6	above customary	above the customary
134	16	dircle	circle
141	15	has been settled	had been settled
162	18	Majestic announced	Majestic announces
183	15	vreated	created
188	22	probably	probable
195	13	Decmeber	December
199	21	company, included	company included
221		Barrett, Edward, 52	Barrett, Edward, 53
224		Dalgiessh	Dalgleish
225		Found ... Farrallones	Found ... Farallones
230		Hallie (Moore)	Hattie
231		"Other Page ..."	"Other Page ..." 215
233		Seenean	Seeman
235		Voyage in a Baloon,137	Voyage in Balloon, 138