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The  
ROMANCE  
of the  
IRISH  
STAGE

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J. M. DIAZ  
MOLLOY

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Mrs. Abington  
from the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds

THE ROMANCE  
OF  
THE IRISH STAGE

*WITH PICTURES OF THE IRISH CAPITAL IN  
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY*

BY  
J. FITZGERALD MOLLOY

VOL. II.

NEW YORK  
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# THE ROMANCE OF THE IRISH STAGE.

## CHAPTER I.

Peg Woffington at Smock Alley — Profusion of applause — The Beefsteak Club and its members — Authors and other geniuses — Politics spoil the fun — Scene in the theatre — Sheridan lectures his company — Terrible riot — Sheridan resigns management — The struggle of his successors — Sheridan reinstated — Apology to the town.

IT was on the evening of the 7th of October, 1751, that Peg Woffington appeared before a Dublin audience for the first time that season, when she played Lady Townley to a great house. She had long ago gained the favour of her own people, but now her popularity, if possible, increased.

Hitchcock states that her reception was such as surprised the most sanguine expectations of her friends and astonished the manager, who was highly pleased with his acquisition. “It is

impossible," he adds, "to describe the raptures the audience were in at beholding so beautiful, elegant, and accomplished a woman, or the happy consequences that resulted to Mr. Sheridan."

Scarce had the season begun when her patron and admirer, the Duke of Dorset, then acting for the second time as Lord Lieutenant, attended the theatre with his Duchess and the Viceregal Court. The play bespoken by him for that evening was the merry comedy of the Provoked Husband. To oblige the Court, the play did not begin until half an hour after seven; though to amuse the regular patrons of the drama, the first music was played an hour earlier. On this occasion the *Dublin Journal* states there was a universal appearance of the nobility and gentry; the house was illumined with wax lights, their Graces were received with uncommon testimonies of joy, and the prologue was spoken by Sheridan.

The newspaper already named, dated from "Tuesday, October 8th, to Saturday, October 10th," in a quaintly written criticism, gives praise to the favourite actress in the following lines: —

*TOASTED BY THE BLOODS*

“The celebrated Mrs. Woffington’s performance in Smock Alley Theatre continues to draw the most crowded audiences hitherto known. Her elegant Deportment at her first entrance, is a prologue in her Behalf. Her correct Pronunciation is accompanied by the most just and graceful Action. Her unaffected Ease and Vivacity in Comedy; Her majestic *Pathos* in tragedy shew her to be an exact Imitation of Nature without the least appearance of her Handmaid Art, tho’ at the same time possess’d and executed by that Lady to the highest Degree.

“These eminent Qualities have so universally obtained for her the Esteem and Applause of all the Tasteful and Judicious in this City that it may be said of her, in Imitation of Cæsar’s Phrase: ‘She Came, was Seen, and she Triumph’d.’ ”

The admiration she gained did not wane with the novelty of her appearance. Victor declares she was “the only theme either in or out of the theatre.” Scarce a day passed that flattering verses addressed to her were not printed in the papers; she was toasted by young bloods at the taverns.

Four times a week she continued to play before those who crowded to laugh with her in comedy, to weep with her in tragedy. A "profusion of applause" especially attended her performance of four characters which her audience had already seen played by all sorts and conditions of actresses; these parts being Lady Townley; Maria, in the Non-juror; and Hermione, in the Distressed Mother. Her representation of each was repeated ten times during this season and brought the manager four thousand pounds, "an instance never known from four old stock plays."

"Whilst in the zenith of her glory, courted and caressed by all ranks and degrees," writes Hitchcock, "it made no alteration in her behaviour. She remained the same gay, affable, obliging, good-natured Woffington to everyone around her. She had none of those occasional illnesses which I have sometimes seen assumed by capital performers, to the great vexation and loss of the manager and disappointment of the public."

What especially endeared her to her fellow-players was her willingness to appear on their

*THE BEEFSTEAK CLUB*

benefit nights, occasions on which they greatly depended. Certain of ever drawing a great house, she added in this manner to the incomes of four and twenty players during this season.

One result of her popularity with the public was her re-engagement by Sheridan at a salary of eight hundred pounds for the next season, which did not prove less brilliant than the first.

Mrs. Woffington now launched out into extravagance, keeping a coach and pair, and an open house where she gathered round her the choicest wits and merriest spirits of the town, who were equally delighted by her open hospitality and her sprightly discourse.

Freed for a time from pressing cares and perhaps incited by her example, Sheridan also determined to entertain good company, and for this purpose founded a club, known as The Beefsteak, which was eventually the cause of his ruin.

At this time there was scarce a theatre in the kingdom that could not boast of its club, at which the principal performer, "authors and

other geniuses, dined together once a week to talk over matters of common interest.

But this started by Sheridan differed from other clubs in connection with the playhouse, for no performers save the founder and Peg Woffington were admitted as members, whilst all expenses were defrayed by him.

To inaugurate this club he invited to dinner in the large room of the theatre about sixty well-known men, chiefly lords and members of Parliament. About half that number attended his summons, when they unanimously elected as their president the only woman amongst them, and accordingly placed Peg Woffington in the great chair at the head of the table.

Delighted by her position, she exerted herself to fill it creditably, and never was her humour more exuberant, her beauty more evident, than when she was surrounded by her royal admirers of the Beefsteak Club. It may readily be imagined that those of her friends who were not already members of the club, soon became its guests, amongst them being Dr. Andrews, Provost of Trinity College, a devotee

*A MERRY COMPANY*

of the theatre; Lord Delawar, "a man of large fortune, great rank, and many temptations," who at this period was supposed "to be near matrimony for the second time," Lord George Sackville, son of the Lord Lieutenant, and the soul of every party he attended; Sir John Whiteford, who commanded the Dragoon Guards; Lord Lucan, who performed to perfection on the German flute; Mr. Brockhill, who played very finely on the harpsichord, and Johnny Adair, of Kilternan, a famous fox-hunter and teller of good stories.

Now as nearly all Peg Woffington's friends were connected with the Court and the Government, and as at this time wine was never drunk without naming a toast, and politics then, as now, were the greatest concern of all classes in Ireland, the presence and conversation of the guests gave a tone to these meetings not intended by the founder.

Men differing in political opinion from the courtiers were occasionally bidden to the dinners, when they brought away with them news of the conversations that had passed and the toasts that were drunk; their purport being remembered

when the wit and repartee that seasoned them were forgotten.

That Sheridan should not only tolerate but support such meetings gave offence to a large share of his patrons. Stories prejudicial to his reputation as a patriot were repeated and exaggerated, his appreciation of a smile at the Castle levees was dwelt upon, until popular opinion turned against him and merely waited an opportunity to manifest itself.

When therefore the tragedy of *Mahomet* was announced for performance, it was considered that the long-desired occasion was at hand when general indignation could be vented; as the political allusions of the play might be pointed sharply to existing circumstances.

On the evening of the 2nd of February, 1754, when the tragedy was produced, the pit was crowded at an unusually early hour, and the suppressed excitement noticeable in the house, indicated that disturbance might be expected. The principal parts were taken by Mrs. Woffington, Sheridan, Snowdon, and Digges; and no sooner did the latter in his character of Alcanor deliver the lines:

“If, ye powers divine,  
Ye mark the movements of this nether world  
And bring them to account, crush, crush those vipers  
Who singled out by the community  
To guard their rights, shall for a grasp of ore,  
Or paltry office, sell them to the foe,”

than the pit applauded violently and demanded an encore. Digges, after “discovering dire astonishment in his countenance,” complied with this wish, and was again loudly greeted, and from that time forward the attention and encouragement of the house were given to the performer who uttered such sentiments, whilst the endeavours of Woffington and Sheridan were passed unnoticed.

Though the tragedy had been seized upon to display political feeling, the manager was not wise enough to set it aside for a season, but rather courted danger by announcing it for production a month later. In excusing this mistake when too late, he explained that certain friends of his declared they saw no reason why he should not reap some benefit from Mahomet, which he and his company had taken much trouble to prepare, because some persons had stamped it as a party play: and moreover

he had received many messages that it was desired, and unless performed voluntarily its production would be insisted on.

He was not, however, without fears for the result of his action, for he sent a general summons to his company to meet him in the Green room on Friday morning the 1st of March, the day before Mahomet was to be played a second time. When all had assembled he entered in a more than usually solemn manner, with a roll of paper in his hand from which he read a lecture on the duties of an actor, particularly respecting his conduct to the public.

In this he stated at great length that the business of a player was to divest himself as much as possible of his private sentiments and to enter into the spirit of the character he represented. But if in order to please part of the public, he should by an unusual emphasis, gesture, or significant look, mark out a passage in his part, which at another time he would have lightly passed, in that instance he stepped out of his feigned character into his natural one, than which nothing could be more disgusting or insolent to any auditor. Such a performer ought

to be looked upon as an incendiary, as one who threw the brand of discord amongst the public.

“To you, Mr. Digges,” he said in conclusion, “I must particularly apply, as you were the first tragedian I ever heard of who repeated a speech upon the encore of an audience. I am in hopes it was the suddenness of the thing, and want of time to reflect upon the ill-consequences which might attend it. You have now heard my arguments upon that head: if you think they are of weight I suppose you will act accordingly; if not, remember I do not give you any orders upon this occasion, you are left entirely free to act as you please.”

When he had finished, up rose Digges, who said the lecture was evidently levelled at him, and as the play was to be produced the following night, when probably the same speech would be encored, he desired to know how the manager would wish him to act.

Sheridan answered he would give him no directions, but leave him to do as he thought proper.

Not satisfied with this, Digges said, “If I should comply with the demand of the audience,

and repeat the speech as I did before, am I to incur your censure for doing it?" To which Sheridan replied, "Not at all; I leave you to act in that matter as you think proper."

Scarcely had the doors been opened on the following evening when an eager audience crowded every part of the house. It was evident that something unusual was about to happen. A general murmur drowned the music, but when the curtain rose silence fell upon all until Digges repeated the lines impatiently waited for; on which a deafening roar was heard, followed by a demand for a repetition of the speech.

At this he stood silent and disconcerted, when the cries of encore became more violent. Stepping aside, he made a gesture to request silence, when he said it would give him the highest pleasure imaginable to comply with the request of the audience; but he had private reasons for begging they would be so good as to excuse him, as his compliance would be greatly injurious to him.

No sooner had he finished than fierce shouts demanded the presence of the manager, who, standing behind the scenes, ordered the curtain

down, and instead of coming forward himself that he might calm the fury by explaining that Digges had been left free to act for himself, Sheridan sent his prompter on to the stage with word that the actors would continue the play if it were heard in quiet, but if not all present were at liberty to claim their money and depart.

The prompter was not listened to, cries for Sheridan preventing a word being heard. Being unwilling to appear, he declared, "They have no right to call upon me—I'll not obey; I'll go up to my room and undress myself."

To his room he accordingly went, where he was followed by some of his friends, who strongly advised him against laying aside his costume, and urged him to face and pacify the audience. Their counsel was unheeded by Sheridan, who had lost all presence of mind. When assured he would suffer no insult from the pit, he replied his fears were of the galleries, and excitedly exclaimed he was convinced the hour had arrived when he could no longer support the stage upon a footing the world had approved of for many years, and therefore he was determined to withdraw from its management.

Accordingly he disrobed as quickly as possible, left the theatre with sounds of confusion ringing in his ears, and getting into his chair was carried home.

It was now thought that Peg Woffington's presence would calm the uproar, and she was therefore asked to appear before the house. She willingly complied, but the sight of one so intimately connected with the courtiers only inflamed an angry audience, that for once refused to hear her.

As a last resource Digges came forward, when silence being granted, he explained that as Mr. Sheridan had not forbidden him to repeat the speech encored, he was not accountable for their displeasure. Had this statement been made earlier in the evening it might have calmed the audience. But their excitement being now thoroughly roused, they were not in a humour to be pacified, and still noisily insisted on the manager coming before them.

On being assured he had gone home, they declared he must be sent for, and as he lived at some distance they would wait an hour for his appearance. Messengers were accordingly dis-

#### *RIOT IN THE THEATRE*

patched to Sheridan, who positively refused to return, and no representation of the injury his property was likely to suffer in consequence of his perversity, could shake his dogged determination.

According to promise, the house waited an hour, and then, as the manager failed to present himself they set to work in wreaking vengeance upon him.

Two citizens described as "persons of gravity and distinction," rose up in the pit, gained the boxes, and with vast politeness saw the ladies to their chairs. This being done, the remainder of the audience fell to work. In the twinkling of an eye swords were whipped out, the upholstery ripped, the candelabra smashed, the benches broken with such fierce fury, that in less than ten minutes the house was a ruin. Not satisfied with this, several gallant young gentlemen leaped upon the stage and began to cut and slash the curtain "which was finely painted and had cost a great sum of money."

The scenes were next attacked, and on being left broken and hacked, a movement was made towards the wardrobe, which fortunately was

defended. Cries were then heard above the general din of confusion, demanding that the house should be set on fire, and speedily a grate full of burning coals was dragged from its position and placed in the centre of the box-room, with some broken doors and pieces of wood on top, and left to accomplish its work. This however was found by the servants of the theatre before serious damage could be done.

On seeing the mob attack the stage, Benjamin Victor hurried to the Castle to inform the Lord Lieutenant of the danger, when His Excellency sent for the Lord Mayor, who excused himself from attending as being ill of the gout. Away went Victor in search of the magistrates, at first to their houses and then to various taverns, but they were not to be found; indeed, these worthies were supposed to conceal themselves designedly; so that it was past one in the morning before any authority above a deputy-constable could be found, by which time the wreckers had done their ill-work and retired satisfied to their homes.

The position Sheridan had laboured for years to attain was destroyed in a night; and not

### *SHERIDAN RETIRES*

only was his property ruined, but he lost the favour and protection of the town by which he had been supported during a previous riot. Nay, he was even looked on with coldness by the courtiers who had been the cause of his unpopularity, they assuring him he should have “stroked the growling lion, and not have gored him.”

Always just and generous, Sheridan was unwilling that his own misfortunes should be the cause of injury to his company, and therefore after the theatre had undergone some temporary repairs, he gave its use to his company for their benefit nights without any profit to himself. Peg Woffington was the first to avail herself of this generosity. On the 18th of March, 1754, by command of the Duke and Duchess of Dorset, she appeared in *All For Love*; and notwithstanding her connection with the Beefsteak Club, was welcomed by a crowded house.

Having determined to retire from management, Sheridan let his theatre and wardrobe for two years to his treasurer, Benjamin Victor, and one of his company, Snowdon, they agreeing to pay him five pounds

for every acting night, and to advance two thousand pounds upon mortgage of the wardrobe, then valued at double that sum. And this being settled, Sheridan quitted Ireland and entered into an engagement with Rich, of Covent Garden, where he appeared in his favourite characters.

Victor immediately set about repairing the theatre, whilst his partner went to London that he might engage acceptable talent for their new venture. Peg Woffington, who remained in Dublin until May, expected a re-engagement at her former salary of eight hundred pounds for the season, but Victor considered it would be for their mutual benefit that she should play in London the following winter — novelty being the very spirit and life of public entertainments; upon which hint she left Ireland.

Snowdon offered Barry a salary of eight hundred pounds and Miss Nossiter three hundred. The former was quite content to accept this sum for himself, but insisted that the actress, in whom he was much interested, should receive five hundred, which was eventually given her. Mrs. Gregory, an actress of

some merit, was also engaged for three hundred pounds for the season, and with this talent, and that of the company already belonging to Smock Alley, the new management made its bid for public favour.

The theatre opened on the 7th of October, 1754, with the comedy of *The Suspicious Husband*, and the town seemed very well satisfied with the performers. For six weeks all went well, but at the end of that time, when Snowdon, after the custom of the day, gave out the play next to be performed, about twenty voices in the pit called for *Mahomet*. On this, he begged leave to retire, which, as it was supposed he desired to consult his partner, was granted him. On returning, he addressed the house, saying, “Gentlemen, I am to ask if it is the unanimous request of this audience that the tragedy of *Mahomet* be performed?” In reply, the score of voices declared it was. He then told them that as Mrs. Woffington, Sheridan, and Digges, who had taken the three principal characters of that play, were absent, some time would be required for the present company to

study them, and he must ask them to allow a fortnight for that purpose.

This reasonable request being granted, the tragedy was prepared, though neither Barry nor Mrs. Gregory took part in the production. It was now feared that party spirit might become rampant again, and bring trouble on the management. Fortunately this dread was without foundation, for on the evening *Mahomet* was acted there was but a poor attendance, only sixty pounds being taken at the doors; and the speech already quoted having been encored and repeated, the remainder of the tragedy was gone through without further interruption.

Later, those who had demanded the play showed dissatisfaction that Barry did not sustain the principal part, and sent a deputation to the managers requesting they would permit him to appear in the tragedy. This they refused on the ground that he was then studying *Alexander*, and *Lear*, parts it was hoped would turn to the advantage of his employers, who were paying him a great salary.

As this explanation seemed justifiable, the

request was not insisted upon, though the performance of the tragedy was again demanded. On the evening on which it was promised, eight or ten young gentlemen, great lovers of liberty, entered the pit, but having sat there in solitude for some time, they were willing to take their money back and seek amusement elsewhere. In this way evaporated the spirit of faction that had a little while before brought ruin to Tom Sheridan.

Barry invariably drew full houses whenever he played. His Romeo was still considered fascinating; as Macbeth, Henry V., Hamlet, Othello, and King John he was greatly admired; whilst his Lear, now acted by him for the first time, was regarded with great interest. Uncertain of his powers in this difficult part, he asked Benjamin Victor for his opinion. This the manager honestly gave, saying that his defects were owing to want of experience in the part, and inattention, that he did little more in the first scene than look the character well; “a more firm and nervous tone of voice is wanting to support the dignity of Lear, in those little yet important passages —

the angry part with Kent was well executed — so was the scene which ends with the curse, but it will be more complete the next time that you speak it. We shall pass on to the mad scenes where Garrick is indeed inimitable, from his peculiar command of the muscles, his spirit, and well settled business; with you there was too great a languor, which seemed (as it really was) as if for want of practice you had not sufficiently digested the business. And in the capital scene, where Lear enters crowned with straw, the transitions were not marked strongly enough — a variety of looks and tones are wanting to mark every passage of that fine scene; it must also be assisted by a vague, wild, unsettled eye, which you wanted and must practise. The couch scene, the recovery of your senses, and in particular the transports of Lear at the restoration, were exceedingly well executed."

An uneventful season ended on the 9th of June, when Barry and Miss Nossiter returned to England. On balancing their accounts, the managers found themselves "very little more than saved from mischief."

As a result they were determined not to give great salaries to their actors during their second season, and satisfied themselves by re-engaging Mrs. Gregory and giving a share in their profits to Henry Mossop, who, since making his *début* in Dublin, had gained considerable reputation in London, and was believed to have a future before him. On all nights he played, the receipts of the house, after forty pounds had been deducted for expenses, were divided into three parts, two of which went to the management, and one to Mossop, who was likewise entitled to a benefit.

Variety was introduced to the stage when "a young gentleman of the name of Fitzpatrick played Romeo," to the amusement of the town; and later, when Dr. Arne, having under his direction an excellent company of vocal performers, gave three operas, which were performed ten nights each. Finally, in the spring, came an excellent actor named Henry Woodward, who secured permission from the Drury Lane managers to play in nine comedies at Smock Alley. His engagement, like that of Mossop's was on shares, when he cleared about two hundred pounds.

At the termination of the two years for which the managers had rented the theatre, they resolved to retire from a position they found full of anxiety, care, and danger. And time having softened the bitter feelings towards Sheridan during his absence, regret began to prevail for the indignity and loss he had suffered. A large share of the public now hoped he would return and resume his management. This change was welcomed by Sheridan, who had meanwhile opened an academy for the higher education of youth. On his part he was willing to forget and forgive the indignities he had received, and to take upon himself the responsibilities of management once more.

Accordingly, Snowdon resumed his place as member of the company, and Victor became treasurer as formerly, whilst Sheridan, with characteristic liberality, renewed the wardrobe, and employed a native scene-painter named Lewis to decorate Smock Alley Theatre and prepare fresh sets of scenes badly needed.

The theatre opened with every prospect of success on the 18th of October, 1756, with the

#### *DEMANDING AN APOLOGY*

comedy of *The Busybody*. The manager did not play on this occasion, reserving his appearance for another time. Previous to this opening night, a rumour gained ground that he would be expected to make a public apology before he was allowed to perform. From this it was seen that party spirit was not really dead, as had been hoped, and that a desire was abroad to pain and humiliate a man to whom redress and satisfaction were due.

The house was crowded in every part, and the first act ended with applause, but when the curtain went up on the second act, some voices in the pit were heard calling on the manager and demanding an apology. The cry was taken up by the galleries, and Dexter, the actor then on the stage, was interrupted in his business. Eventually he was obliged to retire, and consult with Victor on the course to be taken. The latter desired him to state that Mr. Sheridan was ill of a cold that confined him to his apartments, but that on his recovery there was no doubt he would give all the satisfaction desired.

This, however, would not content the noisy

faction that disturbed the house, for they insisted that Dexter should see the manager and bring a positive promise that he would apologize to them. Therefore that actor and Victor went to Sheridan and told him what had taken place, adding that the audience would continue to prevent the performance until he had complied with their demand. The manager was greatly disturbed, but seeing there was no choice between humiliation and ruin left to him, he bade Dexter state that when sufficiently recovered he would make an apology on the stage, and that public notice of the occasion should be given on the bills and in the advertisements.

This message was received with applause, for victory had been gained over a player whose utmost endeavour had been to give them refined and elevating entertainments.

When next day Sheridan consulted with Victor regarding the apology, the latter, as he narrates, advised him "To give them the most pompous one I could carefully compose, and make them pay for it; that they must suppose him to be too much affected on that solemn

### *PAIN AND PROFIT*

occasion to be able to perform any character that night, and therefore I would give extraordinary notice of it in the play bills," announcing at the same time some comedy that in ordinary cases would not draw sufficient money to pay expenses.

In this way pain was to be turned to profit.

When Sheridan was perfectly recovered, the night of the 25th of October was fixed for his public apology. To witness his humiliation was a sight so desired, that the house was packed soon after the doors were opened. In due time the curtain was raised, when a spectacle was seen such as never had been witnessed in a theatre before. With a slow step and dignified action Sheridan advanced, carrying in his hand a written speech, lest in the confusion of the moment his memory might not serve him.

With clear diction and in the midst of profound silence he began his apology, to which his patrons attentively listened, unwilling that a single word of this painful peroration should be lost to their hungry ears. Every sentence carried weight — what might have been abasing humiliation became imposing dignity,

touched with simple pathos, so that tears rushed to the eyes of many men present, and a feeling of shame grew prevalent. As he ended, a storm of applause shook the house, and poor compensation though it was, he welcomed it as a sign of peace. "Your goodness to me at this important crisis," he said, "has so deeply affected me that I want power to express myself; my future actions shall show my gratitude," a speech that was greeted with yet louder demonstrations of satisfaction.

A few nights later when he appeared as Hamlet, a crowded house showed him every appreciation, and by its enthusiasm proved that he was again restored to the favour of a fickle public.

## CHAPTER II.

The humours of the gods—An unrehearsed scene—Barry's scheme for a new theatre—Foote diverts the town—Young Tate Wilkinson—The horrors of crossing the Channel—A first appearance—Mimicking the master—Sheridan becomes indignant—Wilkinson declares himself in the wrong box—A fine benefit.

THROUGHOUT the winter of 1756 Sheridan appeared in his favourite parts, supported by a company that could not boast of any singular merit. The heaviness of his performances were, however, relieved by the capering between the acts of two dancers, whose united salaries amounted to a thousand pounds for the season. His audiences seemed pretty sure to extract fun from even the dreariest representation.

In the staging of Hamlet particular attention always was paid to the crowing of the cock which warns the ghost of approaching day, as his efforts were sure to be praised or blamed by the gods. One night, when a certain Jimmy

Murphy imitated the bird and failed to please his patrons, Sheridan's sublime periods were interrupted by a voice in the gallery, saying, "Arrah, thin, that's a damn bad cock." "No, he isn't," responded another god, "sure, he's a hen." The better to please the house, there were generally half a dozen men employed behind the scenes to crow, who on the first note that warned the ghost, set up an answering chorus, to the music of which and the approbation of the audience, the troubled spirit retired.

Failing in his impersonation of a cock, Jimmy Murphy was entrusted with the part of the ghost, and summoned to a rehearsal on a certain morning. When he came he was found to have a piece of paper sticking out of one ear, and on being asked the cause, said, "I wrote out my part, and here it is in my ear, for I want to get it into my head that I may have it by heart."

As this ingenious method of learning his lines failed to succeed, the part was taken from him and given to Heaphy, who was already cast for Polonius. He was therefore to represent two characters, but on the evening when the

### *UNREHEARSED INCIDENTS*

tragedy was played, Heaphy forgot to rub from his nose and cheeks the vermillion suitable to the complexion of a courtier, and appeared as a troubled spirit with a flaming red nose, a sight which set the gods in a roar, and destroyed an impressive scene.

Another night when Sheridan was playing Cato, a part in which he dressed in a suit of bright armour, under a fine laced scarlet cloak, a huge wig well-powdered and bushy, surmounted by a helmet, he was interrupted in a pathetic scene by a voice from on high crying, "Arrah, now, if that candle to the right is not snuffed, the wick will grow up to the ceiling."

One evening when the manager was playing Alexander the Great, he flung the javelin at Clytus whom he missed, hitting instead the cup-bearer, played by Jimmy Fetterel. The latter, believing this was some new business, and that he was expected to die, seized this long-desired chance of exhibiting his tragic powers. He therefore flung himself down, beat the stage with his hands, kicked and rolled; and taking the uproar of the house for well-merited applause, he refused to die, until by the

exhibition of contortions and spasms he had exhausted his strength and convulsed the audience.

The novelty of seeing Sheridan once more in his famous parts, becoming exhausted, and several new performers having failed to show merit, audiences began to grow thin, when the manager saw some fresh interest was required. Accordingly, when Samuel Foote wrote and expressed a desire to visit Dublin, Sheridan engaged him, much to the benefit of both.

In the spring of the year 1757, about the time when Foote was to appear once more in Dublin, a rumour spread through the town that Barry was about to build a new theatre for himself in Crow Street. The truth of this disquieting news was at first doubted by Sheridan, whose reign as manager was seldom free from vexation. Before leaving London to resume his former position at Smock Alley Theatre, Sheridan had waited on Barry and made overtures to engage him, offering him a certain salary or a share in the profits, with the option of subsequently renting the theatre, for the manager at this time did not entertain the idea

*DISTURBING RUMOURS*

of remaining on the stage longer than a couple of years at most. Barry promised to consider the proposals laid before him, and to call on Sheridan within a few days to declare his decision, but he neither presented himself nor ever afterwards spoke to him on the subject.

Sheridan was, however, obliged to believe that rumour for once was true, when he learned that Barry's agents in Dublin were about to purchase the Crow Street music-hall on the site of which the new theatre was to rise. On consulting with his treasurer, Sheridan decided that Benjamin Victor should hie him to London, that he might if possible persuade Barry to abandon his rash undertaking of building a new playhouse, whilst he might have two old ones for the asking, and on his own terms; and to convince him that a monopoly was worth more to a manager than any other consideration.

Therefore as soon as the weather proved favourable, Victor set out on what was at this time frequently a perilous voyage. It was taken in vain, for on his first interview with Barry the latter produced papers to show that

it was too late for him to forego his project. Victor then set about engaging some actresses of talent for Smock Alley Theatre, and for this purpose approached Mrs. Gregory and Mrs. Hamilton, but their demands so far exceeded what he and Sheridan had agreed to give, "and indeed all imagination," that negotiations were carried on for seven weeks, when the players finally agreed to receive five and four hundred pounds respectively for the coming season.

Having concluded these arrangements, Victor left London, and on arriving at Holyhead met Barry and with him Macklin, who at the time intended to become joint proprietor of the new house. All three embarked on the packet boat and landed safely in Ireland, it being then towards the end of June.

Meanwhile Foote had been amusing the town at Smock Alley Theatre. Since his previous appearance in Dublin many events had befallen this inimitable comedian and adventurous man. Having for the third time inherited a fortune, he moved for awhile "in all the splendour of dissipation which was so congenial to his temper." He then journeyed to France. As

*EXPLAINING HIS ABSENCE*

he remained there some years, and meanwhile held no communication with his friends, they thought it necessary to explain his absence and his silence by various statements, such as that he had been killed in a duel ; that he had died of a fever brought on by intemperance ; and that his misdeeds had procured his execution. To their disappointment he reappeared in London in 1752, his spirits as lively as ever, his willingness and ability as eager as before to satirize and mimic.

He had brought with him a comedy called *Taste*, in which fashionable follies of the day were ridiculed ; and this was in due course followed by another play named *The Englishman in Paris*, brought out at Covent Garden in March, 1753, in which was held up to laughter the custom of sending youths of quality abroad to perfect themselves in the absurdities and vices of other nations.

As it proved a great success, Arthur Murphy, the dramatist, proposed to write a sequel to this piece which he suggested should be named *The Englishman Returned from Paris* ; the plot, characters and conversations of which he frankly

discussed with Foote. And so highly did the latter approve of Murphy's ideas, that he immediately appropriated and in a short time produced them in a two-act farce which highly diverted the town

He amused it in a more uproarious degree when on the 5th of February, 1757, he appeared on the stage of Drury Lane in a two-act comedy written by himself called *The Author*, the purport of which was to burlesque persons of wealth and position who, whilst ignorant themselves, were ambitious to pose as patrons of art and science. Point and personality were given to the satire when Foote boldly mimicked the manner and appearance of a Welshman of fortune allied to many families of distinction.

This individual, whose name was Aprice, had from his intimate acquaintance with the player, unconsciously posed as the model of the character he called Cadwallader. His personality readily lent itself to caricature, for not only was he lubberly, corpulent, and awkward, but his eyes were large and staring, his voice boisterous yet indistinct, whilst he had

*GARRICK IS CONSULTED*

a habit of holding his head on one side, and producing a noise by sucking his wrist.

From the moment Foote appeared on the stage as Cadwallader, he was hailed by a burst of applause and a round of laughter, each of which increased as some trait of Aprice, who was well known to the town, was recognized, until the theatre was convulsed with merriment. Piquancy was lent by the fact that Aprice, who sat in a stage box, led the laughter, all unconscious that he was being satirized and ridiculed.

The Author was played for a great number of nights before Aprice realized that he was burlesqued; the fact only being brought home to his dull mind by his hearing the name Cadwallader applied to himself whenever he appeared in the park, at assemblies, or in coffee houses. He then appealed to Foote, requesting him to desist from such personality, but the latter having the laugh and the profit on his side, refused; whereon Aprice consulted Garrick as to whether the offender should be called out.

“Why, man,” said Garrick, “he would thrust a sword through your guts before you could suck

two oysters from your wrist." Finally Aprice appealed to the Lord Chamberlain for redress, when Foote was prohibited from ridiculing this foolish gentleman.

It was whilst the town was still merry with this incident that Foote had proposed to visit Dublin. It happened that during the last week of his engagement at Drury Lane he and Garrick were discussing the subject of imitation, when the latter said,—

"Egad, Foote, there is a young fellow engaged with me, who I really think is superior to either of us at mimicry. I used to think myself well at it, but I actually give him the preference. He has tried to imitate me, but that will not do."

"Damn it," says Foote, "I should like to hear him."

With that Garrick sent to the Green-room for young Tate Wilkinson, who appeared before the manager, his heart panting from doubt, hope, and fear. Garrick at once asked him to give them an imitation, the first that struck his fancy, adding he expected Wilkinson would do his best to convince Mr. Foote that whatever flattering

*YOUNG TATE WILKINSON*

assertions he had heard were not exaggerated. Without more ado Wilkinson mimicked Barry, Woffington, Sparks, and Sheridan with such success that he was highly praised and thanked for the fun he had afforded.

Next day Foote sent word to Wilkinson saying he was going to Dublin there to perform for some six weeks, and he would be glad of this young man's company. Foote would pay all expenses and endeavour to fix him on genteel terms with Mr. Sheridan at his theatre. Wilkinson declared the offer was "a cheerful cordial elixir to my drooping spirits, and to my still more drooping pocket"; for at this time he was merely a walking gentleman at Drury Lane with a salary of five shillings for each performance.

Before the proposition could be accepted, it was necessary to obtain his manager's permission to accompany Foote; which the latter obtained from Garrick, when Wilkinson prepared to start for Ireland.

This smart youth was the son of the Rev. Dr. John Wilkinson, who had been Chaplain of the Savoy, Chaplain to Frederick, Prince of

Wales, rector of Coyty, and stipendiary curate of Wise, in the county of Kent. Now this good man having violated a law passed in 1754, which forbade the solemnization of marriages without publication of banns or the obtaining of licence, by performing such a ceremony in the Savoy Chapel which he held was exempt from this rule, he was convicted of felony and sentenced to fourteen years transportation. Death opportunely saved him from suffering this ignominy.

When this unfortunate event happened, his only child Tate was in his seventeenth year. The lad's constitution was indifferent, he had not been bred to any trade or profession, and both he and his mother were penniless. He had from an early age been fascinated by the stage, and for his own amusement had dressed himself in fantastical attire and recited passages from plays, whilst for the diversion of his mother's friends he had been called on to imitate Mrs. Woffington and Mr. Quin.

Later, whilst at Harrow School, at a theatrical fête given before the Christmas holidays, he had caused general surprise by his playing of Lady Townley; and whilst at home had been allowed

to visit the theatres, and to consort with actors. It was therefore not surprising that on his father's death Tate had refused a commission in the army offered him by a friend, in order that he might gain a place upon the stage. So one day he plucked up courage, and without consulting his mother, waited on John Rich, manager of Covent Garden Theatre. This magnate listened to his recital of several speeches from Richard the Third, gave him free admission behind the scenes, promised him an engagement, and eventually assured him he was incapable of becoming an actor.

As his mother was at this time selling the few articles of jewellery she possessed to support herself and her son, and as no prospect opened before him, his condition was miserable. "My stomach," he says, "became quite surfeited with grief, shame, and vexation." Dark days passed, no hope appeared of his obtaining an engagement in town or country, until at last a friend of his mother's obtained for him a letter of introduction from Lord Mansfield to David Garrick.

Even with this in his possession, the youth

felt it would require more than common fortitude to present himself before the manager of Drury Lane. Three or four times he walked up and down Southampton Street, where Garrick lived, before daring to rap at the great man's door. Eventually he stood trembling before David, who after scrutinizing him demanded a taste of his quality. With a dry throat and uncertain voice, Wilkinson recited two speeches, of which, as he was so frightened, no judgment could be formed ; this, Garrick added encouragingly, was by no means a bad sign, but often an indication of merit.

After they had chatted a little while, Wilkinson felt more at home, and then asked leave to give imitations of some well-known players. On receiving permission he began to mimic Foote, whom David secretly feared and heartily hated. This threw the manager into great good humour. "Why—well, well," says he, delighted by the exhibition, "do call on me again on Monday at eleven, and you may depend upon every assistance in my power."

Wilkinson left the house in raptures at the friendship shown him by this great man and by

*AN ANXIOUS MOTHER*

the promise he had made. "I did not walk, but flew to my lodgings," he writes, "where my poor anxious mother sat trembling for the event. The noise I made in running up the stairs, and my countenance on entering the room, denoted in full evidence that she was to receive good, not bad news. On my relating to her Mr. Garrick's kind behaviour and his assurance of serving me, she concluded her son Tate's fortune was made. She blessed Garrick, she blessed me, and we were both for that day perfectly happy."

When next he called on Garrick, this clever youth again gave him imitations, and was engaged for the ensuing season, during which time he had been introduced to Foote. The hope of having greater opportunities for the display of his talents made Wilkinson anxiously look forward to visiting Dublin. At this period he possessed only one rusty black suit, whilst the remainder of his wardrobe readily fitted in "a small pair of black bags." In his purse was six shillings given by his mother and two guineas he had received from a friend.

On the day of his departure he met Foote at

the Bedford Arms, and an hour later set out with him in a post-chaise, a servant attending them on horseback. The first day's journey ended at Elstree, in Hertfordshire. Twenty-four hours later and they reached West Chester, and next day proceeded to Park Gate, from where a yacht was to carry them to Ireland. Several people of fashion bound for Dublin were already waiting for a fair wind, but as this did not offer, they set out on horseback for Holyhead, where they were again detained some days before setting sail.

The difficulties that waylaid those adventurous enough to cross the channel in the last century are set out by Wilkinson: "And at nine at night, all dark and dismal, did we roll in the boat belonging to the Packet, over waves most dreary to behold; for the whiteness of the breakers shone double from the darkness of the night. When handed into the Packet, I asked for a bed, but they were all secured, not even one for Mr. Foote, as plenty of cash from the great people had made that request impossible to be complied with. The cabin was wedged like the black hole at Calcutta. The

tumultuous moving of the ship soon made my inquiries after a bed of down quite needless, for I sank on the boards, where my poverty bags were my only pillow, and there I lay, tossed in the most convulsive sickness that can be imagined."

After enduring much hardship, Wilkinson arrived in Dublin Bay, and in the course of time he found himself with Foote in a tavern in College Green. As the former was much out of order, he was unable to eat; but heedless of his state, Foote went to the lodgings already engaged for him, leaving his companion to look after himself. The younger player was directed to an hotel on Essex Quay, where he lay abed prostrate from fatigue and illness.

When he had somewhat recovered, he set out to call on friends of his parents—Mr. and Mrs. William Chaigneau—who lived in Abbey Street; and whilst being driven over Essex Bridge he was "Vastly pleased at seeing the number of lamps, sedan-chairs, carriages, hackney coaches, footmen with flambeaux, &c., as it appeared to resemble another London."

He was warmly received by those hospitable

people. A thousand inquiries were made after his mother, a comfortable supper was set before him, and he was assured that every exertion of theirs would be used to secure his welfare. Whilst, however, he was yet talking to them, he "sank into a heavy feverish languor not in his power to uphold." He was instantly put to bed, Dr. Lucas, the first physician in Dublin, was summoned, together with the family apothecary and a nurse, for he was now attacked by an "outrageous fever" which lasted some three weeks.

Before he was able to leave his room, Wilkinson sent his compliments to Foote and acquainted him with his address, "For," says Tate, "Mr. and Mrs. Chaigneau were so offended at such brutality of behaviour towards me that neither of them had given him any intelligence concerning me."

On learning where Wilkinson was staying, Foote called to apologize, but lest he might catch the infection he declined to see his young friend, whose wants he professed himself anxious to supply. This offer was declined. No sooner had the invalid recovered than he

was provided with an elegant suit of clothes and taken to visit several people of the first distinction.

In April, 1757, Foote appeared as Sir Charles Buck, in *The Englishman Returned from Paris*, and by his inimitable drollery in this and other representations, drew crowded houses during the season.

Meanwhile, Sheridan's uneasiness increased at the prospect of opposition. Soon after the arrival of Barry and Macklin in Dublin, the former began to solicit the names of subscribers to his new theatre, and was so successful that the walls of the Crow Street music-hall, together with several of the adjoining houses, were levelled to the ground, and the foundation of a new playhouse laid.

Barry had originally intended that Macklin should be a joint manager in the undertaking, and as the latter delighted in new schemes, he welcomed this proposal. However, before indentures binding them were drawn up, Barry saw reason to change his mind, for amongst other designs Macklin expressed his intention to represent characters wholly unsuited to him

such as Macbeth, Hamlet, and Richard, in which Barry excelled.

“Not, my dear Spranger,” said Macklin, “that I want to take your parts from you, but by way of giving the town variety. You shall play Macbeth one night, and I another, and so on, sir, with the rest of the tragic characters. Thus we will throw lights upon one another’s performance, and give a bone to the college lads, who after all form a part of the most critical audience in Europe.”

Barry, “in his soft conciliating manner,” pointed out that the very reverse of what Macklin predicted would happen ; that where one of them succeeded the other must suffer by comparison, and the receipts of the house fall away ; that Macklin had a large range of comic parts already at his disposal, which would be sufficient both for fame and fortune, and he had better not risk “the taking up of new business at his time of life.” At this excellent advice Macklin began to fume, and declared his success was more of a certainty than Garrick or Barry were aware of ; that he had long thought of playing such parts, and though he never before had the

*BARRY TAKES WARNING*

power to demand them, he would not now lose the opportunity; and he added with an oath, "Let me tell you I think I shall be able to show the town something they never saw before."

Barry took warning and broke the engagement, but being aware that Macklin and his wife would be useful members of a company, he offered him a large salary to play twice a week in any of the comic characters he selected, without being concerned in any way with the management. This was eventually accepted by Macklin; and soon after Barry articled with Henry Woodward as joint patentee and manager of the new theatre.

Sheridan and his friends lost no time in opposing this project. Letters were addressed to the public and pamphlets printed, which were duly answered by Barry and his supporters. The former held that Dublin was barely able to maintain one theatre, and that if a second were opened, the inevitable consequences were that one must ruin the other. The citizens were reminded of the lamentable condition in which Sheridan had found the stage, of the pains and expense spent in im-

*ROMANCE OF THE IRISH STAGE*

proving it ; that by his learning and abilities, which his greatest enemies could not dispute, he had, after a struggle of many years, shown the people of Ireland what they had never before seen in their own country, a well-regulated theatre—from which facts he was entitled to support.

Barry's friends argued that it was far from evident Dublin could not support two theatres ; that the public would gain by contest, and that the younger actor had now so far advanced in his design that he could not abandon it without ruining himself.

Sheridan, still persevering, had printed a pamphlet stating at length “The Case of the Proprietors of the United Theatres of Aungier Street and Smock Alley,” which was delivered to all members of Parliament. This laid stress on the great expense they had been at in building and completing two magnificent theatres, and praying that the number of such houses might be limited by Parliament, as in London ; and that as two were thought sufficient for that great capital, Dublin might be limited to one. As, however, many leading members of

*MACKLIN'S LETTER*

Parliament had already subscribed to the Crow Street building, this petition was neglected.

Amongst the letters which dealt most severely with Sheridan, were those written by Macklin, who had not forgotten their old quarrel. One of his epistles contains a fine outburst of indignation because the Peers and Commons of the land were asked "so far to forget their own dignity, and their trust, and the sacred virtue of the British Constitution, as to strip the city of Dublin of its immemorial right." This enormity has been done by Sheridan, because "his father whipt the fathers and grandfathers and some of the members of the present Parliament ; and because this player was educated in the University of Dublin ; and because he gives the public to understand in his daily conversations that he is the greatest actor that has been for ages ; that he is the greatest orator, politician, theologian, rhetorician ; that he has revived the long-lost art of eloquence ; and that he will teach it to the Lords and Commons, and make them as great orators as himself. Upon these pretensions he founds his claim to a theatrical monopoly."

*ROMANCE OF THE IRISH STAGE*

In the same inflated manner Macklin talked loud and long at the coffee houses, and whilst inspecting the rising walls of the new theatre, he delighted to gather round him a group of hearers for whose entertainment he would lecture about the Greek and Roman theatres, their usages, masks, and scenery ; until one day a workman told him that as they were building an Irish and not a Greek theatre, they must keep to the plans laid down for them—a statement that offended Macklin and prevented his future visits to the building.

As Sheridan's efforts were unable to check the opposition he dreaded, he turned his attention to his own theatre, that by offering the public attractive fare, he might secure its favour and enlist its sympathy on his behalf. Smock Alley Theatre opened in October, 1757, with *The Fair Quaker of Deal*. Towards the end of the month the manager played *Hamlet* ; later, Mrs. Gregory appeared as *Calista* ; then came Foote as *Ben*, in *Love for Love* ; whilst on the 7th of December, Thomas Ryder made his first bow to a Dublin audience in the character of *Plume*, in *The Recruiting Officer*, and gained great applause.

*MR. PUZZLE'S PUPIL*

It was shortly before Christmas that whilst Tate Wilkinson's friend Mr. Chaigneau was entertaining Sheridan, Benjamin Victor, and Foote at dinner, the latter said it was now time the companion of his voyage should make his appearance on the Dublin stage. Wilkinson and his patron agreed to this, and it was eventually decided that he should come forward on the following Monday, when Foote was announced to give his entertainment called Tea.

He was accordingly sent a part, but as the time for its study was short, Wilkinson declined it; when it was agreed he should appear in the character of a pupil to Foote and give what imitations he pleased. It was therefore duly announced on the bills and the news sheets that—

After the Play

Mr. Foote will give Tea.

Mr. Puzzle (the instructor) Mr. Foote.

First Pupil by a Young Gentleman  
(who never appeared on any stage before).

Neither the public nor the players knew anything of him as a performer; but when the latter were questioned by the critics regarding his abilities, "five out of six spoke to his disadvantage, from the too general depravity of

*ROMANCE OF THE IRISH STAGE*

human nature ; as persons listen to satire rather than praise."

When the evening of his first appearance came, all his friends were in the boxes ready to encourage and support him. The youth himself, in the splendour of full dress, was behind the scenes, where, as there had been no rehearsal, he had not been before. The company were all strangers to him, "and I," he narrates, "not knowing how to enter into conversation with them, and being announced as a pupil of Mr. Foote's, I did not receive any civility from them ; for if I were a blockhead, I was not worth their notice ; and if an impudent imitator or mimic of their profession, bred by Mr. Foote in the same worthy art, I was in their opinion a despicable intruder."

As he stood there trembling and apprehensive, the curtain went up, the entertainment began, and roars of laughter rewarded Foote's mimicry and wit. Then came the dire moment of trial when Wilkinson was called on. His alarm was so great that he felt inclined to run away ; but plucking up courage he stepped forward. Foote, seeing his confusion, advanced and took

*MERELY A NOVICE*

him by the hand, when the audience greeted him good-naturedly. As he continued terribly agitated, Foote, turning to a couple of characters on the stage, said, "This young gentleman is merely a novice ; he has not yet been properly drilled. But come, my young friend," he added, addressing Wilkinson, "walk across the stage ; breathe yourself, and show your figure." Wilkinson obeyed, the house encouraged him, he felt a glow, and told himself that now or never must he seize his opportunity, and show what was in him.

Accordingly mustering his spirit, he gave an imitation of Luke Sparks, of London, in the character of Capulet. Most of those in the boxes had seen this actor in this part, and were so struck by the faithfulness of the imitation, and the likeness to him which Wilkinson's features managed to convey, that there was an instant cry of "Sparks of London. Sparks of London," followed by rounds of hearty applause. The mimic, amazed and delighted, took heart, and boldly decided to imitate no less a favourite than Barry, which was received with peals of laughter.

The house now settled down for a merry evening ; for there was no knowing what entertainment this clever young gentleman might provide. On his part Wilkinson's spirit being strung to bolder flights, he resolved to imitate Peg Woffington in her native city, and on the very stage where she had moved vast audiences to tears and laughter. It may have been that this daring youth was prompted to such an act by a speech she had made on hearing he was going to Dublin to give imitations. "If he dare attempt to take me off," she exclaimed, "he will be stoned to death." But instead of stones his personation of her was rewarded with such laughter as prevented him from going on with his mimicry for some time ; whilst the applause was even greater than any he had received before.

As may be supposed, he had now quite recovered himself, his valour rose, and the knowledge of his success increased. With a quick glance at Foote, who sat upon the stage, Wilkinson advanced six steps in the manner of the elder mimic and repeated some lines of the prologue, spoken by him that evening, hitting

### *MERRY AUDACITY*

his manner, his voice, and his oddities so exactly that the house became fairly convulsed at this faithful representation and merry audacity.

“It really gave me a complete victory over Mr. Foote,” writes Wilkinson, “for the suddenness of the action tripped up his audacity so much that he with all his effrontery sat foolish, wishing to appear equally pleased with the audience, but knew not how to play that difficult part; he was unprepared; the surprise and satisfaction were such that without any conclusion the curtain was obliged to drop with reiterated bursts of applause.”

After the performance Wilkinson was warmly congratulated by his friends, who declared that Foote was surpassed; that the pupil had become the master; that the youth’s fortune was now assured. He himself could not eat, drink, or sleep that night: “Pleasant dreams I needed not; my waking thoughts were so much superior.”

As for Foote, though “he was piqued and chagrined,” he professed to rejoice at Wilkinson’s success. He who had unsparingly ridiculed the peculiarities of his friends as well as his foes, could not with consistency censure

another for the liberties taken with his mannerisms. He therefore declared "it was perfectly well judged to make free with him," yet he did not think the personation very like himself; it was certainly Wilkinson's worst imitation. As it was advantageous to Foote that thronged houses should attend his performances, Wilkinson was allowed to repeat his imitations, and in this way Foote consented to pocket the affront. The entertainment called Tea was given for several successive nights, and was finally commanded by the Duke and Duchess of Bedford, his Grace being then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

Towards the end of the year (1757) Foote was obliged to return to England, but Wilkinson, by Garrick's permission, remained behind, and was placed on a salary of three guineas a week by Sheridan, who likewise agreed to give him a benefit. During the engagement the manager suggested that instead of mimicking London performers, Wilkinson should exhibit the mannerisms of the players familiar to the Dublin public. Wilkinson replied that they would resent such liberties by insulting him, and

*SHERIDAN IS SHOCKED*

injure him by refusing to play for his benefit. These considerations had little weight with Sheridan, who persisted in urging him to make the attempt, whereon this daring youth remarked,—

“ My good Mr. Sheridan, I have hit upon the very thing to establish myself as a favourite with you and the town.”

The manager became impatient to know what this was.

“ Why, sir,” replied Wilkinson, “ your rank in the theatre, and a gentleman so well-known in Dublin on and off the stage, must naturally occasion any striking imitation of yourself to have a wonderful effect. I have paid great attention to your whole mode of acting, and do actually think I can do a great deal on your stage with you alone, without interfering with any other actor’s manner whatever.”

Sheridan became petrified by astonishment at such audacity, and turned red and pale alternately, whilst his lips quivered. “ I instantly perceived I was in the wrong box,” says Wilkinson. “ It was some time before he could speak—he took a candle from off the table, and

showing me the room door, said he never was so insulted. What, to be taken off by a buffoon upon his own stage. And as to mimicry, what was it? Why, a proceeding which he never could countenance; that he even despised Garrick and Foote for having introduced so mean an art; and he then very politely desired me to walk downstairs. I was obliged to march, and really felt petrified with my bright thought, which had turned out so contrary from what I had ignorantly expected. Mr. Sheridan held the candle for me only till I got to the first landing, and then hastily removed it, grumbling and squeaking to himself, and leaving me to feel my way in the dark down a pair and a half of steep stairs, and to guess my road in hopes of finding the street door."

After this Sheridan neither permitted him to play nor spoke to Wilkinson during the remainder of his stay in Ireland save on his benefit night. This was fixed for the 25th of February, 1758. By the exertion of his friends a crowded and brilliant house was secured, the boxes not only being taken, but, "for want of place in that circle, no less than seven rows of

*WILKINSON ENRICHED*

the pit were added and railed in at box prices." The result was that early in the following month Tate Wilkinson left Dublin with one hundred and thirty pounds in his pockets, that had contained two guineas on his arrival.

## CHAPTER III.

Gaiety of the Irish people—A wedding party—Splendour of the bridegroom—Strange adventures on the way—A pike-keeper's predicament—Pacified by a song—Cards—Francis Edgeworth and his wife—Public lotteries—Those who lost and won—Gambling houses and college boys—Sir Hercules Langrishe—Universal habit of drinking—Some strange customs of topers—A remarkable carousal—A bold Secretary.

WHILST players came and went, and the fortunes of the theatre waxed and waned, the tide of daily life surged with its own incidents and interests through the capital; whose citizens gambled and fought, drank and danced, with that love of revelry, that insistence of gaiety, that seemed as universal to the Irish people of the last century as it is unknown to their sombre descendants in the present.

Perhaps no more graphic picture illustrates the light-hearted happiness of the times, than that Sir Jonah Barrington has painted of the

#### *A WONDERFUL WEDDING*

incidents and adventures attending the wedding of his eldest brother Jack, a gallant and handsome young officer, wild, with little judgment, and very moderate education. No sooner was the date of the ceremony fixed, than preparations to celebrate it in style were made. Milliners and tailors, dressmakers and wig-makers, were set going ; ribbon favours were woven on a new plan, the latest modes bespoke. So that for weeks the town gossiped about the doings of the family in whom high and low felt friendly interest.

The wedding was to take place in the bride's home, Old Court House, Bray, some miles outside Dublin, to which place the bridegroom and his relatives were to drive on the happy day. But long before it was time for them to start, a friendly humorous crowd gathered outside the family residence in Clare Street, intent on seeing the splendour, and anxious to bid God-speed and good luck to the gay young gentleman about to enter matrimony.

Presently the "gilded coach of ceremony," drawn by four splendid horses black and smooth as if cut out of ebony, came rumbling to the

door, Tom White and Kearan Karry, with enormous favours in their breasts, acting as postillions, and big Nicholas standing behind as footman, a wonderful sight to behold.

After a while the hall door opened, the crowd hustled forward, necks were craned, a cheer went up, and the bridegroom appeared cased in white cloth with silver tissue, belaced and bespangled and glittering like an Eastern caliph. After him came his mother "clad in what was called a *manteau* of silvered satin. When standing direct before the lights," her son Jonah states, "she shone out as the reflector of a lamp ; and as she moved majestically about the room, and curtseyed à la Madame Pompadour, the rustling of her embroidered habit sounded like music appropriate to the flow of compliments that enveloped her." This magnificent lady's husband, one of the handsomest men of his day, was much more plainly dressed than any of his family.

He with his wife and eldest son having taken their places in the coach, away it started at a hand gallop, whilst standing at the door Sarah the cook gave her benediction, Judy Berger the

*ELEGANT YOUTHS*

housekeeper prayed and crossed herself, and the crowd cheered heartily.

Now no sooner had this gorgeous conveyance disappeared, than its place was taken by an old travelling-chaise, unprepossessing in appearance, it having been rescued from the cocks and hens in a country outhouse. This was drawn by a pair of hacks, one of which was blind and the other lame, and driven by Matthew Querns the huntsman. Into this conveyance stepped the bridegroom's three brothers, Jonah, French and Wheeler Barrington, whose attire consisted of blue satin vest and knee breeches, well laced and spangled wherever there was any room for ornament, the two elder having coats of white cloth with blue capes, the youngest wearing a red coat, as he was intended for the army. Each of their heads was adorned with four large paste curls, white as snow with true rice-powder, and scented strong with real bergamot.

“In truth,” says Jonah, “greater luminaries never attended a marriage festivity. Our equipage however, by no means corresponded with our personal splendour and attractions, and I thought the contrast would be too

ridiculous to any observing spectator who might know the family. I therefore desired Matthew to take a short turn from the great rock road, to avoid notice as much as possible; which caution being given, we crowded into the tattered vehicle, and trotted away as swiftly as one blind and one lame horse could draw such magnificoes. There were and are on the circular road by which I had desired Matthew Querns to drive us, some of those nuisances called turnpikes. When we had passed the second gate, the gatekeeper, who had been placed there recently, of course demanded his toll.

“‘Pay him, French,’ said I to my brother. ‘Faith,’ said French, ‘I changed my clothes, and I happen to have no money in my pocket. ‘No matter,’ answered I. ‘Wheeler, give the fellow a shilling.’ ‘I have not a rap,’ said Wheeler; ‘I lost every halfpenny I had yesterday at the Royal cockpit in Essex Street.’

“By a sort of instinct I put my hand into my own pocket; but instinct is not money, and reality quickly informed me that I was exactly in the same situation. However, ‘No matter,’ again said I: so I desired old Matthew Querns

to pay the turnpike. ‘Is it me pay the pike?’ said Matthew. ‘The devil a cross of wages I got from the master this many a day; and if I did, do you think, Master Jonah, the liquor would not be after having it out of me by this time?’ and he then attempted to drive on without paying, as he used to do at Cullenaghmore. The man, however, grappled the blind horse, and gave us a full quantum of abuse, in which his wife, who issued forth at the sound, vociferously joined.

“Matthew began to whack him and the horses alternately with his thong whip; my brother French struggled to get out and beat the pike man, but the door would not open readily, and I told him that if he beat the turnpike man properly, he’d probably bleed *a few* himself, and that a single drop of blood on his fine clothes would effectually exclude him from society.

“This reasoning succeeded, but the blind horse, not perceiving what was the matter, supposed something worse had happened, and began to plunge and break the harness. ‘You damned gilt vagabonds,’ said the turnpike

man, 'such fellows should be put into the stocks or ducked at the broad stone beyond Kilmainham. Oh, I know you well enough' (looking into the carriage window). 'What are yees but stage-players that have run away from Smock Alley, and want to impose on the country-folk. But I'll neither let yees back or forward, by —, till you pay me a hog for the pike, and two and eightpence-halfpenny for every wallop of the whip that the old green mummer there gave me, when I only wanted my honest dues.'

"I saw fighting was in vain, but courtesy can do anything with an Irishman. 'My honest friend,' said I (to soften him), 'you're right; we are poor stage-players, sure enough; we have got a loan of the clothes, and we're hired out to play a farce for a great wedding that's to be performed at Bray to-night. When we come back with our money we'll pay you true and fair, and drink with you till you're stiff, if you think proper.'

"On this civil address the pike man looked very kind. "Why, then, by my sowl, it's true ough," said he. Ye can't be very rich till

PAYING THE PIKE

ye get your entrance-money ; but sure, I won't be out of pocket for all that. Well, faith and troth, ye look like decent stage-players ; and I'll tell you what, I like good music, so I do. Give me a new song or two, and damn me, but I'll let you off, you poor creatures, till you come back agin. Come, give us a chaunt, and I'll help you to mend the harness, too.'

"'Thank you, sir,' said I humbly. 'I can't sing,' said my brother French, 'unless I'm drunk.' 'Nor I, drunk or sober,' said Wheeler. 'You *must* sing for the *pike*,' said I to French ; and at length he set up his pipes to a favourite song often heard among the half-mounted gentlemen in the country when they were drinking ; and as I shall never forget any incident of that eventful day, and the ditty is quite characteristic both of the nation generally and the half-mounted gentlemen in particular (with whom it was a sort of character song), I shall give it :—

"' Damn money, it's nothing but trash :  
We're happy though ever so poor.  
When we have it we cut a great dash,  
When it's gone we ne'er think of it more.'

Then let us be wealthy or not,  
Our spirits are always the same ;  
We're free from every dull thought,  
And the "Boys of Old Ireland's" our name'

"I never saw a poor fellow so pleased as the pike man ; the words pleased his fancy, he shook us all round most heartily by the hand, and running into his lodge, brought out a pewter pot of frothing beer which he had just got for himself, and insisted on each of us taking a drink. We of course complied. He gave Matthew a drink too, and desired him not to be so handy with his whip to other pike men, or they'd *justice* him at Kilmainham. He then helped up our traces ; and Matthew meanwhile, who having had the last draught, had left the pot no further means of exercising its hospitality, enlivened by the liquor and encouraged by the good nature of the pike man, and his pardon for the walloping, thought the least he could do in gratitude was to give the honest man a sample of his own music, vocal and instrumental ; so taking his hunting horn from under his coat (he never went a yard without it), and sounding his best Death of Reynard, he sang a

stave that was then the character song of his rank, and which he roared away with all the graces of a new holloa.

“The man of the pike was delighted. ‘Why, then, by my sowl, you ould mummer,’ said he, ‘it’s a pity the likes of you should *want* a *hog*. Arrah here’ (handing him a shilling), ‘maybe your whistle would run dry on the road, and you’ll pay me when you come back, won’t you? Now all’s settled, off wid yees. Success, success,’ and away we went as fast as the halt and the blind could carry us.”

Weddings were celebrated in those days with the greatest merriment and good cheer, the families of bride and bridegroom, the bridesmaids and bridesmen ordering new and gorgeous suits for the occasion, and devising all kinds of festivities to follow. The ceremony was usually celebrated in the evening, after which came a great banquet, the tables bending with enormous supplies of fowls and meats, wine passing round with joyous rapidity.

Then came dancing in the great rooms decorated with evergreens and lighted by candles, when young couples with beaming

faces and noisy with hearty laughter took the floor and trod many a measure, not only until dawn made the tapers dim, but through the day and for three successive days and nights ; those who were tired snatching sleep when and where they could, only to begin again, a constant supply of meals being furnished, the whole house in an uproar delightful to all.

Those whose joints were too stiff to take part in the dance, sat down to cards, a great amusement at all social gatherings and with every class. Great sums were constantly lost and won at the tables ; an improvident and reckless race gaining and parting with fortunes with the same devil-may-care indifference.

Colonel Francis Edgeworth, a man of great wit and gaiety, who was wholly regardless of money, might be considered a typical gambler of his time. One evening whilst at a party he lost all the money he could command, but not satisfied, he staked his wife's diamond earrings, and went into the adjoining room, where she was sitting in company, to request she would lend them to him. She took them from her ears and gave them to him, saying she knew for

what purpose he wanted them, and he was welcome to them.

They were placed upon the gambling table and played for, when the Colonel not only won upon this last stake, but gained back all he had lost that night. In the warmth of his gratitude to his wife, he took an oath that he would never more play at any game with cards or dice. "Some time afterwards," writes his relative, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, "he was found in a hay-yard with a friend, drawing straws out of the hayrick, and betting upon which should be the longest. As might be expected, he lived in alternate extravagance and distress; sometimes with a coach and four, and sometimes in very want of half-a-crown."

The poor as well as the rich were seized by a spirit of gambling, by that need for excitement characteristic to the race which in this way found vent. Shoe-boys and messengers, chair-men and coachmen, at intervals between plying their callings, might be seen seated on door-steps or in some quiet nook playing cards for stakes whose loss frequently left them beggars; whilst those who cultivated the idleness dear to

all, spent hours in gambling at taverns. A not unusual stake was a salt herring, and as the winner was bound to eat it, he was rewarded with a parching thirst.

The vice was largely fostered in all classes by Government lotteries which were a regular institution during the last century. Those who could not afford to buy a ticket selected a certain number from the undrawn tickets, and on this laid a wager with an official connected with the lottery that it would be drawn on a certain day, or would turn out a blank or win a prize. The risk was in proportion to the number of undrawn tickets, but the odds were usually silver to gold ; for instance, if five shillings were deposited the insurer of the number would receive five pounds. In order to be within the reach of all, a sum as low as a shilling was received as a bet.

As may be imagined, intense excitement followed; lucky and unlucky numbers were solemnly discussed ; dreams and omens were dwelt upon ; if whilst abroad an individual met some object considered of good import, he would hasten to the lottery office to secure a number ; many pawned or sold necessary

### *THE LOTTERY HALL*

articles of clothing that they might bet, and for the same purpose robbery was frequently committed.

From the moment the doors of the lottery hall were thrown open, the place was filled by an animated, anxious throng. Two large wheels were set up before all, beside which stood two boys of the Blue Coat Hospital, each having one hand thrust into the belt behind his back, whilst flourishing the other in the air. Then the wheels being set in motion, the boys thrust in a hand and took out a rolled packet from each; one containing the number, the other a blank or a prize, which was duly announced by a clerk.

Strange scenes followed. The breathless silence that had waited on the announcement was broken by cheers from the winner and his friends, or groans from some poor wretch now assured of his ruin; exultation and despair interrupted or followed each other; prayers and curses mingled, and general confusion reigned until the wheel was sent whirling again and profound stillness fell on all, to be followed once more by tumult.

So great was the interest connected with the lottery, that an impostor who declared he had won the twenty thousand pound prize, exhibited himself in a room in Capel Street, and got vast crowds willing to pay a shilling each for permission to see so lucky an individual.

Amongst the tragedies attending this craze for gambling was one which claimed for its victim a poor blind creature named Alley Carty. Every day she was led to a certain spot in Sackville Street where she sold small articles stored in her basket. Her cleanly appearance and patient bearing brought her many friends, and though she never asked for alms, they were freely given her. One night she dreamt of a number that made her fortune, and next day she was led to the hall and insured it eagerly.

Unfortunately it was not drawn, and she lost her money : but her faith in the dream was so vivid that she insured the same number again and with a like result. And this she did several times, the gambling fever having seized upon her, until her savings were lost, her basket empty of its stock, and all her available clothes sold. She was now unable to insure that alluring

### *POOR ALLEY CARTY*

number, after which she continued to inquire, to learn that it was drawn on the day she ceased to insure it, when the bitterness of her fate seeming too hard to be borne, she made her way to the Grand Canal and drowned herself.

Another anecdote of the uncertainty of fortune as determined by lottery tickets, relates that an actor named Mahon bought a ticket out of his scanty savings. On hearing of such folly and extravagance his hard-working wife rated him soundly, and nagged at him so continually that he eventually returned to the lottery office and begged that his ticket might be bought from him. This the clerks refused, but Colonel O'Donnell seeing his distress, relieved him of the ticket that in due time gained a capital prize, the possession of which would have made the poor player independent for the remainder of his days.

The numerous gambling houses were pretty free from all interference by the watch, who were generally men advanced in years, whose hands were open as the day to handsome bribes ; but such places of entertainment were occasionally surprised by those watchers of the night, who in some unaccountable manner seemed suddenly to

assume a spirit of youth, vitality, and adventure extraordinary in men of their age.

The fact was that the College Boys, when tired of playing such pranks as putting gunpowder squibs into all the lamps in several streets, and by a prearranged signal and arrangement contriving that they should all burst at the same time; or of flinging crackers into china and glass shops, that they might see the owners trampling on their own porcelain as they rushed from a supposed explosion—would frequently pay the watchmen to lend their cloaks and rattles, when the collegians would burst into the gambling houses, jump on the tables, extinguish the lights, drive the gamblers out, and seize on their stakes, which would be divided amongst those worthy guardians of the city's peace.

The students had the whole body of watchmen belonging to one parish in their pay, each man receiving seven shillings a week, and for this they not only aided and abetted such raids, but would take the undergraduates parts against other watchmen who might dare to interfere with these young gentlemen's amusements.

The convivial habits universal at this time

*SIR HERCULES LANGRISHE*

frequently led to excesses. Hard drinking was not merely the fashion but the rule of the day. "The gentlemen of this country, old and young, study nothing else and have no other subject than Bacchus," Benjamin Victor wrote from Dublin in 1759. By way of preparing them for future orgies, fathers were in the habit of exhorting their sons to "make their heads whilst they were young;" in other words, to become seasoned drinkers.

One of the youths who seems to have followed such advice was Sir Hercules Langrishe, of ancient family and good repute. One evening when a few friends called on him some hours after dinner, they found him alone in company with half a dozen "dead men," or empty claret bottles; he having poured the last drop one of them contained into his glass.

"What, Sir Hercules," exclaimed one of his visitors who was astonished at this display, "surely you have not got through them alone and without assistance?"

"Oh no," answered the baronet, who was something of a wit, "Not alone; I had the aid of a bottle of Madeira."

A common saying was that "No man who drank ever died ; but many died whilst learning to drink," and the number who fell in acquiring this lesson was appalling. As an instance of the quantity of claret, then the fashionable beverage, drank in Ireland in one year, it may be mentioned that in 1763, eight thousand tuns of that wine were imported, the bottles that held it being estimated at the value of sixty-seven thousand pounds.

As a rule men seldom rejoined the women after dinner in a state of sobriety ; whilst at suppers and parties where the male sex alone consorted, the unwritten law was that "No man should leave the company till he was unable to stand, and then he might go if he could walk."

If a guest happened to quit the room, bits of paper were dropped into his glass intimating the number of rounds the bottle had gone in his absence, when on his return he was obliged to swallow a glass for each, under the penalty of drinking so many glasses of salt and water instead. At many tables it was the fashion to have decanters with round bottoms, like modern

### *WINE DRINKERS*

soda-water bottles, the only contrivance in which they could stand being at the head of the table before the host. Once it started on its rounds it was impossible for the decanter to become stationary, so that each man was obliged to fill his glass and pass the wine. Occasionally the stems of glasses were knocked off with a knife, so that they had to be emptied quickly and not allowed to stand whilst containing a drop of liquor.

At some wine parties where the guests were not known as well-approved toppers, they were required before sitting down to put off their shoes, which were taken out of the room. The first bottles emptied were then broken and the glass scattered outside the door, so that none could pass until the carousal was over without danger of severely cutting himself.

The undergraduates, who did their best to "make their heads," gave wine parties at which their wild spirits rose to daring heights. It was their delight to have as their guest on such occasions some dandy or macaronic, as he was then called, whom they strove to make drink as much wine as was given him, and on his refusal

compelled him to swallow tumblers of salt and water "till he came to his feeding."

A story is told by one who when a youth had been soberly reared in the country. Coming to town that he might enter college, he was pressed to stay with friends of the family, when during his visit a carousal was held. As the result of his attendance at the feast he was drunk that night and sick in the morning, when the remedy of a "hair of the old dog," otherwise a glass of neat whisky, was suggested. On the second evening, as the orgie was continued, he stole away through a back window, and wandered about at night to return in the morning and witness an extraordinary sight.

Standing before his friends door was a common cart on which were being laid the bodies of those who were insensible from drink; lighted candles were stuck around and a sheet thrown over them. Those of their boon companions who were able to totter, then got between the shafts of the cart or pushed it behind, all setting up a maudlin cry in imitation of the death keen, as they conveyed their weaker brethren to their respective homes. This was

*LORD MUSKERRY*

regarded as excellent fun, but greater diversion followed when the dead came to life and challenged their mirth-loving comrades.

Few amongst the gentry, parsons, lawyers, and doctors included, were free from this vice. It was Lord Muskerry who on seeing a chair-man lying dead drunk, sighed as he exclaimed: "Happy, enviable fellow. You have the privilege of getting drunk three times a day without losing caste." It is probable there were no dreary intervals of sobriety during his lordship's carousals, for he was a mighty drinker of good wine, and at his death, when his years nearly numbered eighty, he consoled himself with the idea that he had nothing to accuse himself of, as he had never denied himself anything.

It was not uncommon to see judges on the bench in a state of intoxication, though they felt no shame and received no censure at this fact, that indeed occasionally was made the subject of mirth.

One well-known judge was noted for the maudlin sensibility in which he passed sentences, which prompted one of the Bar to remark that if

his lordship did not weep he certainly had a drop in his eye.

Sir Jonah Barrington gives a merry description of a carousal he witnessed about the year 1777. Whilst on a tour in the south of Ireland, he drove to a hunting-lodge just built by his brother French, who happened to have given a house-warming the previous day. So impatient was he for this entertainment to take place, that the dining-room had not been quite finished on the date of the party, and its walls having received their last coat of plaster only that morning, were totally wet. Jonah, who had not prepared his brother for the visit, arrived about ten in the morning, and records what he saw :—

“ The room was strewn with empty bottles—some broken, some interspersed with glasses, plates, dishes, spoons, &c., all in glorious confusion. Here and there were heaps of bones, relics of the former day’s entertainment, which the dogs, seizing their opportunity, had cleanly picked. Three or four of the bacchanalians lay fast asleep upon their chairs ; one or two others were on the floor, among whom a piper

*A STRANGE SCENE*

lay on his back, apparently dead, with a table-cloth spread over him, and surrounded by four or five candles, burnt to the sockets ; his chanter and bags were laid scientifically across his body, his mouth was quite open, and his nose made ample amends for the silence of his drone.

“ Had I never viewed such a scene before, it would have almost terrified me ; but it was nothing more than the ordinary custom which we call *waking the piper*, when he had got too drunk to make any more music. . . .

“ No servant was to be seen, man or woman. I went to the stables, wherein I found three or four more of the goodly company, who had just been able to reach their horses, but were seized by Morpheus before they could mount them, and so lay in the mangers awaiting a more favourable opportunity. Returning, I found my brother also asleep on the only bed which the lodge then afforded ; he had no occasion to put on his clothes, since he had never taken them off.”

The visitor waked various sleepers, the piper was carried away, rooms were cleared, windows opened, and breakfast made ready, when the host by a lusty summons woke those not

yet astir. A roar of agony answered his call, for two of the revellers, Tom Kelly and Peter Alley, having fallen asleep in their chairs, drawn close to the freshly plastered wall, had got their heads imbedded in the cement, which had become hard from the heat of the room. When hearty laughter at this incident had subsided, various means of extricating the prisoners—amongst other solvents melted butter, new milk, and hot vinegar—were tried in vain. Eventually Peter Alley whetted two dinner-knives against each other, “and sawed away at cross corners till he was liberated with the loss only of half of his hair and a piece of his scalp ;” whilst after an hour’s hard labour with a pair of scissors and an oyster knife, Kelly likewise found himself free.

As the century advanced this ruinous habit increased, if possible. A correspondent, who signs himself with initials, writing on the 3rd of March, 1781, to William Eden, at that time Irish Secretary, says : “ I hear you are likely to be very acceptable to the Irish if you can prevail on them to be satisfied with your sobriety. Rigby says you are the boldest Secretary he

*A SOBER SECRETARY*

ever heard of, to call for coffee at six o'clock. You should do with your Irish friends as I do with mine at Wigan. I easily convinced them that during an opposition (which I had for eight years) it was absolutely necessary some one of the party should be constantly sober ; and as I as easily satisfied them that as they would like to be sober less than I should, they had better leave that wretched state to me ; which they accordingly did ever after.”

## CHAPTER IV.

The rival theatres open—Smock Alley Theatre planet-struck—Women of fashion bespeak plays—Sheridan refuses to return—Henry Mossop's engagement—Foote mimics Wilkinson—“Dann the pug”—Charming Mrs. Abington—Her sudden popularity—Mossop becomes a manager—Protection by ladies of quality—The tragedian's exceeding vanity.

ON Monday the 23rd of October, 1758, the rival theatres of Smock Alley and Crow Street opened their doors to the public. A new house, fresh scenery and dresses, and the novelty of a company the greater part of which was unknown to the town, failed to draw a large audience to Crow Street. Next day a universal rumour spread through the city unsavourable to the talents of the players. The following night The Beggar's Opera was produced, the principal parts being represented by Miss Pye, a sweet singer with a very pretty figure, and Aldridge, who danced a hornpipe to perfection, but this

attraction did not bring above twenty pounds to the theatre. Alarmed by this unexpected state of affairs, Barry played Hamlet on the 3rd of the following month, when he was received with enthusiasm.

Meanwhile Smock Alley Theatre was making but feeble efforts at opposition. The three principal members of Sheridan's company, Mrs. Gregory, King, and Dexter, went over to the enemy; whilst Sheridan, having at the close of the previous season gone to London to engage talent, had not yet returned.

In his absence Benjamin Victor managed affairs, and engaged Brown, formerly an army man, but now an excellent actor, who made his first appearance in Dublin in the character of the Copper Captain. As he was unknown to the town, he failed on this occasion to draw more than twelve pounds to the house; the second night he brought near twenty-eight pounds to the treasury: whilst on his third performance there was forty pounds in the theatre; and from that time to the end of the season, the Copper Captain became a favourite comedy and he a favourite actor.

Two or three weeks later in the season Mrs. Ward and Digges joined the company at Smock Alley, and materially helped the struggle it was making against Crow Street. Theophilus Cibber had also been engaged by Sheridan, who with a view to Christmas, had bought from the manager of Sadler's Wells for a hundred pounds, a pantomime with scenery, music, and machinery complete, all of which had cost five times that sum. He had also agreed to give two hundred pounds for the season to Maddox, a celebrated wire-dancer who was to act as harlequin. In due time Cibber and Maddox set out for Ireland, where they failed to arrive on the date expected, and "after a painful interval of ten or twelve days," news came that the boat on which with about seventy other passengers they had embarked, had been lost.

This unfortunate occurrence was a blow to Smock Alley Theatre, but a greater came with the announcement that Sheridan did not intend to return, as he believed that further contest was hopeless. "Not only our company appeared planet-struck," writes Victor, "but all our friends in the city hung down their heads and

*LOST WRETCHES*

gave us up as lost wretches." Accordingly, "the worthless part of the tradesmen and all the mean, base persons in the company" began to demand payment for their goods or services.

Victor had one card left to play. Macklin and his daughter had been engaged to perform at Smock Alley in March or April, when it was believed they would bring credit and profit to the house. Meanwhile to keep business going, the manager proposed that his company should take their benefits. The first of these began on the 23rd of January, 1759, two months sooner than was the custom. "And so much were we pitied for our misfortunes and approved for our perseverance by the generous public," writes Victor, "that to sixteen benefit plays was taken the sum of two thousand and twenty-seven pounds, to the great distress of our antagonists."

These benefit nights at Smock Alley left the new theatre so empty, that its managers were reduced to the necessity of imploring the aid of some fashionable woman to bespeak a play, and to exert her interest to have it attended, not only by her friends, but by the tradespeople with whom she dealt. So that it was not un-

common to encounter on the same day a woman of quality forcing the sale of tickets for a performance at the new house ; and a poor player entreating that tickets might be taken for his benefit at the old.

A description is given by one present of a woman of fashion who had bespoken a play in which Barry was to act, and had sent out pit and gallery tickets to all her tradespeople with threats of the loss of her custom if they did not dispose of them, but who, when the evening came, was in a state of consternation at seeing an empty house staring her in the face. She declared herself ready to faint, sniffed at her smelling bottle, and cried out that she was ruined and undone, for she would never again be able to look her dear Mr. Barry in the face, after such a shocking disappointment.

In the midst of her lamentations the box-keeper entered with the hope of bringing her consolation, saying, "I beg your ladyship will not be so disheartened ; indeed, your ladyship's pit will mend, and your ladyship's galleries, too, will certainly mend before the play begins." At which she cried, "Out, you nasty flattering

fellow. I tell you I'm undone; ruined and undone, that's all. But I'll be revenged; I am resolved I'll pay off—no, I'll turn off all my tradesmen to-morrow."

When March came, Macklin, who probably had heard of the pitiful condition of Smock Alley, and did not think it worth while performing there, wrote stating he could not visit Ireland, his daughter's health forbidding him to undertake so hazardous a journey. Victor's last hope of sustaining the struggle was gone. Therefore, by order of Sheridan, he dissolved the company from acting any longer on his account; but as arrears of salary were due to them, the manager gave them permission to keep the house open on their own responsibility. They immediately decided to accept this privilege, and appealed to the town for its patronage, in an advertisement which said:—

“Unforeseen losses will, it is hoped, recommend us to the patronage of the town. And we beg leave to assure the public that it shall be our pride and study to perform the ensuing representations with as much accuracy and diligence, now we are left to our own conduct,

as we have been compelled to suffer irregularity and confusion from having been subjected to a variety of disappointments."

But this petition remained unanswered. They had no attraction or novelty to offer; the public had grown weary of their indifferent performances; and after a few nights the poor players closed the doors on the 28th of May: Crow Street following this example on the 6th of June.

Sheridan was profitably employing his time during this winter by lecturing in London and at Oxford, and had now resolved to return to Dublin no more. Victor, in writing to the Duke of Dorset, tells him of this determination on the part of the late manager, who he says was anxious to sell his property in Ireland if he could find a purchaser. "I am of opinion," says this correspondent, "the purchase money will clear all his debts here, and then the world is open to him to strike out a new fortune. He has merit and sanguine hopes. For my part, not being of that happy number, my hopes are blasted and my prospect barren. As all the little money I have in the world is included in

*PLAGUES OF A THEATRE*

Mr. Sheridan's mortgage, I am to pray for a purchaser, and then I shall gladly retire from the plagues of a theatre."

At this stage of affairs Brown entered into treaty with Sheridan "for the possession of the forlorn and deserted domains of Smock Alley" for the ensuing winter. As an actor of comedy, he won favour; as a tragedian, however, he was found wanting.

Once when he had played Richard the Third at Drury Lane, he had been barely permitted to finish the part. Personally he was a most pleasing and well-behaved companion, rather indolent, very extravagant, and heavily in debt. It was therefore of little consequence to him if his new venture failed, for he could not be poorer; and though in such case he might not obtain further credit, yet he was so well beloved that the tradespeople would not, we are told, "press him to any distress, for as they knew money he had not, to lock him up was inflicting cruelty that could not answer any good purpose."

Eventually the theatre was let to him, when Victor was free to return to London. Of his

departure he writes: "I left a city, that by fourteen years uninterrupted happiness I began to think my own. I must confess I landed on my native country England with sorrow, fearing I should never more see a people I had long loved; nor revisit the land of hospitality and true benevolence."

Having secured Smock Alley for the coming season, Brown, with the remainder of the company, Digges and Mrs. Dancer excepted, went to Cork, where they played during the summer with some success; whilst the managers of Crow Street betook themselves to London that they might engage fresh talent. Believing that Henry Mossop, if secured by the management of Smock Alley, would materially oppose them, Barry and Woodward offered him high terms to join their ranks.

Since he had left Ireland some two years previously, his reputation had steadily risen, so that he was at this time considered the equal of any actor on the stage, and the rival of Garrick. His manner was pedantic, he lived genteelly, and his opinion of himself stood high. Tate Wilkinson relates how this actor reproved him

*TRULY RIDICULOUS*

one day on the stage of Drury Lane, regarding the mimicry of their fellow performers. “Mr. Mossop, the turkey-cock of the stage, with slow and haughty steps, all erect, his gills all swelling, eyes disdainful, and hand upon his sword, breathing as if his respiration was honour, and like the turkey almost bursting with pride, began with much hauteur: ‘Mr. Wilkinson, phew, (as breathing grand) sir, Mr. Wil-kin-son, sir, I say, phew—how dare you sir, make free in a public theatre, or even in a private party, with your superiors? If you were to take such a liberty with me, sir, I would draw my sword and run it through your body sir; you should not live sir,’ and with the greatest pomp and grandeur he made his departure. His supercilious air and manner were so truly ridiculous, that I perceived Mr. Garrick underwent much difficulty to prevent his gravity from changing to a burst of merriment; but when Mossop was fairly out of sight he could not contain himself, and the laugh beginning with the manager, it was followed with avidity by each one who could laugh the most.”

Mossop lent a willing ear to the Dublin

manager's offer, especially as at this time he considered himself affronted by Garrick having played Richard III. on the evening following that on which he, Henry Mossop, had won great favour in the same character. Barry was not only willing to share the representation of tragic parts with him, but to allow him to fix his own terms; so that Mossop, in an evil hour for his fortunes, accepted the engagement.

Amongst others enlisted by the Crow Street managers was Samuel Foote, who was to produce a new sketch called *Taste*, and a comedy he had lately written, entitled *The Minor*, but had not yet put upon the stage.

With a new theatre, the strongest company that had been seen in Ireland, and an excellent wardrobe at their command, the Crow Street managers felt certain of success. This indeed seemed guaranteed by the favour promised them by the Viceregal Court, and by the fact of their being appointed Deputy Masters of the Revels, an act by which their house became the Theatre Royal.

On the 3rd October, 1759, their season opened, when a "Prologue in the Character of Rumour"

*PATRONIZED BY THE COURT*

was spoken by Woodward, and the comedy of *The Way of the World* was played to a tolerably full house. Ten nights later the Duke and Duchess of Dorset, attended by the Court, were present to see *The Stratagem* performed, and so highly pleased were their Graces that from that time forward during the season they were frequently present at the playhouse. On the last day of the month Mossop made his appearance in his favourite character of *Zanga*, before a brilliant and crowded audience, who welcomed his return in the heartiest manner possible, and gave him every proof of their admiration.

He next played *Richard III.* and *Macbeth* to thronged houses, and it was not until the novelty of seeing him act had somewhat subsided, that Barry made his first bow to the town that season, when he played *Orestes* in *The Distressed Mother*, before the Viceregal party and a house uncommonly fashionable and brilliant.

In December Foote was seen, though not as yet in his new play, *The Minor*, that being reserved to the night of the 28th of January, 1760. On this occasion the house was filled

to every corner, a crowd being drawn not only to see the new piece but to laugh at the author's imitation of Wilkinson ; for not only had Foote told his friends, but he had circulated in the press that in the character of Shift he would mimic the voice and manner of his rival.

The caricature, however, was coarsely and untruthfully drawn. Shift was made to state that he was the result of a left-handed marriage between a lamplighter and a seller of cat's meat ; that he himself had been a link-boy ; had learned to pick pockets ; and had moved the compassion of a performer, a whimsical man who had taken him into his service, and from whom he picked up the art of mimicry.

Greatly to Foote's surprise the comedy seemed to disappoint his audience. His biographer, William Cooke, says: "A kind of lassitude arising from misconception first took place ; but when Woodward, who played Mrs. Cole, complained of the rheumatism in her hip, his manner was thought so indecorous by the boxes as to create disgust. The rest of the audience followed the hint and the comedy nearly received its final damnation."

#### *DAMN THE PUG*

Tate Wilkinson, who had arrived in Dublin a few days before this play was produced, could afford to laugh at so absurd a caricature of himself, and to await his opportunity for revenge.

He had landed in Ireland for the second time on the 26th December, 1759, and had immediately received an invitation to supper from the manager of Smock Alley Theatre, who engaged Wilkinson on his own terms of sharing receipts when over twenty pounds, and giving him a clear benefit on whatever night he chose. As Smock Alley had fallen into such decay that it looked like a dungeon, and as the company were "tattered and mean in their attire," Wilkinson's friends thought it would be greatly to his disadvantage to play there.

Foote, on hearing of his rival's engagement, exclaimed, "Damn the pug, what can he do against me?" Barry, who knew the power of mimicry, dreaded Wilkinson's appearance at the opposition house, and strove to enlist his services for Crow Street. His overtures being unsuccessful, he sent a friend named Coates, who was one of the subscribers to the new theatre, and therefore warmly interested

in its success, to wait on Wilkinson. After expressing many compliments, Coates most politely assured the mimic that Barry wished him every success, and begged to assure him that on his benefit night no strong opposition would be offered by the Crow Street management.

Such graciousness as this was the preliminary to a gentle hint "that it would be extremely irksome to Mr. Barry, who was hazarding a deep game and had much at stake, to give the slightest opportunity for his enemies, the partisans of Mr. Sheridan's remaining party, to laugh at any little peculiarities of Mr. Barry's." Finally the latter begged to state, his theatre should always be open to receive Tate on any future occasion, and it might suit both their interests to enter into an engagement at a future day.

"I sincerely wish," said the ambassador before taking his departure, "that you will accept my advice, for the friends of Barry and Woodward are of the first consequence, and the leading people in the kingdom. They have now paid a high compliment to your abilities; and though, Mr. Wilkinson, I have undertaken this

*WILKINSON IS WISE*

embassy, I assure you it is not entirely on their accounts, but chiefly on your own."

Wilkinson being well aware of the injury he might cause his future prospects by ridiculing Barry, begged his compliments might be presented to that gentleman, together with the assurance that the manager might depend on his request being complied with.

Such evidence of the dread he inspired must have been highly gratifying to the young mimic, but greater satisfaction was felt by him next day, when "the high-breathing Mr. Mossop," with pompous step and measured speech, paid him a visit. The tragedian's manner was courtesy itself.

As both had been members of the Drury Lane company the winter before, Mossop wondered much why Wilkinson had not already called on him. "He affected great ease and gaiety, neither of which sat easy," writes Tate. "Though a proud, well-behaved man, he hoped we should be on friendly terms while I continued in Ireland. He did not express one syllable relative either to mimicry, or what I had done, or intended to do at Smock Alley Theatre. On

his departure he rang the bell for a pen and ink, and begged permission to leave a note of remembrance for six box tickets on my benefit night." This was a policy which Barry soon imitated, he requesting that his name might be set down for ten box tickets, for which however he did not pay without a reminder.

Smock Alley Theatre did not begin its season until Friday, the 11th of December, 1759, when the manager spoke a prologue written by himself, entreating the favour and protection of the town. This was followed by a comedy called *The Stratagem*, in which Mrs. Abington made her first appearance in Dublin. This actress, who was soon to achieve high distinction, was at this period almost obscure.

The daughter of a poor cobbler who kept a stall in Vinegar Yard, London, Frances Barton as a child sold flowers in the streets, and was generally known as Nosegay Fan. Alternately with this occupation, she recited and sang at tavern doors or in coffee-house rooms. Later, when acting as servant to a French milliner, she gained familiarity with her mistress's language and a taste for elegant dress. Her inclination

and ambition made her desire to figure as an actress, for which natural intelligence and growing beauty rendered her suitable.

Guided by this longing, she escaped from obscurity, and in the summer of 1775, whilst in her eighteenth year, appeared at the Haymarket Theatre under the management of Theo Cibber. A born actress, her playing surprised the public, and before the season ended she was engaged for the Bath Theatre, where she met Brown. Whilst here she was seen by Lacy, who with Garrick managed Drury Lane, for which house he secured her services, at a salary of thirty shillings a week.

Wise enough to regret the want of education and accomplishments which would enable her to advance in her profession, she set about remedying the defect, and laid aside a portion of her limited income to defray the expenses of her tuition. Amongst other arts she learned music from a man named Abington, who persuaded her to marry him. Their union, however, proving unhappy, they resolved to part, she agreeing to pay him a certain annuity on the condition that he in no way molested her.

At Drury Lane she contended with the jealousy that invariably besets those struggling for public favour ; and her talents bringing her into direct rivalry with Kitty Clive, the latter made life unpleasant for the younger and more beautiful woman. Mrs. Abington came to believe that Garrick failed to perceive her talents lest his acknowledgment of them might entitle her to demand a higher salary ; so when her former friend Brown asked her to enlist under his management, and offered her the choice of every leading character, she immediately answered by crossing the channel and joining his forces.

Every effort had been made by the manager to obtain a crowded house for Mrs. Abington's first appearance in Dublin, and in this he fairly succeeded, when she was warmly greeted, critically observed, and heartily applauded. The theatre was not again opened until the following Wednesday, when she played Beatrice to his Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and gained a greater measure of favour.

The same comedy was acted on the 4th of

### *WILKINSON'S REVENGE*

January, 1760, after which Tate Wilkinson appeared in *The Diversions of the Morning*. It was now his turn to mimic Foote, and this he did with such wit and accuracy, that the audience roared, and the players on the stage catching the contagion of laughter, the merriest evening possible was passed by all present. *The Diversions of the Morning* was repeated a few nights later, after the *Shylock of Brown* and the *Portia* of Mrs. Abington, when once more the house was convulsed with laughter.

It might have been supposed that Foote, who had made so many people wince, would bear with philosophic calm or good-humoured indifference the mimicry of a youth he had grossly burlesqued, but this was not the case ; for one morning he presented himself before Wilkinson and angrily told him that if he dared to take any more liberties with him on the stage, he was determined to call him to account. This threat did not frighten Wilkinson who knew his man ; the mimicry was continued, the public laughed, and as for Foote, as Wilkinson says, " he was not observant, but let me rest in quiet."

Wilkinson's imitation of Foote being "really and truly greatly approved," the town talked of it incessantly until news of the fun reached the Viceregal Court, on which the Lord Lieutenant commanded a performance of *The Diversions of the Morning*, at which he and his suite were mightily amused.

The rivalry between the mimics continued until they took their departure from Ireland. Foote fixed his benefit for the 11th of February, 1760, when "his boxes, though fashionable, were not extremely well supported, and the house on the whole did not amount to above one hundred pounds." Wilkinson announced his benefit to take place four evenings later. On the date selected every disadvantage seemed to threaten him; for not only did a violent snow-storm visit the town, but *Measure for Measure*, followed by the pantomime of *Fortunatus*, were played at the opposition theatre, a Miss M'Neal was holding a concert at the Assembly Rooms, and a debate was taking place in the House of Commons.

Notwithstanding this the eagerness for admission to Smock Alley was so extraordinary

### *WILKINSON'S BENEFIT*

that the house overflowed soon after the doors were opened. "Even the orchestra was filled with gentlemen who got over." Numbers were refused admittance, and another night was demanded for those holding outstanding tickets.

This success was largely due to Wilkinson's social and theatrical popularity, and also to the fact that he selected for production the farce, *High Life Below Stairs*, that had met with great success when played at Drury Lane the previous October, but which had not yet been seen in Dublin. In selecting it for his benefit he had the approval of Mrs. Abington, who agreed to play the principal female part, fortunately for her own repute. Both she and he had seen it performed at Drury Lane, they knew the stage business perfectly, and no comparisons with other players could be made to their disadvantage.

Half the first act of the farce had not been gone through before "looks of universal surprise and satisfaction overspread every countenance"; roars of laughter followed, and a general merriment spread through the house. Nor was this

mirth without its amazement ; for the audience for the first time saw Mrs. Abington in a part that more than any other she had attempted, gave scope to her powers as an actress of comedy. Wilkinson says "the whole circle were in surprise and rapture, each asking the other how such a treasure could have possibly been in Dublin, and in almost a state of obscurity. Such a jewel was invaluable, and their own tastes and judgments they feared would justly be called in question if this daughter of Thalia was not immediately taken by the hand and distinguished as her certain and striking merit demanded."

Though the average receipts of Smock Alley Theatre ran from twenty to twenty-five pounds, and at highest to forty pounds, yet Wilkinson's benefit brought him a hundred and seventy-two pounds, "the greatest ever known at that time in that kingdom." The farce was played again some nights later, and was preceded by the tragedy of *The Orphan of China*, in which Wilkinson played the hero dressed in an old red damask bed-gown, "which was what we termed the stock bed-gown for Bra-

bantio and many other parts, and had from time immemorial been of that venerable use, and bore marks of many years faithful servitude."

Again Mrs. Abington's grace and humour delighted her audience. A thousand merits were seen in her now which had not been observed before. Her manner was charmingly fascinating, her voice melodious, her by-play natural. O'Keefe tell us she had "peculiar tricks in acting : one was turning her wrist and seeming to stick a pin in the side of her waist ; she was also very adroit in the exercise of her fan."

Her dress was much commented on by her own sex and approved by them ; so that a week later than her appearance in this farce, the Abington cap was so much the taste of ladies of fashion, that there was not a milliner's shop window, great or small, in which this article did not appear with the actress's name attached to it in great letters.

Many of her ardent admirers who disliked visiting the old dilapidated theatre in Smock Alley, and desired to have an opportunity of seeing her play with a suitable company in better surroundings, proposed that she should

appear a few evenings at Crow Street Theatre before the season closed, assuring her of their patronage on the nights she played. It was therefore arranged that she should act for the managers of that house a certain number of times on condition of having a clear benefit for herself. This took place on the 22nd of May, when an overflowing house gave her the warmest applause.

With her disappearance from the stage of Smock Alley Theatre, its manager's last hope went out, and he abandoned the struggle, bearing an increased load of debt that was never discharged.

Crow Street Theatre closed on the 6th of June, after one of the most brilliant seasons ever known in Dublin. Tragedy, comedy, and pantomime had been staged in a manner superior to anything previously seen in Ireland ; an excellent company had been enlisted, whose weekly salaries amounted to about one hundred and seventy pounds ; whilst the tradesmen's bills and the servants salaries exceeded that sum. The result was that the expenses were greater than the receipts. This did not much disturb

### *MOSSOP'S DECISION*

Barry, who was naturally extravagant and accustomed to debt ; but his partner, Woodward, was a man of different character, who was honourable, economical, and so honest that it was said " his dinner, good or bad, would not digest unless he was certain it was paid for." They hoped, however, to recover their losses and profit themselves at a future time, especially as they believed all opposition was now ended.

They were soon to learn their mistake on this point, for on offering to renew Henry Mossop's engagement for the following season, he told them he had decided to take Smock Alley, and enter into management for himself. The argument Sheridan had used to Barry, the latter put forward to Mossop—that there was room but for one theatre in Dublin ; that the struggle they must maintain would bring ruin to both ; but to all such reasoning Mossop turned a deaf ear, for he was now at the highest point of popularity, lauded by the public, sought after by the nobility, and followed by the College Boys, whose partisanship and patronage were valuable to an actor.

To win him from a project so dangerous to

themselves, the managers offered him the great salary of a thousand pounds and two clear benefits for the season, but these terms he haughtily rejected, spurred on by his exceeding vanity, by his desire to rival Barry in the parts the silver-tongued actor reserved to himself, and by a number of fashionable women "who protected him, and who without either judgment or discretion, would take him from almost a sinecure situation to place him at the head of Smock Alley Theatre, under all the responsibilities of such an undertaking and with a rival and established theatre in opposition." These women of quality, at whose head and front stood the Countess of Brandon, were reckless gamblers, who by his susceptibility to flattery, led a man naturally prudent and sober to indulge in their favourite vice. And as each had a certain following in the fashionable world and could exercise some interest amongst their tradespeople, they promised to use their influence on his behalf as a manager; when it was believed by them a larger share than usual of his earnings would find its way to their pockets across the card table.

*SEEKING NOVELTY*

When therefore Crow Street Theatre closed, Woodward and Mossop went to London, both intent on securing novelty and talent for their rival houses. Barry meantime took his company to Cork.

## CHAPTER V.

Preparing for opposition—Engagement of Miss Bellamy—The actress indulges in melancholy—Facing a crowd of college boys—Her appearance at Smock Alley—Contention of the theatres—Poverty of the managers—Mrs. Bellamy is arrested—Mossop gambles—Barry and the bailiffs—Macklin's farces—Terence Martin's eccentricity—Rival Othellos.

THE first step taken by Mossop in preparation for his campaign was to have Smock Alley Theatre thoroughly repaired and handsomely decorated, to order a new wardrobe, and to have an entirely fresh set of scenes painted. He next organized a company that numbered scarce less than forty performers. Amongst these was Brown, the former manager of Smock Alley; Diggles, who had been prevailed on to leave Edinburgh, where he had become an extraordinary favourite; Weston, "a genuine son of comic humour"; Griffith, who was "easy, sprightly, and fashionable, had a marking eye, a pleasing countenance, and a good voice,"

and who moreover had the distinction of being a brother to "the celebrated Mrs. Griffith, an authoress of great repute, and whose share in the Letters of Henry and Frances had raised her reputation high in the literary world."

Mossop, however, was at some loss for an actress who could play comedy or tragedy with distinction, for Mrs. Abington had been engaged on most eligible terms by the Crow Street managers, who had likewise secured the continuation of the services of Mrs. Griffith, now Mrs. Fitzhenry. On learning that she preferred to remain with Barry, we are told that "Mossop sniffed the air and breathed hard," for London "had no tragedy woman to spare," and the new manager feared his fortunes would suffer for want of a capable leading lady.

At this point he heard that Miss Bellamy, owing to her extravagances, was in such financial straits as to prevent her public appearance in London lest she might be arrested for debt, and remembering the favour in which formerly she had been held by the Dublin public, he offered her an engagement of a

thousand pounds for the season, with two benefits.

This she readily accepted.

“As I had been so caressed and flattered at Dublin in my younger days,” writes this foolish, fantastical woman, “it was naturally to be supposed that the success I had since met with on the London theatres would enhance my value, and make me a desirable acquisition to any house I should appear at.” Accordingly she set out for Ireland alone, as she discreetly remarks, save for her retinue of servants, that numbered two postillions, a guide, two footmen, and three maids. During her journey she became sentimental. “Having leisure to indulge my melancholy,” writes this heroine of a hundred intrigues, “I could not even help envying the happiness of my servants, in whose bosoms cheerful innocence seemed to reign, whilst I was tortured with the severest reflections.” The days she spent in travelling to Holyhead were monotonous, but during the evenings she had great entertainment, “there being always some person at the inns playing upon the harp, the favourite instrument of the

Welsh, and the ditties they played seemed to suit the gloomy temperature of my mind."

At Holyhead she found a great number of persons waiting to cross over but unwilling to venture, as the weather was rough. However, as this romantic lady had no desire to live, though she had a very earnest wish to arrive at a specified date, so that a heavy penalty might not be exacted by her manager, she got on board, was accommodated by a state cabin, and for four days suffered dreadful sea-sickness.

A coach was sent to meet and convey her to a house in College Green where she was to make a temporary stay. And as her arrival had been hourly expected, and the fame of her beauty had been handed down from a former generation, a number of the undergraduates had collected to see her. "I accordingly found the door of the house at which I was to alight crowded with them, in expectation of beholding a wonder. For it could not enter into the imagination of those young gentlemen that anything less than a perfect beauty had been so general a topic of conversation, and the subject of so many poetical compliments from their predecessors.

“One of my female domestics was tolerably handsome ; she therefore at first caught their eyes, but as she had not that appearance of elegance which distinguishes the gentlewoman, the mistake was but momentary. At length I stepped out of the coach. The long-expected phenomenon now made her appearance. But oh, how different a figure from what their imagination had depicted. Fashion to yourself the idea of a little dirty creature, bent nearly double, enfeebled by fatigue, her countenance tinged with the jaundice, and in every respect the reverse of a person who could make the least pretensions to beauty. Such was I when I presented myself to the sight of the gazing crowd. And so great and natural was their surprise and disappointment, that they immediately vanished, and left me to crawl into the house without admiration or molestation.”

The next day Mossop came to congratulate her upon her safe arrival, for recent storms had made him fearful of her fate. Now some time before receiving Mossop’s offer she had promised to give Barry the option of engaging her in case she decided to visit Ireland. When therefore

Mossop wished to engage her, she wrote to Barry concerning his proposal, but receiving no answer, she had bound herself to the manager of Smock Alley. When therefore the latter called on her, one of the first things he mentioned was that Barry had posted on the principal coffee-house in the town, her letter giving him the option of engaging her. This enraged Miss Bellamy, who wrote an account of the incident to Calcraft, her late protector, when that gallant man at once demanded of Barry the four hundred pounds he had lent him. As Barry was unable to comply, his partner was obliged to pay ; and in this way the lady was avenged.

Crow Street Theatre had been newly painted during the autumn, and its company equalled in number and excelled in talent those under Mossop's management. Both houses prepared for a hot contest, and the Theatre Royal, as the Crow Street house was called, opened its doors on Friday, October 24th (1760), when *All's Well that Ends Well*, purposely chosen for its title, was produced. Smock Alley prepared to follow suit by beginning its season on the 29th, but on the morning of that date came a rumour

that George II. had died four days previously. Both theatres promptly closed that evening, "on account," as the Dublin *Courier* announced, "of a disagreeable report which was propagated almost universally throughout this city, but which, we hope, is without foundation." On the 1st of November, eight days later than the death of this profligate old man, a message was received at Dublin Castle stating that "our late sovereign lord King George the Second of blessed memory" had died. The theatres accordingly remained closed, a hardship the poor players had to bear; but the usual period during which regret for a monarch's loss was expressed by keeping the playhouses shut was mercifully shortened by Government, so that they were permitted to open their doors on the 17th of November.

Mossop allowed Weston, Griffith, and "an English young gentleman of the name of Shaw, who had never yet appeared upon any stage," to make their appearances before Miss Bellamy sought public favour. But on the 1st of December she was announced to play Belvidera in *Venice Preserved*, Mossop appearing as

*THEY REMEMBERED HER BEAUTY*

Pierre. No sooner was the tragedy announced for performance at Smock Alley than the rival house advertised it for the same evening.

Curiosity and excitement were rampant; the remembrance of Miss Bellamy's beauty, and sympathy with Mossop's venture inclined the greater number to favour them. According to Wilkinson, no sooner were the doors of Smock Alley Theatre opened than "the house crowded as fast as the people could thrust in, with or without paying." Whilst the boxes filled with women of quality in hoop and powder, patches on their cheeks, diamonds on their breasts, and with men of parts, brave in the splendour of flaring satin suits with embroideries of silver and gold, the gods cheered or joked, sang and hailed those known to the town. Then the candles in front of the stage being lighted, and the orchestra having discoursed sweet music, up went the curtain and silence fell upon the house.

When Digges entered as Jaffier he was received with "most unfeigned plaudits"; later Mossop appeared to receive three rounds of approbation, "as lasting as it was sincere"; then

came the turn of Miss Bellamy. On speaking her first line behind the scenes her voice struck the audience as harsh, yet she was received with hearty welcome, but her appearance immediately disillusioned all. For "the roses were fled, the young, the once lovely Bellamy was turned haggard, and her eyes that used to charm all hearts, appeared sunk, hollow, and ghastly. Before the short first scene had elapsed, disappointment, chagrin, and pity sat on every eye and countenance. By the end of the third act they were all planet-struck ; the other two acts hobbled through. Mossop was cut to the heart, and never played *Pierre*, one of his best parts, so indifferently as on that night. The curtain dropped, and poor Bellamy never afterwards drew a single house there."

As Crow Street could boast of three excellent actresses, together with such players as Barry, Woodward, and Fleetwood, an excellent comedian brought over from Drury Lane, its performances were far better sustained. Though Barry with his commanding presence, his handsome face and bewitching voice was unequalled, he was always doubtful of his own powers ; and this

actor who by the utterance of a single line sometimes made the whole house burst into tears, as Hitchcock states, would frequently draw aside the members of his company, and even his stage carpenters, to ask their opinion on his playing and on his appearance. One evening when he had "made up" for Othello after a sketch of the Moor, drawn for him by O'Keeffe, he entered the green room and anxiously inquired how he looked. "Why," replied Isaac Sparks, who had the reputation of a wit, "as you belong to the London Beefsteak Club, O'Keeffe has made you peeping through a gridiron."

Barry's partner, Henry Woodward, besides being a clever comedian was declared the best harlequin on the stage. He delighted in pantomimes, and this season brought out an entertainment of the kind called *Queen Mab and the Sorcerer*, at an enormous cost and "in a style of perfection worthy the first theatre in Europe." Barry was not pleased at so gorgeous a display in which he had no part, and when possible introduced magnificent processions into the tragedies in which he played. In this

way arose jealousy and contentions which were soon to part them. One of these splendid spectacles was presented when in the play of Alexander the Great that monarch made his triumphant entry into Babylon. Alexander was seen at the further end of the stage seated in a magnificent chariot, drawn to the sounds of martial music by unarmed soldiers. "When arrived at its station to stop for him to alight," writes John O'Keeffe, who describes the sight, "before he had time even to speak, the machinery was settled on such a simple yet certain plan, that the chariot in a twinkling disappeared, and every soldier was at the instant armed. It was thus managed. Each man having his particular duty previously assigned him, laid his hand on different parts of the chariot; one took a wheel and held it up on high—this was his shield; the others took the remaining wheels, all in a moment were shields upon their left arms; the axle-tree was taken by another—it was a spear; the body of the chariot also took to pieces, and the whole was converted into swords, javelins, lances, standards; each soldier thus armed arranged

himself at the sides of the stage, and Alexander, standing in the centre, began his speech."

Both houses made their highest bid for popularity, whilst neither did sufficient business to pay expenses. Occasionally a full house was obtained to see Barry play Othello, or to see Digges as Macbeth prepare for mortal combat with Macduff by flinging wide his embroidered waistcoat to show he was not "papered," or otherwise protected from the blade of his antagonist. Throughout the season the greatest endeavours were made by the rival theatres not merely to excel but to harass each other. In these efforts neither labour nor expense was spared, whilst recourse frequently was made to ingenuity and deception. No sooner was a piece put in rehearsal or announced for production at one house, than the other strove to forestall its appearance. And even when this was impossible, one theatre would boldly advertise the performance of the same play for the same evening as that already selected by the other, and change the bill at the last moment; for by such means it was hoped injury would be dealt the rival.

For example, an announcement that The Wife's Resentment would be played at Crow Street, immediately produced an advertisement of the same play at Smock Alley, though Mossop had not the least idea of putting it on his stage. Later he gained a success by subtlety.

Barry and Woodward decided to produce a tragedy by Arthur Murphy called The Orphan of China, which a little while before had gained great reputation in London. Believing its fame would bring them crowded houses, they made costly preparations for staging the tragedy, taking care in puff preliminaries to inform the public of the extraordinary expense they undertook in having the dresses made in London from models imported from China, and the scenes painted for the occasion in the Chinese style by an artist of the highest reputation.

The play being printed was at the disposal of all, and Mossop who had received his copy as soon as his rivals, had set about producing the tragedy, whilst keeping his intentions secret. Rehearsals were gone through three times a

day, the tailor belonging to the theatre was set to work, and in a short time all was ready. Then when the curiosity of the town was at its highest, and all looked forward to seeing it at Crow Street, an unexpected advertisement appeared stating that *The Orphan* would be played that same evening, January 5th, 1761, at Smock Alley. The bills announced that the scenery, dresses, and decorations were entirely new, and that "the characters will be all new dressed in the manufactures of this kingdom."

The tragedy drew five good houses to Smock Alley before it could be produced at Crow Street, by which time public interest in the piece had been exhausted, and heavy losses were suffered by Barry and Woodward.

On another occasion *the Tempest* was advertised by both houses for performance on the same date; but on this occasion victory was gained by Crow Street because of the ingenious machinery it employed.

The respective companies were harassed, not knowing when they might be called to rehearsals, or required to study new parts. Mossop was exacting with his staff, and never

consulted them regarding the play he would next produce, or even mention its name until such became necessary. In this respect he was declared by Mahony, one of his comedians, a sphinx.

“A sphinx,” said a super who overheard him, “an’ what is that?”

“A monster, man,” was the answer.

“A Munster man; sure I always thought he was a Leinster man,” replied the ignoramus.

On nights when Mossop played to scanty houses, he suffered as much from wounded vanity as from financial worry. That he should act and be neglected by the town, seemed intolerable, yet in spite of the exertions of his patronesses, this was frequently the case. On account of poor receipts and gambling losses, he was unable to meet his expenses during his first season. Miss Bellamy says, “Not one of his company was regularly paid but myself, though by what means he expended his money I could not imagine.”

A member of his company named Usher, wrathful that his salary had been left for weeks in arrears, hit upon a strange way of obtaining

his money. One evening when Mossop was playing Lear to a brilliant house, lighted by wax, as was the custom when Shakespeare was produced, Usher represented the Duke of Kent. All went well until the scene where the stricken monarch is supported by this faithful subject, when the latter took the opportunity of whispering to his majesty, "If you don't give me your honour sir, that you'll pay me my arrears this night before I go home, I'll let you drop about the boards." Alarmed at this, the king muttered, "Don't talk to me now." "I will," persisted Usher, "I will let you drop," on which King Lear promised to pay the duke, and kept his word.

Mossop was not the only one connected with Smock Alley who was in debt; for no less a person than his leading lady, Miss Bellamy herself, was arrested in the street for a wine bill. On arriving at Holyhead the actress had sent back her male servants and her horses to London, and soon after reaching Dublin had taken a furnished house in Kildare Street, and bought a splendid state sedan, with superb silver lace liveries, which was vastly admired and envied.

It may be mentioned that at this time it was

impossible for a lady of quality in evening dress to ride in her coach, for her head, being piled with woollen cushions, had her hair drawn over it, greased, powdered, and surmounted by nodding plumes, the whole structure often rising to the height of six feet. It was therefore necessary for her to be carried in a sedan chair which was accommodated by a dome. The seat was set in grooves, to be raised or lowered according to the altitude of the occupant's head-dress. "I have seen," writes one who comments on this fashion, "a lady standing in the street, the chairman looking up at her feathers and cap-wings, and several times raising or lowering the seat. At last he thrust it in not three inches from the floor, and there the belle was obliged to squat, the feathers rising three feet perpendicular, and the face the centre of the figure, with her hoop up on each side of her ears."

Now as Miss Bellamy was being carried in her gorgeous sedan to rehearsal one morning, she observed a mean-looking fellow run by the side of her chair. She paid a visit on her way, but on again setting out saw the same figure attending her. She had no suspicion of danger

*BELLAMY ARRESTED*

from him, but attributed his notice "to the beauty of my sedan, which indeed attracted every eye."

That day she had some fine company to dinner, which made it later than usual when she started for the playhouse. And scarce had she entered an adjoining street, than the man who had followed her in the morning rapped at the window of her chair, and on Miss Bellamy letting it down, showed her a bit of paper. She asking what it was, he told her it was nothing less than a writ for two hundred pounds she owed to one Coates, a man "of rude, turbulent disposition." To this creature she had, during her five months residence in Dublin, become indebted to the amount of four hundred pounds "for wine and other articles," but out of a salary of fifty guineas a week had managed to pay half the sum. That he should pester her for the remainder was intolerable; however, she assured the bailiff that if he went with her to the theatre he should receive his money, but the fellow stoutly told her she must come with him, and nothing was left for her but to obey.

She was taken to the bailiff's house in Skinner

Row, where according to her own story, she was informed that the object of taking her that evening was to prevent her appearance at the theatre. Indeed the mean-looking man, who "was such a vulgar impudent" as this fine lady had never heard before, assured her he had been particularly warned not to arrest her in the morning, as it was supposed she could have paid the debt and disappointed the purpose for which she had been arrested.

Meanwhile the part she was to have acted at the theatre was read by Mrs. Usher. The play being over, Mossop hurried to her, when she became "vastly apprehensive that he would cane her creditor." Later Digges arrived upon the scene "like a distracted man." Now Digges had a reputation for gallantry, hearing which, so discreet a lady as Miss Bellamy had at first declined to admit him as a visitor. However, according to her own statement, he had marked her for a conquest, he sighed at a distance, and behaved with such respect that she imagined, poor innocent, his character had suffered injustice. Eventually a female acquaintance introduced him to her house, when she found

him a polished gentleman and an entertaining companion. Seeing her distressed condition, outraged his tenderest feelings, and "his first business was to give a most severe chas-tisement to Coates." After this her gratitude induced her to smile upon Digges.

At the end of the season Mossop had no desire to retain her services, nor was he able to pay the salary due to her, so that before she left Dublin she was obliged to borrow four hundred pounds to discharge her debts.

Both houses closed early in June, to begin the same contention in the autumn. Various members of the respective companies changed their managers ; and so common an occurrence was this amongst them, that Hitchcock says "some gentlemen were so much in this mode of manœuvring, that they were sometimes led into great mistakes, and have often been called to begin a play at one theatre, when they have been found dressing at another."

Amongst those who went over to Mossop were Mrs. Abington and Mrs. Fitzhenry, who had found it unpleasant to remain in a company where Mrs. Dancer exercised such influence

with Barry. Smock Alley opened on October 12th, but without presenting any novelty or causing any interest until the appearance of Tate Wilkinson early in January, 1762. As usual, he acted in comedy and gave imitations, but wisely avoided mimicking Barry or Woodward. Whilst in London Wilkinson had set the town in a roar by his imitations of Mossop, who as "a distiller of words," a speaker "whose syllables fell from him like minute guns," and who being "overloaded with a quantity of combustibles consisting of pride, insolence, arrogance, and gall," made him an easy victim to ridicule. Mossop on hearing of Wilkinson's imitations had been wrathful, but he overcame his anger that he might benefit his finances.

He now professed great friendship for Wilkinson, graciously admitted him to a footing of equality, and dined with him twice a week at Dr. Wilson's rooms in Trinity College. At these Wilkinson was often urged to imitate Barry and Woodward, but refused from policy, for he believed that Mossop's friendship would be of short duration. "I knew," says the mimic, "in his heart he hated me; so the foundation

#### *GREAT MIRTH*

which I depended on for his good will was weak and frivolous ; and when he wanted to be quit of me, I should have shut Barry's doors against my sweet self."

However, over his wine one day he agreed to imitate Woodward, which greatly pleased Mossop, "a plain proof how we relish satire against others, and how little we allow for it against ourselves." Wilkinson's imitations of Woodward and Miss Bellamy brought good houses for a few weeks, after which Mossop had recourse to music, and introduced Italian opera to Dublin. Most of his patrons were pleased with the idea, and subscribed with sufficient liberality to enable him to profit by the venture, which however "hurt his own consequence as a performer"; for the opera nights were crowded, but he acted to scanty audiences.

It was during this season that one of his tragic performances occasioned great mirth ; for when as Osmin in *The Mourning Bride*, he had killed the wretched Selim, the latter was seized with a sudden fit of coughing, and putting his hands to his neck, he loosened his stock, causing

a general roar of laughter. When the curtain fell on this untimely merriment, the outraged tragedian soundly rated the dead man for coming to life; but the latter protested he must have choked had he not acted as he did.

“Sir,” answered Mossop, “you should have choked a thou-sand times ra-ther than spoil my scene.”

Notwithstanding the success he met with by the engagements of Wilkinson, of the Italian Opera Company, and of Reddish, “a gentleman of easy fortune,” who now made his first appearance on the stage and gained great esteem, the manager continued to be hard pressed for money, whilst his company had their salaries left unpaid. “When he had a good house,” says Wilkinson, “instead of endeavouring to extricate himself in any degree from his multiplicity of difficulties, he grew desperate, and instead of paying either his tradesmen or performers, flew to gay circles where he was gladly admitted; in order to mend his broken fortune by the chance of a die or the turn up of a card, of which I believe he was ignorant and unacquainted with the necessary arts to succeed. He has often left

*ACHING HEAD AND HEART*

the theatre with a hundred guineas in his pocket, and returned home with an aching head and heart ; the Countess of Brandon served him greatly, it is true, but often the money she occasioned being paid at the theatre returned to her own coffers."

On one occasion, when the salaries of his company were several weeks over-due, one of its members, Mrs. Burden, who was to play Andromache in *The Distressed Mother*, found access to his house, which from prudent motives he seldom quitted before sunset, save on Sundays. Reaching his royal presence, she cried out, " Oh, sir, for God's sake assist me, I have not bread to eat, I am actually starving, and shall be turned out into the streets if you don't pay me."

" Wo-man," answered the tragedian loftily, " you have five pounds a week, wo-man."

" True, sir," the poor actress answered, " but I have been in Dublin six months, and in all that time have received only six pounds. I call every Saturday at the office, but am told there is no money for me. Besides sir your credit and honour are at stake, for how am

I to play Andromache without black satin shoes?"

"Wo-man, begone," replied the great man, impervious to the humour of her argument. "I insist on your having black sat-in shoes for Androm-a-che. And, wo-man, if you dare ask me for money again, I will fine you ten pounds." So ended, says Wilkinson, "that real tragical scene of penury and pomposity."

Barry's condition was nothing better. His reckless extravagance rendered him liable to arrest at any moment, and indeed one night when the curtain had dropped on the last act of Romeo, he was assisted to rise from Capulet's tomb by two bailiffs. His first words were to ask at whose suit he was arrested, and being told, he prepared to accompany them. Seeing his plight, the stage carpenters, who were devoted to him, came on the scene, one of them, a ferocious-looking chap, carrying a hatchet. Barry told them to "be quiet, you foolish fellows," but not feeling certain of their obedience, he stood between them and the bailiffs, whom he ushered through lobbies and passages until they reached the street door,

where he gave them his word of honour the debt should be discharged the following morning. The men thought it advisable to accept his promise, and thanking him for his protection, gladly hurried away.

It was during this season that he introduced his son, Thomas Barry, to the stage. Though the youth's figure was graceful, he failed to inherit the charm of voice or beauty of countenance that distinguished his father, whilst he was wanting in dramatic ability. An indulgent audience, who felt a personal interest in him, welcomed young Barry, who however soon fell into the ranks of mediocrity, and the best that could be said of him was that his performances never offended. His appearance on this world's stage was brief, for he speedily fell into a consumption of which he died.

The greatest success that the Crow Street managers scored this season was caused by the engagement of Charles Macklin, who was to produce an after-piece he had written called *Love à la Mode*, that had met with much commendation at Drury Lane.

This comedy, whose chief character is a

genial Irishman, had been suggested to Macklin by the humorous conversation of a Hibernian he had met in a Covent Garden coffee house. But before it was written Macklin laid an outline of the plot before Barry, then in London, who was so pleased with the idea that he offered to play the principal part ; and was so anxious to have the comedy finished that he offered the elder actor the wager of "a rump and a dozen" he would not produce it within three months. In six weeks a complete sketch of the incidents without the conversation was shown to Barry, who gladly paid the wager to Macklin, he undertaking to finish the play before the end of the season.

He took a longer time however, and meanwhile Barry went to Dublin. *Love à la Mode* was then played at Drury Lane and received with applause. It was produced at Crow Street in December, the principal parts being represented by Massink, Woodward, and Barry. The latter as Sir Callaghan O'Brallaghan was delightful. It was considered partly the character of the player himself in his

convivial moments, "for as he excelled in telling humorous stories relative to Irishmen and their blunders, he knew how to fill up all the minutiae of the picture to advantage. The heroism of his figure, and the frankness of his manners, gave that finish to the whole which rendered it as perfect a piece of acting as perhaps ever was exhibited. The town followed it with unabated curiosity for a whole winter, as one of their never-failing dishes of entertainment."

So great was the success of this play that Macklin set to work on a similar composition which was produced the following season under the name of *The True Born Irishman*. The object of this little comedy was to ridicule the affectation of Irish ladies of fashion, who on their return from a visit to London, aped the pronunciation and manners of the English in contempt of their native dialect and customs. To this study was added that of a prejudiced Englishman, who saw every thing in Ireland with a jaundiced eye, so that the fish was too fresh for him, the claret too light, and the women too fair.

These characters were certain to please an

Irish audience, but a further bid for popularity was made by the introduction under a thin disguise of Single Speech Hamilton, who as secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, was thoroughly disliked by the patriotic section of the populace. This personage, who was called Count Mushroom, was excellently played by Ryder ; Morrough O'Doherty, the principal part, by the author, whilst Pat FitzMongrel was acted by Massink.

Whilst the piece was in rehearsal news spread through the coffee-houses and taverns of its wit and satire, some of its speeches were repeated, its laughable situations were described ; so that on the night of its first representation a great house gathered to enjoy the fun. Its humour and ridicule were at once seized on and applauded ; Macklin was received with cheers, whilst Mrs. Dancer, who played the part of the affected fine lady, Mrs. Doherty, was declared irresistible. Laughter rang through the theatre from the moment the curtain went up, and the merriment was increased by the whimsical conduct of a member of the audience.

In one of the stage boxes, seated in the

centre of a large party, was an individual named Terence Martin, who was famous for his eccentricity. Now either believing or wishing to believe that he had the distinction of being burlesqued in this piece, he no sooner saw Massink enter as Pat FitzMongrel, than he claimed that character for himself, and instantly cried out to the house: "Why, that's me. But what sort of rascally coat is that they've dressed me in? Here, I'll dress you," saying which he stood up, took off his fine gold-laced coat and flung it on the stage. Massink took it up, retired to the wings, threw off his own, put on Martin's coat, and returned to the stage amidst roars of laughter and applause.

Though the character of Count Mushroom was declared a strong likeness of the Chief Secretary, the Court pretended not to recognize or feel hurt by it, this example being set by the original of the study, who attended the theatre, seemed amused by the farce, and subsequently entertained its author, in this way helping to disarm ridicule.

For the performance, at the option of the manager, of *Love à la Mode*, and *The True*

Born Irishman, it was agreed their author should receive thirty pounds a week, payable at the treasury every Saturday morning. For a brief while Macklin received his money, but eventually found great difficulty in obtaining the same. This was a state of affairs which sturdy Charles Macklin would not long tolerate; so he roundly demanded of Barry why he was not paid, and declared with an oath that if he were not, and that regularly according to agreement, he would take himself and his plays to Smock Alley.

Barry, whom long experience had made skilful in the art of soothing creditors, acknowledged the services the farces and their author had rendered him, for which he was most willing to fulfil his engagements. "But my dear Mac," he added sweetly, "as your lodgings are two miles from town, and as it is known you take down thirty pounds every Saturday night, there is every danger of your being robbed, and perhaps otherwise ill-treated; so that you had better let your money lie in the treasury, which you may command at all times."

At this advice Macklin grinned sarcastically,

then pulling a great clasp-knife from his pocket, answered, "Look 'ee here, sir, here is my remedy against thieves. The man who attempts to rob me shall taste steel."

"Well, but my dear Mac," persisted Barry, "determined as you are, remember you are but one man, and these fellows go in gangs, so that your knife will be little use amongst numbers."

"Very true, sir," said Macklin ; "but allowing all this to be true, I have still but a chance of being robbed on the highway, whereas in the other case, my dear Spranger, you know there is a certainty of my being robbed in town. Therefore I'll choose the least risk. Pay me my money or I'm no longer your actor."

Even the persuasive Barry was unable to change this determination, and was therefore obliged to pay Macklin regularly.

To combat the success which the Italian burlettas had brought to Smock Alley, it was suggested by Lord Mornington that *Midas*, a musical piece written some four years previously by Kane O'Hara, vice-president of the Academy of Music, should be produced at *Crow*

Street. The managers of the latter house seized on the idea, and this musical trifle, which already had been performed with success in private, was lengthened and made to burlesque the Italian singers who had attracted the town. To aid this ridicule the performers in *Midas* had their names Italianized, so that Pat Mahony and Elizabeth Glover became Signor Patrico Mahoni and Signora Elizabetta Gloverina. As the piece was rich with topical allusions and local satires, and was excessively humorous, it obtained immediate success and long remained popular.

As early as March (1762) Barry and Mossop fixed their benefits for the same evening, each announcing that he would play *Othello*. Mossop relied on his novelty, and Barry on his reputation in that part, to draw large houses. Although the Countess of Brandon and her friends would not on any account be seen in Crow Street, yet Barry, whose matchless love-making left tender impressions, had his following of fair women who set their faces against Smock Alley; whilst the town was torn by contention, the tradespeople especially being

*THE VICEROY'S MESSAGE*

harassed by the commands of their patronesses to attend both houses on the same evening.

On this occasion the strife was at its height when Lady Brandon, at whose solicitation the Duke of Northumberland, then Lord Lieutenant, had commanded Mossop's performance, now besought his Excellency to use his influence in persuading Barry to fix on another date for his benefit. His Grace being anxious to avoid civil warfare and to oblige so fair a courtier, accordingly despatched a messenger to Barry to state the regret his Excellency felt at being unable to attend Crow Street on the evening chosen for the manager's benefit; but if by postponing this, he would accord to his Grace the pleasure of seeing so great an actor representing Othello, his performance would receive a royal command.

Barry of course consented to change the evening, when in due course the Court assembled to see the tragedian, who represented the Moor of Venice in a complete suit of English regiments, with a three-cocked gold-laced hat. On this night however, from the fact of his "taking too great pains," as Wilkinson says, but probably because of his nervousness,

Barry was seen to less advantage than usual in his favourite part.

By the end of the season Woodward found that his partnership that had lasted about four years had involved him in the loss of about fifteen thousand pounds ; and being a prudent man, he resolved to resign his position. Disagreements had already arisen between him and his partner, he blaming Barry for the extravagance with which he had mounted his tragedies, whilst Barry retorted by bewailing the sums expended on pantomimes Woodward had produced. Separation was inevitable, but it was not to take place without the exchange of open hostilities.

On the 12th of July, 1762, Woodward inserted a notice in Faulkner's *Journal* stating, "From the late behaviour and conduct of Mr. Barry to me, relative to the Theatre Royal, I am advised, for my own safety, to let the public know that the partnership between Mr. Barry and me is dissolved ; and also to caution all persons from giving further credit to the said Barry on the partnership account."

The said Barry replied by similar means,

*PARTNERS SEPARATE*

when Woodward retorted, and a bitter controversy was continued for some time. Woodward, suffering from fatigue, trouble, and loss, eventually left Ireland, and immediately found an engagement at Covent Garden Theatre.

## CHAPTER VI.

Noted characters in Dublin city—Kane O'Hara—Molland the musician—George Faulkner's introduction to Dean Swift—Sheridan's story of the printer—Faulkner and Foote—Description of Faulkner's dinner table—Geoghegan's device for retaining his property—Kedagh Geoghegan and his neighbour Stepney—Father O'Leary's visit to Dr. Johnson.

KANE O'HARA, of whom mention has been made in the last chapter, was one of the most remarkable personages at this time living in the Irish capital. As a member of the tribe of O'Hara which descended from Cian or Kane, son of Oliol Olum, king of Munster in the third century, he was universally respected in a country where, and at a period when, ancestry was reverenced; whilst as a skilled musician, a popular composer, and a painter of some merit, he was welcomed in the most fashionable circles in Dublin.

He was devoted to the theatre, and indeed

#### *A NECESSARY MAN*

had a stage in his own house, the actors whereon were puppets worked by Nick Marsh, a fellow of infinite humour, who made the little people he controlled play such pranks and utter such witticisms as convulsed all who heard and saw.

In figure O'Hara was so lean and tall as to be called by his friends St. Patrick's steeple; his shoulders stooped, his eyes were protected by gold-rimmed spectacles, and he wore an antiquated wig. In manner he was polite, sensible, and cheerful, "foremost and chief modulator in all fashionable entertainments, the very pink of gentility and good breeding, and a very necessary man in every party for amusement."

Another noted character about town was Morland, who was a lover of art and of punch, a music teacher by profession, an unconscious humorist who has been briefly described as "a pleasant little man in a modest wig." It was his general custom to sleep all day, so that, as he stated, "his morning began at one o'clock at night"; and it was not uncommon for him to call at the houses of his patrons in the small hours of the morning, when so much was his

tuition valued that his young pupils were roused from sleep to receive his instructions.

When remonstrated with for his slothfulness, when by exertion he might have earned a fortune, he replied with a smile that disarmed all anger, "Sure, it's not an easy thing to work hard." Money had little value in his eyes; he often knew the want of a shilling, and was in no way concerned at acknowledging his poverty. Once when he was being paid for a lesson he was asked if he had change for a guinea.

"Oh, then, is it change you want?" he asked, with a twinkle in his eyes. "Arrah, you might as well ask a Highlander for a knee-buckle."

It was Morland who promised Lord Mornington, founder of the Musical Academy, that he would keep sober one day in every week, on which he would give his lordship's family a lesson, stipulating that the day should be Monday, "except," says he, "it falls on Christmas day or Easter Sunday."

One of the most noted men in the city was George Faulkner, a printer by trade, who in conjunction with James Hoey opened a bookselling and printing establishment, and in 1724

began the publication of the *Dublin Journal*, which was issued twice a week and sold at a halfpenny. Faulkner's first uprise was due to Dean Swift, who at one time needing a printer, sent for the publisher of the *Dublin Journal*. The wit and satirist was waited upon by James Hoey, who failed to please the dean ; for when asked if he were a printer, Hoey made answer "he was an apology for one," a reply which offended by its freedom. When further questioned as to where he lived, Hoey answered, "facing the Tholsel," when the dean turned from him and bade him send his partner.

On Faulkner's appearance the same questions were put to him ; to the first he simply responded that he was a printer, and to the second that "he lived opposite to the Tholsel." "Then," remarked the dean, who was agreeably satisfied, "you are the man I want," and from that day their friendship began.

Six years after its establishment, the partnership between Hoey and Faulkner was dissolved, the latter, who retained the *Dublin Journal*, removing to Essex Street. The following year, 1731, brought its proprietor into note, for having

inserted in his paper "certain queries highly reflecting upon the honour" of the House of Lords in Ireland ; when he was ordered by that august body to attend at their bar, where subsequently, whilst on his knees, he received a severe reprimand.

In 1735 he was again in trouble, this time for having published a pamphlet written by Dr. Josiah Hort, "the disreputable Bishop of Kilmore," afterwards Archbishop of Tuam, "who is said to have been the last magnate who ate his dinner from a wooden trencher." This pamphlet, called "A new proposal for the better regulation and improvement of the game of quadrill," contained reflections on the character of Sergeant Bettsworth, who represented it to the House of Commons as a breach of privilege, whereon the publisher was sent to Newgate, where he was "thrown into gaol amongst ordinary felons, though he prayed to be admitted to bail." He was kept there only a few days, and on his dismissal each of the legal officers, instead of their usual fees, accepted a copy of the new edition of Swift's works that Faulkner had just brought out ; he being, as

Sir Walter Scott states, "the first who had the honour of giving to the world a collected and uniform edition of the works of this distinguished English classic." Dr. Hort, though a man of wealth, made not the slightest recompense to Faulkner for the expense and annoyance he had suffered.

Concerning the publication of these volumes, a story is told by Thomas Sheridan, the dean's godson.

Faulkner journeyed to London that he might solicit subscriptions for Swift's works, and on his return hastened to tell the dean of his success, first arraying himself in a laced waistcoat, a bagwig, and other fopperies. The dean received him with all the ceremony he could exhibit to a perfect stranger.

"Pray, sir, what are your commands with me?" he asked.

"I thought it my duty to wait on you immediately on my return from London," stammered the astonished publisher.

"Pray, sir, who are you?" gravely inquired Swift.

"George Faulkner, the printer," was the reply.

"You George Faulkner, the printer?" exclaimed the dean. "Why you are the most impudent, barefaced impostor I ever heard of. George Faulkner is a sober, sedate citizen, and would never trick himself out in lace and other fopperies. Get about your business, and thank your stars that I do not send you to the house of correction."

Away went poor Faulkner greatly crestfallen, but knowing the eccentricities of his patron, he dressed himself in his plainest garb and once more appeared before Swift, who immediately went up to him and seized him by the hand, saying, "My good friend George, I am heartily glad to see you safe returned. Here was an impudent fellow in a laced waistcoat, who would fain have passed for you ; but I soon sent him packing with a flea in his ear."

Whilst Lord Chesterfield was Viceroy of Ireland, Faulkner was presented to him, and their acquaintance soon ripened into friendship. Faulkner was received without ceremony at the Castle, and closeted with his Excellency, would amuse him with gossip and interest him with hints regarding the government of the people,

whilst persons of the first consequence were cooling their heels in the ante-room. His lordship is said to have paid great attention to Faulkner's suggestions, and to have described himself as "the only lieutenant that Faulkner absolutely governed." In return Chesterfield gave his friend advice regarding the publication of books, offered him a knighthood, and on his Excellency's return to England he maintained a correspondence with the printer that continued to the last year of his life.

Faulkner is described as "a fat little man with a large well powdered wig and brown clothes." His shop, on the counter of which stood a bust of his friend and patron, Swift, was a place of assemblage for the authors, wits, and scholars of the town, to whom he delighted to tell amusing stories and to speak of the great men he had counted amongst his friends. Whilst in England on one occasion he had the misfortune to meet with an accident that necessitated one of his legs being amputated. The fact of his supplying its place by an artificial limb, was seized upon as a subject for ridicule by his opponents, who referred to his "wooden under-

standing," described him as "a man with one leg in the grave," and spoke of him as the "wooden man in Essex Street," in allusion to a figure ornamenting a snuff and tobacconist's shop in that thoroughfare.

The severest ridicule came from Foote, who in 1762, at the Haymarket Theatre, introduced him as one of the characters in *The Orators*, under the name of Peter Paragraph. Lord Chesterfield urged Faulkner to prosecute the mimic, and volunteered his services in managing the prosecution, but Faulkner declined to take action; nay, he even printed and sold the play. On his next visit to Dublin Foote announced *The Orators* for performance, when Faulkner resolved that he should have a warm reception. Accordingly he purchased a number of tickets, which he gave to the people in his employ, with directions to hiss the actors from the stage. That he might witness their discomfort he attended the playhouse, but selected an obscure corner where he could not readily be seen.

On the night in question the house was crowded, and scattered amongst the audience sat Faulkner's employés ready to avenge any

### *PUBLISHER AND PLAYER*

insult given to their master ; but presently when Foote entered hopping, he was greeted by vehement applause, and his witticisms received with bursts of laughter, Faulkner's printers leading both, much to his mortification. It was only next morning that an explanation of their conduct was forthcoming ; for every one of them declared in good faith he had seen "his master himself on the stage, and sure it wasn't themselves that was goin' to hiss and hoot a man that gave them bread, because he had turned a player."

The town laughed heartily at poor Faulkner who could not hop through the streets or stand at his own door without hearing some allusion to Foote's mimicry, and personal remarks that passed as wit ; so that the publisher felt compelled to take an action for libel against the player, when he was awarded damages. On his return to London the irrepressible Foote mimicked the judge, jury, and lawyers to his heart's content. A couple of years later, in 1766, he met with an accident that necessitated the amputation of one of his legs. "Now," said the sufferer, to whom nothing was sacred

from jest, “Now I shall take off Faulkner to the life.”

In 1758 this “Prince of Dublin Printers,” as Swift called him, became more notable than ever in the eyes of many, he having in that year embraced Catholicism. From that time forward he became a zealous and active advocate for the repeal of the Penal Code, which laid such hardships on the members of the religion he had joined; and he never lost an opportunity to impress its iniquity on those in power with whom he was brought into contact.

Richard Cumberland, an elegant fine gentleman who, to use his own expression, “amused his fancy with dramatic compositions,” describes Faulkner as having “a solemn intrepidity of egotism and a daring contempt of absurdity that fairly out-faced imitation. He never deigned to join in the laugh he had raised, nor seemed to have a feeling of the ridicule he had provoked; at the same time he was pre-eminently and by preference the butt and buffoon of the company, he could find openings and opportunities for hints of retaliation, which were such left-handed thrusts as few could parry: nobody could

foresee where they would fall, nobody was of course, forearmed, and as there was in his calculation but one super-eminent character in the kingdom of Ireland, and he the printer of the *Dublin Journal*, rank was no shield against George's arrows, which flew where he listed, and fixed or missed as chance directed, he cared not about consequences.'

Like the generality of his countrymen he was hospitable, "gave good meat and excellent claret in abundance," but the company which gathered round his board was whimsically and miscellaneous classed, and for that reason perhaps afforded more general merriment. Cumberland on one occasion sat at Faulkner's table from dinner-hour till two in the morning "whilst George swallowed immense potations with one solitary sodden strawberry at the bottom of the glass, which he said was recommended to him by his doctor for its cooling properties. He never lost his recollection or equilibrium the whole time, and was in excellent foolery: it was a singular coincidence that there was a person in the company who had received his reprieve at the gallows, and the very judge

who had passed sentence of death upon him. This did not in the least disturb the harmony of the society, nor embarrass any human creature present. All went off perfectly smooth, and George, advertiring to an original portrait of Dean Swift which hung in the room, told us abundance of excellent and interesting anecdotes of the dean and himself with minute precision and an importance irresistibly ludicrous. There was also a portrait of his late lady, Mrs. Faulkner, which either made the painter or George a liar, for it was frightfully ugly, whilst he swore she was the most divine object in creation. In the meantime he took credit to himself for a few deviations in point of gallantry, and asserted that he broke his leg in flying from the fury of an enraged husband, whilst Foote constantly maintained that he fell down an area with a tray of meat upon his shoulder when he was a journeyman to a butcher."

Another well-observed figure in Dublin life was one Geoghegan, a tall athletic man with a rollicking gait and a merry eye. On suddenly becoming heir to a fine property in Westmeath, he feared that as he was a Catholic his next of

### THE DEAREST GLASS

kin, a distant cousin, might under the sanction of the Penal Code, by professing Protestantism, claim and gain the property; for in such manner had many good estates changed hands. To secure himself against such loss, Geoghegan hit upon a strange device. In all haste he set about making his declarations of Protestantism in compliance with the required legal forms, much to the surprise and horror of his friends, one of whom said to him, "For all your assumed Protestantism, Geoghegan, you will die a Papist."

"Ah, my friend," he replied, with a twinkle in his eye, "that is the last thing of which I am capable."

He therefore made the required profession of the established religion on a Sunday in Christ Church, and received the Sacrament, when on the wine being presented to him, he drained the cup, much to the displeasure of the officiating clergyman, who rebuked him for his indecorum.

"You need not grudge it to me," asserted this ardent convert, "it's the dearest glass of wine I ever drank."

It was on the afternoon of the same day that

he boldly entered the Globe coffee-house in Essex Street at an hour when it was most crowded. Advancing to the middle of the room, he put his hand on his sword, threw a glance of defiance around, and in a loud voice said, "I have read my recantation to-day, and any man who says I did right, is a rascal."

On Monday he sold his estates, and on Tuesday became a Catholic once more, stating in explanation of his conduct that he "would rather trust his soul to God for a day, than his property to the devil for ever."

There was no doubt he was prompted to this action by an incident that had happened to a relative of his, Kedagh Geoghegan, who might often be seen in the streets of Dublin. The latter, a country gentleman, was held in much esteem by the surrounding gentry, and though as a Catholic he was legally precluded from acting as a grand juror, he continually attended the assizes at Mullingar, and dined with the grand jurors, who welcomed his company.

Now though the penal laws forbade a Papist to possess a horse of greater value than five

*KEDAGH GEOGHEGAN*

pounds, and forced him to part with any such animal on that amount being tendered to him in return, Kedagh Geoghegan, trusting to the honesty of his neighbours, invariably had four thoroughbred horses yoked to his carriage when he drove into Mullingar. And for years none took advantage of so cruel a law until one day a man named Stepney, who was the owner of considerable property, remarked to him, as they were at the inn at Mullingar, "Geoghegan, that is a capital team to your carriage. I have rarely seen four better horses, nor better matched. Here are twenty pounds," he continued, offering him the money. "You understand me; they are mine."

Geoghegan understood him only too well. As the would-be purchaser stepped to the door to secure the cattle, their owner called him back, saying, "Hold, Stepney. Wait a moment," and without more ado he rushed from the room. A few seconds later and the loud report of pistols was heard, when before anyone could surmise what had happened, Geoghegan returned laden with fire-arms.

Holding by their barrels a brace of pistols in

each hand, he went up to Stepney and said, “You cannot have the horses for which you bid just now.”

“I can and I will have them,” the other answered.

“You can’t,” answered Geoghegan, “for I have shot them; and unless you be as great a coward as you are a scoundrel, I will do my best to shoot you. Here, choose your weapon, and take your ground. Gentlemen,” he called to those around, “open, if you please, and see fair play.”

Stepney refused to fight, and quitted the room, leaving Geoghegan to receive the congratulations of his friends for his action and their sympathy for his loss.

A man whose method of proposing marriage entitled him to be considered more eccentric than any of those already mentioned, was Anthony Marsh, who owned a fine house in Stephen’s Green. It happened one day that a young girl fresh from the country was being shown the sights of the town by her relatives. Coming to Stephen’s Green, they paused to look at a residence over the porch of which was

#### *A SINGULAR FELLOW*

a great carved lion. As they were admiring this, a gentleman standing by asked them to walk in, promising to show them over the apartments. And they consenting, passed from room to room, all being furnished in the first style.

When eventually they expressed their thanks, and were about to take their departure, their guide, addressing himself to the country girl pointedly asked her if she liked everything she saw. She readily answered that she did. "Why then, madame," said this singular fellow, "the house and all it contains are mine, and if you wish to make it yours also, you may have the house and the master of it."

The country girl accepted her good luck, and her marriage to Anthony Marsh speedily followed.

Another whimsical character was James Latham, a portrait painter, usually called the Irish Vandyke. His excellent likeness of Peg Woffington having brought him into repute, he received commissions from many ladies of quality to paint them. Amongst these was Mrs. O'Reilly, who though a person of the first

distinction, was not remarkable for beauty. Latham was sufficiently injudicious to paint a faithful, and therefore a plain portrait of this excellent lady, which he did not allow her to see until she had given him the final sitting. As she glanced at it she flamed with anger, abused the painter, and flounced from the studio; whereon Latham tore the portrait from the frame and nailed it to the floor of his hall.

As every visitor who entered his house recognized the lady they were obliged to walk over, news of the indignity to which she was subjected spread through the town, when she sent to the artist requesting he would sell her the picture at any price, but this he peremptorily refused, to her bitter indignation.

Then Father O'Leary himself, a mighty learned man, a wit, and a lover of plays, was a popular figure in Dublin society in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Tall and thin, his visage was pale and long, whilst his grey eyes sparkled with fun. His dress was "an entire suit of brown of the old shape; a narrow stock, tight about his neck; his wig

*FATHER O'LEARY HIMSELF*

amply powdered with a high poking foretop." Next to a good story he delighted in a good song, and he could hold his own against the most humorous. One day after dinner John Philpot Curran said to him,—

"Reverend Father, I wish you were Saint Peter."

"And why, Counsellor, would you wish I were Saint Peter?" asked the priest.

"Because in that case," answered Curran, "you would have the keys of heaven, and could let me in."

"By my honour and conscience, Counsellor," remarked Father O'Leary, "it would be better for you that I had the keys of the other place, for then I could let you out."

It was the same Father O'Leary who on visiting London, expressed a great desire to meet Dr. Johnson, when Arthur Murphy, the dramatist, undertook to introduce him to that learned man, and for that purpose drove him to Johnson's lodgings. As they entered the doctor viewed the priest from head to foot, darted a sour look at him, and then addressed him in Hebrew, to which Father O'Leary made

no reply. Upon this Johnson said, "Why do you not answer me, sir?"

"Faith, sir," replied the priest good-humouredly, "the never a word I know of what you've said."

Hearing this the philosopher turned to Murphy with the remark, "Why, sir, this is a pretty fellow you have brought hither. Sir, he does not comprehend the primitive language."

Father O'Leary bowed him low, and then addressed Johnson in a long speech in the Irish language, of which the doctor did not understand a word. Then seeing his puzzled expression, the priest, turning to Murphy said, "This is a pretty fellow to whom you have brought me. Sir, he does not understand the language of the sister kingdom," saying which he bowed once more and quitted the room.

## CHAPTER VII.

**Alas poor players**—Mossop plays to five pounds—The town wearies of opposition—Barry resigns management—Mossop takes Crow Street Theatre—Fresh opposition—Mossop leaves Crow Street, which is taken by Dawson—Mossop's debts—Death of a broken-hearted man—Ryder manages Smock Alley—Takes Crow Street—Death of Barry—Richard Daly.

NOTHING daunted by the loss of his partner, Barry undertook the management of Crow Street Theatre on his own responsibility and continued his opposition to Mossop. The warfare by which both houses steadily lost was continued briskly season after season, with little variety to enliven the monotony of the contest. Italian burletta singers were heard at Crow Street; a performing monkey pleased beyond expression at Smock Alley; rope-dancers were seen at both houses.

In a letter dated from Dublin, 18th November, 1763, Macklin, writing to his daughter

says, “Never were there greater theatrical contests than at present, nor were parties among the ladies higher; insomuch as they distinguished themselves by the names of Barryists and Mossopians. . . . Pantomime and dancing are two good auxiliaries to Barry; and Saunders the wire-dancer, and Macklin’s acting in the farces of great benefit to Mossop. Barry is determined to play the same plays as Mossop does in order that the town may judge of the merit of the performers.”

John O’Keeffe gives a picture of the poor players at Crow Street, who being unable to obtain their salaries, mutinied on the night when King was about to take his benefit. “The grand dressing-room in which King had to prepare himself was next to the green room. The performers were all in a murmur; some having looked through the curtain and seen the house very full, thought at least they ought to be paid their salary for that night. King overheard them, and in the embroidered damask *robe de chambre* and fine morning cap and slippers of Lord Ogleby (the character he was to play), quitted his dressing-room and walked

THE PLAYERS MUTINIED

into the green room, but with a countenance, attitude, and manner the most conciliatory and good-natured, although he must have overheard some of the remarks which were couched in rather bitter terms. He had his purse in one hand well stocked with guineas, and going round the room asked them one by one what might be the amount of their salary by the night. Each answered; and on the answer he drew the sum from his purse and presented it to each in turn. All began now to be ashamed of their intention, and refused taking the money except one, a comical joking man and a capital actor. He took the guineas and put them in his pocket. King made a low bow to the company, and with a smile of kindness and thanks, returned to his dressing-room."

By way of compensating for arrears of salaries due to their companies, the managers sometimes allowed them free benefits, but such did not always answer their purpose. On one occasion, in the month of May, 1766, when two members of Mossop's company united in a benefit of this kind, a friend of theirs, Dr. Fleury, took places,

and on the evening in question sent his servant to keep them, as was then the custom.

At seven o'clock he presented himself at the theatre accompanied by two ladies, when to his surprise he found his servant playing ball outside. On entering the theatre they found it almost empty ; indeed when the curtain drew up there was but one lady, the Countess of Brandon, in the boxes. The band, we are told, "consisted of one solitary fiddler, and a minuet in Able's first overtures, strummed over and over, was the sum of his performance. Her ladyship finding her situation rather awkward, joined the doctor's party in the lattices. The play was *The Fatal Curiosity*. The manager himself, with the strength of a respectable company, acted in it ; yet the receipts fell short of five pounds."

Though the town was wearied by the opposition of the theatres, and the managers were tired of their persistent rivalry, yet neither would surrender so long as it was possible to continue. The time came however, when in 1767, after nine years of strife, Barry, overwhelmed by debt, was obliged to resign his

### *BARRY RESIGNS*

management. Not only had he involved himself in difficulties which he was never able to surmount, but he had ruined many from whom he had borrowed, and had left unpaid a number of his fellow players. Moreover he had suffered severely from vexations and disappointments, as well as from the knowledge that his talents, now at their ripest, had failed to secure him independence. On going to London he was accompanied by Mrs. Dancer, in whom he had long been interested. Both were engaged for the little theatre in the Haymarket, and in the following year, on the death of the lady's husband, she was married to Barry, whose wife had quitted this life years before.

Though Mossop was enabled to continue, his fortunes were little better than those of his rival; for his credit was gone, his resources almost exhausted, whilst he "was hourly solicited by starving actors and daily watched by keen-scented bailiffs." However, his insuperable pride and his immovable obstinacy braced him for fresh efforts; and that he might, as he believed, have the town to himself, and thus end all future rivalry, he rented the Crow Street

Theatre whilst still keeping possession of Smock Alley. The former house was thoroughly repaired, and on the 7th of December, 1767, Mossop appeared on its stage in the character of Richard III. Crow Street was henceforth devoted to tragedy, whilst comedies and performances on the tight rope were reserved for Smock Alley. The tragedies, we are told, were seldom acted to less than ninety or a hundred pounds, at that time considered a respectable sum for an evening's performance; whilst farce, comedy, and the antics of equilibrists seldom brought more than forty, and often less than twenty pounds to the treasury.

Whilst Mossop believed himself secure in a monopoly of the theatres, an ominous rumour reached him that a building in Capel Street, formerly used as a lecture and concert hall, was about to be opened as a playhouse by some of his own actors, under the management of Dawson. This news was received at first with contemptuous incredulity by Mossop, who however was soon to learn its truth. He was then forced to admit that this unexpected rivalry might prove troublesome; for Dawson was a

*CAPEL STREET THEATRE*

man of much experience, who had shown himself to be industrious and intelligent in his profession, whilst those who joined him had exhibited sufficient abilities to make them popular.

Preparations for his campaign were eagerly pushed forward by Dawson, who had new scenes painted, a fashionable wardrobe provided, and the theatre thoroughly decorated. The limited size of the house was considered an advantage, as it could be fitted up with less expense and more easily filled. That it had no regular green room was a serious disadvantage, partially remedied by the hire of the back parlour of an adjacent shop.

All things being ready, this theatre opened its doors on the 26th of February 1770, when *False Delicacy* was played, a comedy by Hugh Kelley, never before performed in Ireland, though held in high repute in London. To this was added a comic opera called *The Padlock*. Curiosity and interest brought a great audience which was so pleased by the novelty of the play, the freshness of the dresses, and the spirit of the performers, that unbounded enthusiasm filled the house. News of Dawson's success

spread rapidly, and drew crowds for many a night to Capel Street.

To counteract the success of these rebellious subjects, Mossop produced with all possible pomp and splendour the tragedies in which he excelled, and in due time introduced wire dancers and rope tumblers, but all with little advantage to himself, for his expenses were heavy and his receipts were poor. The newcomers seemed to beat him in the race. For example, when Bickerstaff's opera of *Lionel and Clarissa* was being played with great success at Covent Garden, Dawson managed to produce it at Capel Street, where it drew great houses, but when some three weeks later it was staged by Mossop, "it languished for a few nights and was then cut down to a farce."

With profound disgust Mossop saw the town run after those whose abilities could not compare with his own. After a tenancy of three years, he was obliged to give up Crow Street Theatre, and return to Smock Alley, the chief attraction in his company being Ryder, an excellent actor, who had been five years absent from the

Dublin stage, to which he was now warmly welcomed.

No sooner had Mossop vacated Crow Street than it was taken by Dawson, who made every effort to secure popular favour, for which purpose he engaged amongst others, Miss Young, of Drury Lane, John O'Keeffe, and Charles Macklin. The ruinous scheme of producing the same play at both houses was again resorted to by the rival managers, and invariably to Mossop's loss and vexation. Not only was he disappointed in his hopes and burdened by debts, but his spirits deserted him and his health failed.

In these unhappy circumstances the proud and haughty Mossop was obliged to solicit a benefit performance at which he was unable to appear, when he "humbly hoped his indisposition would not prevent the attendance of his friends." There were few who did not pity him ; even his rivals closed their doors on the night of his benefit, April 17th, 1771, lest any attraction they offered might lessen his receipts.

The sum realized gave him temporary relief and ever sanguine, he determined to continue

the struggle that already had cost him so much. For this purpose he visited London in the summer of 1771, there to secure talent for the coming season. His engagements being made, he was preparing to return when he was arrested for debt at the suit of one of his own company. This proceeding was the signal for action for innumerable creditors, and as a consequence Mossop was lodged in the King's Bench, from where there seemed no possibility of his immediate release.

Though this did not cause surprise, it brought him the sympathy of many friends at both sides the channel, who grieved to think a man of his abilities should be overtaken by misfortune. This feeling took practical shape in Ireland, where a second benefit was organized for him by Ryder, who kept Smock Alley theatre open. The advertisement he inserted in the Dublin daily papers stated that—

“The friends of Mr. Mossop make no doubt that the lovers of the drama in particular, and the nobility and gentry of this kingdom in general, ever eminent for their encouragement of merit, will exert themselves on the above

*MOSSOP BECOMES BANKRUPT*

occasion, as Mr. Mossop's case is peculiarly severe, having at great trouble and vast expense, during the summer, made very considerable theatrical engagements in England for the entertainment of this city, when on the very eve of his return to this kingdom to reap the harvest of his labours, he met with the hard hand of oppression, and that chiefly from people of his own profession."

In answer to this appeal, the generous-hearted citizens high and low, thronged to his benefit, so that the theatre could not give room to half their number, when two nights later a second benefit was given him. The sums realized however were far from defraying his debts ; to one creditor alone, Dr. Thomas Wilson, Senior Fellow of Trinity College, he owed over twelve thousand pounds. After a severe confinement he gained his liberty by becoming a bankrupt. When he had passed his examination before the Commissioners at the Guildhall, he delivered up his effects, which consisted of a gold watch, a forty and a ten pound bill, and about a hundred and thirty pounds in cash. The creditors gave him back his watch and the bills.

His friends strongly advised him to offer his services to David Garrick, urging that his talents were sufficient to recommend him to any manager. Of this fact Mossop was fully persuaded, but his foolish pride would not permit him to seek an engagement. Garrick, he replied, knew very well he was in London ; the inference being that the first move towards his joining the Drury Lane company should be made by its manager. This however Garrick failed to see, and when summer came Mossop was taken for a continental tour by a devoted friend named Smith.

On his return to London about a year later his health appeared no better, whilst his spirits were if possible more dejected. His friends again urged him to apply for an engagement, but he loftily disdained to take such advice, when one of them, more injudicious than the others, the Rev. David Williams, published a pamphlet in the form of a letter addressed to Garrick, in which pains were taken not only to set Mossop's abilities in high relief, but to contrast and cavil at the excellencies of the man who was most capable of serving him.

This letter had the effect of ending all chances of Mossop's engagement at Drury Lane. Subsequently overtures were made on his behalf with the manager of Covent Garden, who seemed willing to enlist him, until Mrs. Barry, who was then playing at that theatre, refused to act with him, either because she feared his rivalry of her husband, whose powers were then declining, or because of the vexations and losses his management had caused them.

This last blow had its bitter effects upon a man whose health and spirits were already shattered. Neglected by the public that had once applauded him, and deserted by the woman whose vice and greed had been his ruin, his days were passed in sombre silence, from which it was difficult to rouse him, and he moved like one overtaken by melancholy madness.

To those who approached the once haughty Mossop it was clear he was dying of a broken heart, but proud to the last, he concealed his feelings, and when asked how he was, would reply, in a voice scarce audible, he was much better, whilst though in abject poverty, he

declined all gifts, stating that he was not in want of anything. Fortunately for him the end was not long in coming. One dull November morning in 1773 he was found dead in bed in his poor lodgings at Chelsea, four-pence half-penny being the amount found in his pockets.

After his death his miserable condition was loudly lamented by Garrick, who had not sufficient nobility in his nature to pity the fallen man and make allowance for his pride. To compensate for this, he offered to defray the funeral expenses, but Mossop's uncle, a Bencher of the Inner Temple, who had not striven to help his nephew, declined Garrick's proposal ; so that this poor proud spirit was spared the humiliation of having his body laid to rest at the expense of a rival and a stranger.

Meanwhile the Rev. Dr. Wilson, who held a mortgage on the interests of Smock Alley Theatre, let the house to Ryder for the term of his own life, or twenty-one years, whichever should last longest, at an annual rent of 365*l.* This being done, the old weary struggle between the theatres was renewed once more. Seeing

its hopelessness, a fair share of the citizens were in favour of making an application to Parliament, praying that only one theatre should be allowed in the city, but at a public meeting to discuss the question, such diversity of opinion and strong feeling were evident that the proposed petition had to be abandoned.

Whatever the town might think of his chances of success, Ryder was hopeful of his future. Indeed fate seemed to smile on him at this time, for all unexpectedly he became the winner of a handsome prize in the State lottery. Strange to say, he remained in ignorance of his luck for some weeks, until his wife, "meeting with the ticket accidentally at her toilet," urged him to make inquiries regarding it, which resulted in his finding himself a rich man.

A great part of the sum gained in this manner was expended in decorating Smock Alley Theatre, which he opened in September, 1772. A note added to the advertisement of the play, *She Would and She Would Not*, states, "The house is fitted up and repaired in the most elegant manner, and will be lighted with wax. And as Mr. Ryder has been at the expense of

covering the benches of the pit with green cloth, he humbly hopes no person will stand on them. Ladies will be admitted into the pit, as in the London theatres."

Prosperity attended Ryder only to desert his rival. Both houses used every exertion to attract, and it seems strange to read that during the contest, Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* was produced in Dublin for the first time, being played at Crow Street on a Monday and at Smock Alley the following evening, but meeting with little success at either house; for in the last, as in the present century, Irishmen of genius receive recognition from their own nation only when they have been lauded by another. At the end of this season Dawson was obliged to give up Crow Street, when he opened again at Capel Street, still persisting in opposition. Industrious and energetic, he persevered for some time, and would have continued longer in the field if he had not been suddenly deserted by eleven members of his company, who elected to set up for themselves at Portarlington. This blow, which obliged him to close his theatre, left Ryder without an opponent for the time being.

*A RIDOTTO BALL*

According to an agreement signed May 7th, 1776, he rented on a lease of seven years, at 450*l.* per annum, "the theatre in Crow Street, its materials and appurtenances, with all Barry's right and title to perform and act in it all theatrical and musical entertainments, according to Letters Patent." The lessee was bound "not to perform or act, or cause to be performed or acted, any theatrical or musical entertainment at or within any other place than within the said theatre or playhouse."

The first use Ryder made of his new possession was to hold a ridotto ball within its walls, admission to which was a guinea each. This entertainment was given under the sanction of the Lord Lieutenant, and under the patronage of the Duke of Leinster and the nobility, whilst all attending it were to dress in clothes of Irish manufacture. The ridotto realized a thousand pounds, which enabled Ryder to make considerable improvements in the theatre, where henceforth he intended to act, whilst retaining possession of Smock Alley, lest it might fall into the hands of rivals.

In due time the alterations were complete,

when it was announced that the boxes were warm and comfortable, being "decorated upon a new construction, the seats covered with crimson, surrounded with gold lace, brass-nailed; the backs painted blue, and ornamented with glasses, with lights which have a wonderful effect; the pillars, with the breastwork round the galleries, are painted a marble colour, and give a light and easy appearance; the circular seat surrounding the pit is taken into the boxes, and therefore their extent is wonderfully increased."

The galleries were also reconstructed, "every opportunity for making them elegant having been made use of"; the pit was new matted, and its entrance changed, "by which means the wind cannot, as formerly, annoy persons seated near the door"; the front of the house was neatly ruled and plastered, whilst a passage to be used on thronged occasions was made "from the box-room into the street, for the convenience of the ladies who wish to retire in private, unobstructed by the crowd, which formerly was dangerous."

The theatre had not been occupied by Ryder

for twelve months before he was deserted by two of his principal actors named Vandermere and Waddy, who taking with them a number of the company, opened a rival theatre in Fishamble Street. They proved but poor opponents. Their first performance was *The Wonder*, but their entire dependence for success lay in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comic opera *The Duenna*, which had met with great applause a little while before in London.

Vandermere and his colleagues went to great trouble and expense in preparing this piece, the words of which Ryder had meanwhile obtained by employing a shorthand writer to take them down, and the music also being secured, the opera was produced, under the title of *The Governess*, at Crow Street, where it met with much applause. The Fishamble Street company took law proceedings against Ryder for infringement of their rights, but gained nothing by this act, as the judges were of opinion that it was lawful to make memoranda of whatever was publicly exhibited for payment.

This seems to have crushed the deserters, and

to have enabled Ryder to continue his management for some time in peace.

On the 10th of January, 1777, Spranger Barry, who for some time had been partially disabled by gout, died in London and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Three months later his former partner, Henry Woodward, likewise quitted life's stage. By his will Barry left his wife the Theatre Royal in Crow Street, together with the wardrobe, scenes, furniture, and other things belonging to the theatre now occupied by Ryder. This manager met with varying fortunes for some five years, when in 1781, being unable to pay the rent of Smock Alley Theatre, he was obliged to surrender that house, which was then taken by a member of his own company named Richard Daly.

The latter, a man of marked individuality, was the second son of a Galway squire, and had been educated in Trinity College. Whilst here he was well known as a lover of adventure, a leader in all riots between town and gown, and a duellist who was said to have fought sixteen times in the space of two years, " Yet with so little skill or so much good fortune that not a

*A DISTURBER OF THEATRES*

wound worth mentioning occurred in the course of the whole."

His figure was tall, his appearance graceful, though he suffered from a squint that made it impossible to say what he looked at except his nose, of which he never lost sight. The daintiness of his dress entitled him to be considered a fop or maccaroni, for his costume usually consisted of a pea-green coat, silk stockings, a large tucker with a diamond brooch, a three-cocked hat with a gold button-loop and tassels, and a *couteau-de-chasse* dangling from his thigh.

John O'Keeffe speaks of Daly, who was destined to become a player and a manager, as "this very dread and disturber of theatres," and records that in the year 1772 the beau, at the head of a college party, forced his way into Smock Alley Theatre by the stage entrance, beat the doorkeepers, and dashed into the green room; though what was the object of this escapade is not stated.

Sir Joshua Barrington, some of whose pleasant personal sketches have enlivened these pages, tells of a duel to which he was

summoned by this "young gentleman of Galway." One winter's evening whilst at college, Barrington was surprised to receive a written invitation from Daly to fight him early on the ensuing morning. As he had never spoken to the challenger, and indeed scarcely knew of his existence, he could not imagine what was the cause of the quarrel. However, those were days when it was not considered good form to inquire too closely why a combat was sought, and accordingly Barrington politely accepted the invitation, stating that the field of Donnybrook fair was the most suitable spot for their meeting.

He then went in search of a college friend named Crosby, who he hoped might act as his second. Barrington found him in his rooms, which resembled an artisan's workshop; for Crosby had studied science, and was an ingenious mechanic, and later constructed the first balloon ever seen in Ireland.

To this individual, a ruddy-faced, brawny youth of over six feet high, good-tempered, honest-hearted, brave as a lion and stubborn as a mule, Barrington made known his case. "He

highly approved of my promptness," says the latter, "in accepting Daly's invitation, but I told him that I unluckily had no pistols, and did not know where to procure any by the next morning. This puzzled him, but on recollection he said he had no complete pistols either, but he had some old locks, barrels and stocks, which, as they did not originally belong to each other, he should find very difficult to make anything of. Nevertheless he would fall to work directly.

"He kept me up till late at night **in** his chambers to help him in filing the old locks and barrels, and endeavouring to patch up two or three of them so as to go off and answer that individual job. Various trials were made. Much filing, drilling, and scanning were necessary. However, by two o'clock in the morning we had completed three entire pistols, which, though certainly of various lengths and of the most ludicrous workmanship, struck their fire right well, and that was all we wanted of them--symmetry, as he remarked, being of no great value upon these occasions."

After drinking some hot chocolate, dashed

down with a plentiful draught of cherry brandy, the students set out on foot for the field of Donnybrook fair, the March winds laden with sleet flapping their cloaks and bringing colour to their cheeks. On arriving they found Richard Daly and his second, Jack Patterson, awaiting them. Barrington thought that the former, who was elegantly dressed, looked as if already standing in a state of triumph after having vanquished and trampled on his antagonist.

Without salutation or prologue, Crosby cried out, "Gentlemen, gentlemen ; ground, ground ; damn measurement," and placing Barrington on a selected spot, whispered in his ear, "*Medio tutissimus ibis* ; never look at the head or the heels, hip the maccaroni ; the hip for ever, my boy ; hip, hip." At the same moment Jack Patterson advancing, stated that Mr. Daly could not think of going any further with the business, that he had made a mistake originating in misrepresentation, and begged to say he was extremely sorry for having given Mr. Barrington and his friend the trouble of coming out. Finally he hoped they would excuse and shake hands with him.

Barrington would have accepted the apology, but his second declared that according to one of the rules of duelling no apology could be received after the parties had met, without shots being exchanged. Daly appeared displeased, but took his ground without speaking and presented his pistol; at the same time Barrington, without taking aim, let fly, when his antagonist staggered back, and putting his hand to his breast, said he was hit. Crosby gave his principal a slap on the back that staggered him, and a squeeze of the hand that nearly crushed his fingers. Then they hurried forward to Daly, whose waistcoat and shirt were open, showing a black spot about the size of a crown on the breast. The ball had not penetrated, but it had broken Daly's brooch, a piece of the setting adhering to the bone. The wounded man put his cambric handkerchief to his breast and bowed, Barrington did the same, whereon they parted without conversation or ceremony, save that when the latter expressed a desire to know why he had been challenged, Daly replied he would give no explanation, and to back this resolve Jack Patterson quoted another rule of the duelling

code that stated, "If a party challenged accepts the challenge without asking the reason of it, his challenger is never bound to divulge it afterwards."

Whilst yet at Trinity College, Richard Daly is said to have been instrumental in killing three watchmen who in the exercise of their duty interfered with him and his companions whilst they sought midnight adventures. These charges were never brought home to him or his friends, but an act of violence that proved fatal to its victim obliged him to quit the country.

Whilst playing billiards one day at Mara's rooms in Cope Street, a dispute arose between Daly and his opponent; an appeal as to which was right, was made to the general company, but they refusing to decide, the billiard marker was asked his opinion. This he gave against Daly, who instantly hurled a ball at him, which struck the unfortunate man in the eye. Three days later after enduring great torture, he died, leaving a widow and three children. A bill of indictment was prepared and found against Daly, who fled to England.

By this time he had well nigh spent the

twelve hundred pounds which his father had left him, and as a means of livelihood he resolved, "after many hard struggles with native pride and ignorant consequence," to become a player. For this purpose he sought instruction from Macklin, to whom he was well known, the latter undertaking to fit him for any stage.

After much "preparing and parotting" Daly made his *début* at Covent Garden Theatre as Othello, with ludicrous effect, and never again faced a London audience. At this point of his career he fell in with a man named Crawford, who likewise had failed to make his mark as an actor, though he had secured a competence by marrying the widow of Spranger Barry, who was considerably his senior.

The Crawfords having an engagement at Cork, suggested to Daly that he should journey with them to that city, and acting on this, he was permitted through Mrs. Crawford's interest to play Norval. Having gained some experience here, he accompanied the Crawfords to Dublin, where he was engaged by Ryder for small parts. Eventually he played important characters, and furthermore bettered his fortune

*ROMANCE OF THE IRISH STAGE*

by marrying, two months after her husband's death, Mrs. Lister, a clever actress, an excellent singer, and the inheritor of considerable property, who in a brief while was to discover the infinitesimal share she held in his affections.

However, by the money which she brought him, Daly was enabled to become manager of Smock Alley Theatre, and gain a position on the stage to which his talents did not entitle him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Robert Owenson, comedian—First appearance of Dorothy Bland, afterwards Mrs. Jordan—Ryder becomes bankrupt—John Philip Kemble plays at Smock Alley—Robert Jephson's drama—Mrs. Siddons visits Dublin—A new manager at Crow Street—Mrs. Billington—The Duke of Rutland—Lord Lieutenant—Scene at the playhouse—The Viceregal Court—The duchess and Mrs. Dillon—Alas, poor Duke.

THOUGH Thomas Ryder failed to win success as manager of Crow Street Theatre, he had striven hard to deserve it, by the excellence of his own acting and the talent he introduced to his stage. One of the most notable figures in his company was none other than Robert Owenson, father of the famous novelist, Lady Morgan. Years previously, whilst acting as land steward, he had felt the glamour of the stage, and had entered into correspondence with Oliver Goldsmith, who he hoped might help him to a place on the London boards.

Eventually the kindly gentle Goldsmith introduced his countryman to David Garrick, who however failed to find a place in his ranks for Owenson, whom he advised to join a strolling company that he might learn the rudiments of an art in which he hoped to excel. This suggestion being acted upon, Owenson after some time returned to London in 1774, when he was engaged for Covent Garden. His performance met with no approval, and he once more returned to the provinces.

His appearance was greatly in his favour, his face being wonderfully expressive, his deportment gentlemanly, his stature commanding, whilst his voice was sweet and his tongue persuasive, so that it has been said "he could break as many hearts with his blarney as heads with his shillalah." As a representative of Irish characters he was excellent, whilst being a good musician, his singing was no less admirable. Coming back to his native land, he made his first appearance on the Irish stage in October 1776, and in the following year purchased with part of the dowry of the English wife with whom he had eloped, a share in Crow Street

Theatre, thus becoming joint proprietor with Ryder. Here he continued to play a round of important characters, one of the most notable of which was Sir Lucius O'Trigger in *The Rivals*. In the year above-mentioned, and on the stage of Crow Street, a young girl named Dorothy Bland, *alias* Francis, afterwards famous under the name of Mrs. Jordan, made her first bow to a Dublin audience as *Phœbe* in *As You Like It*, Owenson playing Oliver.

The daughter of an actress engaged at Smock Alley who had married a scene-shifter named Bland, Dorothy was born near Waterford in the year 1762, and had been apprenticed to a Dublin milliner. Hereditary tendencies induced her to become a player, and from the first she gave promise of the talent which later was to distinguish her.

Her laughter rose from the heart, her manner was unrestrained, her expression animated and droll. Receiving little instruction, she left everything to impulse. As she afterwards said, "Had I studied my positions, weighed my words, and measured my sentences, I should have been artificial, and the audience might

have hissed me ; so when I got the words by heart, I told nature I was then at her service to do whatever she thought proper with my feet, legs, hands, arms, and features : to her I left the whole matter. I became her puppet, and never interfered further myself in the business. I heard the audience laugh at me, and I laughed at myself ; they laughed again, so did I."

She soon captivated the town in general, and gained victory over one individual in particular, a young military officer named Doyne, plain-featured and with small means, who followed her wherever she went and earnestly sought her as his wife. She might in time have listened to him had not her mother been advised by Owenson—who took a kindly interest in Dorothy Francis and predicted her uprise—to remove her to England, where her talents would have more fitting opportunities to develop. Eventually this advice was taken—Mrs. Bland and her daughter crossed the Channel, leaving Lieutenant Doyne broken-hearted.

Meanwhile Ryder and Owenson used all their endeavours to divert the public, and amongst other pieces produced in May, 1777, a

satire called *The Rehearsal*, or a Lick at the Modern Drama. By the light of recent days it seems strange to read the comments on his wares set out in an advertisement of this play by its anonymous writer. In the first sentence he begs leave to request the patronage of the public for *The Rehearsal*, and then continues :—

“And as it is quite unusual for an author to have the profit of the first representation of a new piece, he assures them this innovation in his favour arises entirely from the condescension of Mr. Ryder, for which he thinks himself bound in justice and gratitude to return his thanks in the most public manner. In regard to the merits of the piece, the author cannot presume to decide ; but respectfully leaves the determination to the judicious public, fully satisfied that it shall stand or fall by their suffrages. He will only add that if satire free from personality, an attempt to restore humour to modern comedy, a great variety of character, and a diligent attention to nature can please, he is not without hope of obtaining the approbation of the audience, the ultimate end of his wishes and the best reward of his endeavours.”

No record remains of how this play was received, but it may be hoped it was not one of its subsequent representations which received the forcible manifestation that caused Ryder to offer ten guineas reward for the discovery of the person "who flung the quart bottle from the upper gallery upon the stage."

When empty benches gave evidence of flagging interest in the theatre, one of the company named Sparks suggested the revival of an after-piece called *The Padlock*, saying if it were left to him he would secure a succession of good nights. With such a prospect in view, Ryder allowed Sparks to act as he pleased, when *The Padlock* was advertised, and a Spanish lady announced to play the principal part of Leonora.

Sir Joshua Barrington says that public curiosity was excited, and youth, beauty, and tremulous modesty were all anticipated. The house overflowed, impatience was unbounded, the play ended in confusion, and the overture of *The Padlock* was received with rapture. "Leonora at length appeared, the clapping was like thunder, to give courage to the *debutante*,

#### *A SILLY PERFORMANCE*

who had a handsome face and was very beautifully dressed as a Spanish donna, which it was supposed she really was. Her gigantic size, it is true, rather astonished the audience. However, they willingly took for granted that the Spaniards were an immense people, and it was observed that England must have had a great escape of the Spanish Armada, if the men were proportionably gigantic to the ladies. Her voice, too, was rather of the hoarsest, but that was accounted for by the sudden change of climate. At last Leonora began her song of Sweet Robin, and at the same instant Leonora's mask falling off, old Sparks stood confessed, with an immense gander which he brought from under his cloak, and which he had trained to stand on his hand and screech to his voice and in chorus with himself. The whim took, the roar of laughter was quite inconceivable, and the frequent repetition of the piece replenished poor Ryder's treasury for the residue of the season."

This silly performance can have been but a slight prop to the manager's failing fortunes. Like his predecessors, from whose fate he failed

to take warning, he was harassed by debts, and continually threatened by his unpaid company. One memorable evening when the Lord Lieutenant and his court were present to witness a play he had commanded, one of the actors named Clinch, came on the stage before the performance and announced that as they had been unpaid for some time, the company would not act. On this hint the Viceroy withdrew.

Outrageous at this behaviour, Ryder, who had been for some days confined to his house by illness, advertised that on a certain evening he would appear on the stage and state his case to the public. When the appointed time arrived, he came forward, and so ghastly did he seem that the audience called for a chair in which they wished him to seat himself whilst addressing them. He then read over certain documents showing that the most clamorous performers were those who had the least cause to complain. Owenson made an effort to answer, but the audience would not listen, so great was their sympathy with Ryder; and when the play began, each actor as he appeared was either

*JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE*

hisSED or applauded, according to the report given of him by the manager.

In 1782, the year succeeding that in which Richard Daly rented Smock Alley, Ryder became a bankrupt, and enlisted in the company of the man who had been his rival. From the first Daly had been energetic, and during his career as a manager introduced actors of the highest talent to the Dublin public.

The first of these was John Philip Kemble, who at the time of his appearance on the Irish stage was in his twenty-fourth year. The eldest son of Roger Kemble, actor and manager, whose strolling company was well liked in the north of England, John had made his first bow to the public when ten years old, in an historical play called *Charles the First*, he representing James, Duke of York; the Duke of Richmond being played by young Siddons; and the Princess Elizabeth by Sarah Kemble, who years later became his wife.

It may be that at this early age John Kemble showed no signs of conspicuous talent; at all events his father decided that the lad should become a priest, they being an old Catholic

family who in the days of Elizabeth had given a martyr to the Church. That he might be educated for this calling, John Philip was sent to a seminary in Staffordshire, and subsequently to Douay in France ; whence he returned at the age of eighteen, declaring he much preferred to be a player than a priest.

His respectable father being shocked by this decision, refused to give the youth a place in his company ; and that he might experience the rough ways of the world and repent his choice, John Philip was left to his own resources. Whilst he had been in France, his sister Sally had declared her intention of marrying Siddons, with whom she had been in love for some time ; she being then in her sixteenth year. To this her parents would not consent, because of her youth and therefore that she might be removed from the influence of Siddons they forced her to accept a situation as maid to Lady Mary Greathead, a person of importance in Warwickshire. For upwards of two years she was parted from the man and the art she loved ; at the end of which time, as was stated, she “left respectability for degradation ” ; in other words,

she ceased to be a servant and became a player. Soon afterwards she married Siddons, when, happy as larks and almost as poor in worldly wealth, they joined a strolling company to which hardships were not unknown, their vicissitudes binding them closer.

The story of her engagement for Drury Lane, and of her failure to win the favour of the town, need not be repeated. Again she was obliged to stroll through the provinces. Being in Birmingham in 1776, she received a letter from her brother, then beginning life, asking if her manager would make room for him in the company. No vacancy could be found, on which Mrs. Siddons recommended him to a manager then at Wolverhampton, who eventually engaged him.

Here work was more certain than pay. Besides performing in tragedy and comedy on the same night, John Kemble occasionally recited odes and read Shakesperian scenes between the acts. To obtain the necessities of life he dipped into debt, was imprisoned in a bedroom and escaped by stratagem. The bitterest experiences sometimes make merry reading.

Before a year ended he was able to join the company in which his sister played, and to share her hardships.

At Birmingham they were "informed against," when their worships the magistrates bade the players begone. In Liverpool their fate was little better, for their manager, Younger, was threatened in public "for presuming to bring any company to Liverpool who had not played before the King." On the night of their first opening, Younger came before the curtain to explain the reason of their audacity, and in the hope of preventing a riot; but the audience hissed, kicked, and stamped, in the first instance, and then flung volleys of potatoes and broken bottles at the offending manager. The lights were next extinguished, the stage was invaded, and their money taken back by these miscreants, brave in their loyalty and their tyranny.<sup>1</sup>

An engagement with Tate Wilkinson, now manager of the York Circuit, followed; Kemble steadily progressed in his calling, playing

<sup>1</sup> For the letter written by John Kemble to Mrs. Inchbald giving details of this event, see "The Life and Adventures of Edmund Kean," in which it was first printed.

Macbeth with great force, and gaining warm praise for his presentation of Hamlet. His fame gradually spread, when Richard Daly offered him an engagement at a salary of five pounds a week, which John Philip gladly accepted. Accordingly he made his first appearance at Smock Alley Theatre on the 2nd of November, 1781, as Hamlet, a part he is said to have written out forty times. His acting, careful, measured, and picturesque, was without animation or inspiration. It however brought him considerable applause, which increased on his second appearance in the same character. At the request of his manager he next appeared as Sir George Touchwood in *The Belle's Stratagem*, a part quite unsuited to his temperament, on which he lost the favourable opinion the town had begun to form of his talents.

He regained the lost appreciation when he appeared as Alexander the Great; and later when seen as the Count of Narbonne in Robert Jephson's play of that name, we are told that Kemble "burst upon the audience in the full blaze of his powers." This success not only gratified his manager, but delighted the

dramatist, whose satisfaction proved of much consequence to the player.

Robert Jephson, then in his forty-fifth year, held a high position as a man of talent, a polished wit, and a successful courtier. Born and bred in Ireland, he had early in life entered the army and subsequently retired on half-pay. For some time he resided in London, when he became the friend of Garrick and Goldsmith, the associate of Reynolds, Burk, Johnson, and Walpole. In 1775 his tragedy of *Braganza* had gained great applause at Drury Lane, and four years later another tragedy of his, entitled *The Law of Lombardy*, was brought out at the same theatre, whilst *The Count of Narbonne* was first played at Covent Garden in November, 1781, with a success that made Richard Daly anxious to produce it on the stage of Smock Alley.

When Viscount Townshend in 1767 was made Lord Lieutenant, Jephson was appointed his Master of the Horse, a position he held under twelve successive viceroys. He had as a consequence settled in Dublin, in whose polite society he held a prominent part. So pleased was he by the actor who had given his hero

vitality, that he invited Kemble to his house, where he introduced him as his friend to the most distinguished men in the Irish capital.

The young actor's reputation rapidly increased; during the summer he went with Daly's company to Limerick, to return in October, and begin another season in Dublin; for which the manager had also engaged Digges and Mrs. Inchbald, the interesting young widow of a portrait painter and actor. A woman notable for her refined type of beauty and gracious manners, she was but an indifferent player, and a little while later than her Dublin engagement, she left the stage to gain fame as a novelist and dramatist.

Meanwhile Mrs. Siddons had been steadily winning her upward way towards the eminence she was soon to reach. At Bath she had electrified great and fashionable audiences by the sublimity and pathos of her tragedy; so that her fame becoming the talk of London, she was once more engaged for Drury Lane, and made her second appearance there in 1782, some seven years later than the date on which she had first played on that stage.

Accordingly on the 10th of October in the year above mentioned she appeared as Isabella before a densely packed house stirred by expectation, critical, and hushed in suppressed excitement. The result exceeded all her hopes and satisfied all her desires. Above middle height, her figure perfect in its symmetry, noble in its grace ; her face beautifully moulded, capable of infinite expression ; her voice flexible, sonorous, tender in its melancholy, firm in its rage ; above all, her eyes lit with the fire of genius, she swayed those who saw her to her moods, and swept varieties of passion across their minds as she might sound an octave of notes on harp-strings.

Everything she did had the tone and look of truth; her laugh as she plunged the dagger into her heart so electrified her audience that they forgot to applaud, and the curtain went down in a profound silence that a couple of seconds later was rent with a fury of voices struggling to express admiration.

The town rang with her name ; her impersonation of Isabella was repeated eight times ; the most notable men, the most distinguished

*TRIUMPH OF SARAH SIDDONS*

women of the day applauded her ; a critic declared that to have seen her once was an event in a life ; crowds followed her chair through the streets ; managers stood cap in hand to her ; verse writers sought self-glory in belauding her ; statesmen were anxious to converse with her ; whilst her entrance into a drawing-room was the signal for those on the outskirts of the throng to jump on chairs and sofas and crane their necks ; and as Hazlitt declares, there was something idolatrous in the enthusiasm she excited.

News of this crossing the channel, the lovers of fine acting in the Irish capital were eager to see her. Here also she became the universal topic of conversation. Whilst John Kemble was dining with Robert Jephson at his quarters in the Castle, Lord Inchiquin, Mr. Gardiner, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, and various other men and women of distinction being present, his lordship gave the toast, "The matchless Mrs. Siddons," when drawing from his finger a ring that held a miniature of the great actress, he sent it on a salver to her brother, asking if it were a good likeness.

In compliance with the wishes of his patrons,

Richard Daly set off for London early in the spring of 1783, in the hope of being able to secure her for a few weeks in the summer. In this he was ultimately successful, for before he left England she had signed an agreement to appear for a limited number of nights at Smock Alley, for which she was to receive six hundred pounds, and four hundred more for her performances at Cork.

In her journey from London to Dublin Mrs. Siddons was accompanied by her husband, her sister, and an actor named Brereton. In a letter written by the great actress to her friend Dr. Whally, she tells him that never having been at sea, she was awed, but not terrified on embarking. She felt herself "in the hands of a great and powerful God, 'whose mercy is over all His works.'"

The sea was particularly rough, rising mountains high and sinking low the next instant. "A pleasing terror took hold on me, which it is impossible to describe, and I never felt the majesty of the Divine Creator so fully before. . . . We arrived in Dublin at half-past twelve at night. There is not a tavern or a house of any

### *FIRST IMPRESSIONS*

kind in this capital city of a rising kingdom, as they call themselves, that will take a woman in ; and do you know I was obliged, after being shut up in the Custom-house officers' room, to have the things examined, which room was more like a dungeon than anything else—after staying here about an hour and a half, I tell you I was obliged, sick and weary as I was, to wander about the streets on foot (for the coaches and chairs were all gone off the stands) till almost two o'clock in the morning, raining too as if heaven and earth were coming together."

Eventually she got a bed in the house where Brereton was to lodge ; but this first impression of Dublin did not tend to prejudice her in favour of the people, whom she confesses she does not like. "They are," she says, "all ostentation and insincerity, and in their ideas of finery very like the French, but not so cleanly, and they not only speak but think coarsely. This is in confidence ; therefore your fingers on your lips, I pray. They are tenacious of their country to a degree of folly that is very laughable, and would call me the blackest of ingrates were they to know my sentiments of them. I have got a thousand

pounds amongst them this summer. I always acknowledge myself obliged to them, but I cannot love them."

Later, when experience of the Irish people had removed her early unpleasant impressions, she wrote of being received by all the first families "with the most flattering hospitality, and the days I passed with them will be ever remembered among the most pleasurable of my life."

Her first appearance was made on the Dublin stage on the 20th of June, 1783, in the character of Isabella. Her success was far removed from what had been expected, owing to a cause which her admirers could not but consider ridiculous.

When Ryder retired from Crow Street Theatre its management was undertaken by Thomas Crawford, who had married Barry's widow. From the first he had to face difficulties; for his wife held fast the property she had inherited from her former husband, and was so little inclined to help her present spouse that it was her habit to demand her night's salary before the curtain went up, under a threat of leaving the house; when poor Crawford was

frequently obliged to collect the money as it was taken at the doors and hand it to this harpy, the sole attraction of his indifferent and unpaid company.

Now Barry, who had sprung from the Dublin people, had been their idol for years, his very faults of extravagance and indiscretion, the reflex of their own, endearing him to them ; his misfortunes begetting their sympathies. On his death they had transferred something of these feelings to his wife, who had shared his struggles and triumphs ; so that they now regarded as her rival the strange actress who had come to seek their favour.

Mrs. Siddons was also regarded with resentment by Mrs. Crawford, who after the death of Barry had allowed her great talents to lie dormant, and whilst playing in the company of her husband, from whom she soon parted, had been content to walk through her parts with little care as to whether she pleased. Now, however, she roused herself, stung by comparisons between herself and Mrs. Siddons, and played the same characters on the same nights as her rival.

From Dublin Mrs. Siddons went to Cork, where her success was more marked than in the capital, John Kemble accompanying her. Both returned to London early in the autumn, where they were engaged to play at Drury Lane.

Thomas Crawford, like his predecessors, was soon swamped by debt, the members of his company, the orchestra, servants, and scene-shifters being left unpaid, all but one, that individual being his wife. Eventually the trades-people refused to supply the manager's orders, with the result that where wine was formerly drunk at stage banquets, water was now served, whilst the viands were painted mockeries.

One evening an opera was announced for performance, followed by the farce of *High Life Below Stairs*. But on the curtain rising no music was heard from the orchestra, and the characters were obliged to sing without accompaniment. This the audience seemed to endure good-naturedly, and the actors were not much put out; for when the farce was being played they joked during the supper scene about the champagne and burgundy tasting so confoundedly strong of water, and deplored the

hardness of wooden pheasants and the toughness of pasteboard pies. At last came the minuet between Sir Harry and Mrs. Kitty, when the former said it was the first time he had the honour of dancing at a ball without music, but he would sing the air, whereon the gods, losing all patience, called out to the players to remove themselves, and they would furnish the music. Upon this hint the stage was soon deserted, when there fell from on high a devastating rain of oranges, bottles, and other missives that smashed the chandeliers and lamps. Later the benches were broken, curtains torn, and the house wrecked, so that no music was required within its walls for several weeks. With this scene Crawford's reign as manager of Crow Street Theatre may be said to have ended. It is true the house opened again that he might take a benefit, when we have a vision of him acting Othello whilst the curtain was up, and playing the fiddle in the orchestra, as the sole musician, when the curtain was down.

In 1784 his wife disposed of all her interests in the theatre to Richard Daly, for an annuity during her life of a hundred a year, and in

consideration of his undertaking to secure her against the various claims to which, as executrix of Spranger Barry, she was liable in connection with this playhouse.

Richard Daly, who had now no opposition to contend with, continued to entertain the town at Smock Alley ; and in the year just mentioned engaged Elizabeth Billington, who on the 4th of March appeared in the opera of "Orpheus and Eurydice, in imitation of the ancient Greek Theatrical Feasts ; the Shade of a Departed Hero—Mr. Owenson ; Eurydice—Mrs. Billington."

This gifted woman is said to have been the greatest singer England has ever produced. The daughter of musicians, she had before she was twelve years old composed two sets of pianoforte sonatas, whilst at fourteen she had sung with success at a concert in Oxford. In October, 1783, when in her fifteenth year, she secretly married James Billington, a double bass player in the Drury Lane orchestra, and a couple of months later the pair crossed to Dublin, where for the first time she played the important part of Eurydice.

THE DUKE OF RUTLAND

The married life of this couple was far from harmonious. Five months later than her wedding-day, her husband inserted a notice in *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* forbidding all persons to give credit "or trust Elizabeth Billington, the wife of me, James Billington, as I am determined not to pay any debts she may contract on any account whatever." The breach between them had been caused by a connection she formed with Owenson, who in point of years might have been her father. It is also probable that it brought her engagement to an abrupt ending, for immediately after the insertion of the above notice, her name and that of Owenson disappeared from the playbills and from advertisements of the theatre.

It was in February 1784, that Charles Manners, fourth Duke of Rutland, was made Lord Lieutenant by Pitt; chiefly, it was believed, that by his amiable characteristics and love of conviviality, he might induce the Irish nobility to favour the legislative union of their country with England.

Both the Duke and Duchess were young, singularly handsome, and great lovers of

pleasure, so that it was believed that under them the Irish Court would gain an unusual splendour, and the theatre, patrons that would encourage its exertions. In this latter respect it seemed at first that such hopes would meet with disappointment : for this reason :—

On the 9th of July, 1784, the Lord Lieutenant commanded a performance of *Douglas* at Smock Alley, for which due preparations were made. Now three days before this date, he had been waited on by a deputation of the High Sheriffs and citizens, who carried with them a petition to the King. In his reply to them the Duke stated that in forwarding their memorial he should not fail to accompany it with his disapprobation of the contents, as reflecting unjustly on the Parliament. News of this flying round the town, the greatest indignation was roused amongst all classes, and his arrival at the theatre was anticipated with interest and excitement. Accordingly, no sooner had he entered his box at the playhouse than he was greeted with a furious storm of hisses, groans, shouts, cat-calls, and every imaginable variety of noise. On this scene the curtain rose, but the agitated

audience would not permit the actors to be heard until the orchestra had played "The Irish Volunteers March," to which their Graces and the Court calmly listened. The tragedy of Douglas then began, but was continually interrupted by an excited house, on which Daly came forward and said: "I am the servant of the public, and wish to know whether it is your will the performance should continue?" Pleased and soothed by his addressing them and not the Court, the audience heartily applauded him and suffered the tragedy to be acted; not, however, without occasional volcanic outbursts of indignation; so that it was thought advisable to hurry through the play and dismiss the house before hostilities became more active. The curtain therefore fell on the last act at five minutes past eight, when the Viceregal party as quickly as possible got into their carriages and were driven to the Castle, followed every inch of the way by a menacing mob, uttering yells of execration at his Grace's conduct.

Fortunately this scene was soon forgotten by the good-humoured Viceroy, who frequently attended the theatre, and in 1786 sanctioned an

Act passed by the Irish Parliament prohibiting public performances except in a theatre held by patent from the Crown. In the same year Richard Daly was appointed Master of the Revels ; this office being granted in the form of a license or exclusive privilege " for the term of fourteen years to purchase or to rent ground, and to build thereon a theatre ; to receive sums of money as had been customarily given ; to pay actors, &c. ; to remunerate himself his expenses ; to eject all disorderly people out of the company of performers, whose salaries would thenceforward cease ; to avoid giving scandal to morals, to the police, to religion, or to the characters of clergymen, which were thereby termed sacred ; and if he offended in this particular, and did not cease so offending upon notice given by the Lord Lieutenant, then this grant, privilege and immunity, was to be null and void."

Crow Street Theatre was opened by Richard Daly in January, 1788, but before that time the merry Duke of Rutland had been laid to rest ; not, however, without leaving a record for eccentricity and joviality behind him. On

arriving in Ireland he had barely reached his thirtieth year, whilst his wife, a daughter of the Duke of Beaufort, was still younger. Not only, as has already been stated, were they dowered with good looks, but likewise were they owners of great wealth which it was their disposition to spend freely.

From the time of their landing in Dublin a reign of pleasure was established; a series of revels followed each other in which pomp and state were sometimes set aside in favour of frolic and fun. The drawing-rooms and balls at Dublin Castle were voted more brilliant than those of St. James's; and the expenditure and magnificence indulged in, gave a stimulus to trade.

Scarce a day passed that the streets were not brightened by a sight of the young Viceroy and his retinue as they flashed through them on his way to the Parliament house, the hunting field, to review troops, or to assist at some social function; whilst the Duchess, seated in a new-fashioned carriage, the forerunner of the phaeton, drawn by six horses and with three outriders in splendid liveries, took her airings in the

public drives to receive the homage her beauty begot from a people so susceptible to its impressions. Then at night a ripple of wit, a sound of laughter, ran round the banquet tables heavy with gold plate and lighted by scores of tapers.

Notwithstanding the *contresép* which had threatened his popularity at an early stage of his Viceregal career, the Duke and his Duchess, by the liberality with which they scattered their wealth, as well as by their love and appreciation of humour, soon became prime favourites with the people.

A newly-built square was given the name of Rutland; a new dye was spoken of as the Rutland blue; the carriage his Grace had introduced was known as the Rutland gig; whilst articles of clothing without number were also called after their Graces' title.

Quite early in her reign at the Viceregal Court the Duchess came to hear that her beauty was equalled, if not surpassed, by the wife of a silk mercer named Dillon, residing in Francis Street. This fair citizen, it was stated, was also remarkable for her modest demeanour, and charitable disposition. Now resolving to satisfy

herself regarding the truth of such tidings, the Duchess took an opportunity of driving to Francis Street, where her carriage and six rattled up at the silk mercer's door, which she speedily entered. On inquiring if she could see Mrs. Dillon, a surprised shopman answered that the latter was in the parlour, and inquired if he should call her.

"No," promptly answered the Duchess, "I will go to her."

Taking her way through a passage, she soon found herself face to face with the woman she sought, whose sweetness, dignity and beauty she immediately recognized.

"I am Mrs. Dillon," said the silk mercer's wife, as she courtesied.

"I could have sworn it," replied her Grace; adding to herself, "There's no exaggeration in it."

Then taking the hand of her hostess, who was now much surprised, she said, "I had been under the impression that I was the handsomest woman in Ireland, but was told by those who do not flatter I was in error, as you surpassed me in face and figure. They were right. Allow

me to say you are the most beautiful woman in the three kingdoms," and with that she shook hands again with this gentle citizen, flashed through the shop, and had been driven away before Mrs. Dillon recovered her amazement.

After the manner of his times, the Duke was wont to drink deep, and often while in a state bordering on intoxication sought adventure in the congenial company of a friend or two. On one of these occasions, when he was pleased with the wine supplied him by a tavern-keeper named Cuffe, he there and then knighted him. Next morning, on being told of his act, he sent in hot haste for the knight, whom he begged not to mention what had happened. The man pulled a rueful face as he explained he was willing to oblige his Grace in any way possible, but he had already told Lady Cuffe of the event, and by that time the news was sure to have spread over the town.

That the Duke might divert himself in a new direction, he decided to make a tour of the country in the summer of 1787, when he visited several of the nobility and gentry, who entertained him with hunting parties, sumptuous

### *THE DUCAL HABITS*

dinners, dances, and the most extravagant revelries. Wraxall in his memoirs tells us that during the course of this tour, his Grace "invariably began the day by eating at breakfast six or seven turkey eggs as an accompaniment to tea and coffee. He then rode forty and sometimes fifty miles, dined at six or seven o'clock, after which he drank very freely, and concluded by sitting up to a late hour, always *supping* before he retired to rest."

Scarce had he returned to Dublin, when he was seized by a fever which from the first seemed dangerous, and eventually brought about his death on the 24th of October, when he was greatly lamented by the people to whom his love of pleasure and magnificent displays, had endeared him. He was then in his thirty-third year.

## CHAPTER IX.

Crow Street Theatre renovated once more—Astley's Amphitheatre—Francis Higgins, the sham squire—John Magee's eccentricities—Daly's action for libe'—Lord Clonmel is entertained—Lord Cloncurry attends a remarkable fête—Riots in the theatre—Frederick Jones establishes a new theatre—Another patent granted—Daly's annuity—The new manager and his troubles—His theatre at the close of the last century.

ON a patent being granted which he believed would effectually secure him against opposition, Richard Daly set about renovating Crow Street Theatre, which had fallen into a ruinous condition. For this purpose the new manager expended, as he stated in an advertisement in the *Dublin Chronicle* of the 17th of January, 1788, "Upwards of five thousand pounds, unassisted by public or private subscription." This he trusts "will speak more powerfully than any terms he could find to express his uniform wish to advance the reputation of

the stage, and merit the patronage of a city whose national entertainments he has the honour to conduct."

Amongst other improvements, he raised the walls, added two tiers of boxes, and gave the theatre a new roof. The pit was enlarged, and "the frontispiece of the stage is brilliant beyond conception, presenting his Majesty's arms wrought in a style of matchless splendour. . . . Respecting the very essential point of lighting the theatre, Mr. Daly appears to have gone to an immense expense. Two rows of glass chandeliers with wax candles dart such an effulgence round the brilliant circle, that the eye is greatly captivated, and the mind perfectly enlivened, with the powerful lustre of the scene; to heighten which the stage is illuminated with London patent lamps, which have not only the most brilliant effect, but are infinitely more pleasing to the sight, exclusive of many other agreeable circumstances, which the common oil lamps do not possess."

We are furthermore assured that it were vain to attempt a description of the painting, gilding and ornamentation of the theatre; whose com-

fort was increased by having "a grand reception room well laid out with a refectory, where every kind of elegant refreshment may be had."

The theatre opened on the 18th of January, 1788, and for a while all went well, until its success was checked by an unforeseen opposition in the establishment of Astley's Amphitheatre in Peter Street, which included in its entertainments the performance of dramatic pieces. Without delay Daly set the law in force, when the proprietors of the Amphitheatre were obliged to discontinue all theatrical representations.

A worse form of opposition lay ahead.

Soon after taking possession of Crow Street Theatre, Daly became financially associated in its interests with Francis Higgins, a man of low origin, who leaving his native town of Downpatrick in Ulster, had settled in Dublin. From the most menial employment he rose to become an attorney's clerk. He next fixed his attentions on the daughter of a wealthy citizen, to whose family he obtained an introduction through a priest, Higgins representing himself to the latter as the only son of a gentleman possessed

*FRANCIS HIGGINS, ADVENTURER*

of three thousand a year, and nephew of a member of Parliament to whom he was heir-presumptive. To ingratiate himself with the family, he desired to be, and was, received into the Catholic Church. After his marriage with the citizen's daughter his imposture was discovered, and he was prosecuted by her friends for fraud, convicted and imprisoned.

Having gained his release, the adventurer became connected with lottery offices, gambling dens, and brothels, much to his profit. It will seem strange that this man was in 1780 admitted as an attorney, and that subsequently the positions of magistrate, deputy-coroner, and under-sheriff were given him; but an explanatory light is thrown on the subject when it is stated that he was the paid spy of the Government in a time of political disturbance, and that he was the traitor who, in 1798, received a thousand pounds reward for the betrayal of Lord Edward Fitzgerald.

On becoming proprietor of the *Freeman's Journal*, he devoted that paper to the defence of the Government and the villification of its opponents, with an unscrupulous foulness

that was denounced by Grattan in Parliament.

At this time John Magee, editor of the Dublin *Evening Post* and the *Weekly Packet*, a man distinguished by great ability, sound patriotism, and some eccentricity, not only attacked the Government, but laid serious charges in his papers against Francis Higgins and Richard Daly. The moral character of the latter was notorious, and amongst other things he was accused of having, in conjunction with Higgins, unjustly obtained large sums of money from the lottery offices, through information gained by means of carrier pigeons dispatched from London to Dublin with news of the winning numbers, which he at once bought up, before tidings could reach the office in the usual manner.

On the publication of this and other statements, Daly in 1789 took an action for libel against Magee, when Chief Justice John Scott, Lord Earlsford, subsequently Lord Clonmel, vindictively issued a fiat against Magee for four thousand pounds; a judge's fiat being "a warrant or authority to the officer of the court,

*JOHN MAGEE*

to issue a writ marked in such sum as the fiat directed, on which writ the defendant could be arrested, and should either find bail to the amount of that sum, or remain in prison."

Magee was therefore clapped in jail, but after a rigorous ~~imprisonment~~ was bailed out. He then devoted his attention to avenging himself on Lord Clonmel, who was a friend of Francis Higgins. The eccentric editor first posted the town with advertisements stating he had found himself owner of a certain large sum, ten thousand of which he had settled on his family ; the balance he intended, "with the blessing of God, to spend on Lord Clonmel."

The latter had built himself a handsome residence outside Dublin on an eminence called Temple Hill, surrounded by spacious and beautiful gardens. He had, however, neglected to buy a plot of ground not far from the front, and in view of the house. This field, which he called Fiat Hill, was secretly purchased by Magee, who on coming into its possession entertained the populace here once a week with droll exhibitions in which asses dressed in

scarlet robes and full wigs, and dogs in the gowns and wigs of barristers, largely figured.

Lord Cloncurry, who, pitying Magee, had done much to relieve his sufferings whilst in prison, states that he attended one of the gatherings on Fiat Hill, "and the fête certainly was a strange one. Several thousand people, including the entire disposable mob of Dublin, of both sexes, assembled as the guests at an early hour in the morning, and proceeded to enjoy themselves in tents and booths erected for the occasion.

"A variety of sports were arranged for their amusement, such as climbing poles for prizes, running in sacks, grinning through horse-collars, and so forth, until at length when the crowd had obtained its maximum density, towards the afternoon, the grand scene of the day was produced. A number of active pigs with their tails shaved and soaped were let loose, and it was announced that each pig should become the property of anyone who could catch and hold it by the slippery member. A scene impossible to describe immediately took place; the pigs, frightened and hemmed in by the crowd in all directions, rushed through the hedge which

*LORD CLONMEL*

then separated the grounds of Temple Hill from the open fields; forthwith all their pursuers followed in a body, and continuing their chase over the shrubberies and parterres, soon revenged John Magee upon the noble owner."

Though causing Lord Clonmel the greatest annoyance, the scenes were not considered sufficiently riotous to be regarded as a public nuisance; and the Chief Justice was therefore obliged to suffer them in patience. In Hilary term Magee's case came before the court, which ruled that he should again provide special bail to the extent of four thousand pounds, but Magee deposed by affidavit that he had suffered so much from the libels published by Higgins in the *Freeman's Journal*, that he could not procure surety for more than five hundred pounds. He also stated he was ignorant of the publication of the libel of which he was accused, not being in Dublin when it appeared, as the Chief Justice very well knew, for he (Magee) had been entertaining the citizens under his lordship's windows, and saw him peeping out from one of them the whole day; and next morning he had overtaken him riding into town.

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“And by the same token,” added Magee gravely, “your lordship was riding cheek-by-jowl with your own brother Matthias Scott the tallow-chandler from Waterford, and audibly discussing the price of fat, at the very moment I passed you.”

As Lord Clonmel was remarkable for his round girth, hanging cheeks and treble chins, this sally produced a laugh from all save his lordship, who compassionately remarked, “It was obvious from the poor man’s manner, that he was not just then in a state to receive definite judgment, and that the paroxysms should be permitted to subside before any sentence could be properly pronounced. For the present, therefore, he should only be given into the care of the marshal, till it was ascertained how far the state of his intellect should regulate the Court in pronouncing its judgment.”

The practice of the court, allowing the plaintiff three terms before requiring him to try his action, gave Daly the power of keeping Magee in prison for nineteen months in default of bail, purposely set at an exorbitant figure by the Chief Justice.

The injured man did not remain inactive meanwhile. He sent Lord Clonmel word that his health had much improved since "he had got his heels out of Newgate;" when the Chief Justice, sending in hot haste to know how the rascal had escaped, was told that Magee merely referred to his practice of sitting with his feet, cased in scarlet slippers, protruding through the window of his cell. Later, he contrived to injure his lordship by bribing attendants to turn boiling water on him whilst he was having a bath.

He also avowed his intention of having Daly hanged for murdering a billiard marker, and sent Mrs. Daly a portrait of Higgins begging that she would keep in her cabinet this picture "of the most infernal villain yet unhung—except the murderer of the honest marker."

Magee's trial took place in June, 1790, in the King's Bench before Lord Clonmel and a special jury, Daly employing no less than eleven of the most eminent lawyers of the Irish bar to prosecute; Magee being defended by five. The manager laid his damages at eight thousand pounds, and the jury returned a verdict for two hundred pounds and sixpence costs.

Later, Magee was sentenced by Lord Clonmel to six months imprisonment and a fine of fifty pounds for contempt of court. But it may here be mentioned that though Magee suffered loss of fortune and broken health, as a consequence of having published assertions which were true, he ultimately succeeded in having Higgins removed from the Commission of the Peace and his name struck from the rolls; whilst through Magee's efforts Lord Clonmel's unconstitutional conduct in issuing fiats for such considerable sums, subjected his lordship to a vote of censure being proposed in Parliament, which was barely defeated by interest of Government.

Daly's punishment was taken in hand by the populace. That a patriot like Magee should suffer by the manager was sufficient to create a hostile feeling that soon found expression.

Night after night, so soon as the doors of Crow Street Theatre were opened, a crowd rushed into the pit and galleries armed with bludgeons, pistols, swords, and other weapons of defence, ready for use in case of necessity. An ominous murmur sounded a note of alarm the rising of the curtain became the signal

for interruption. A voice calling for a groan for the "dasher," as Daly was called, was answered with a heartiness that drowned the dialogue on the stage; a further demand for a groan for the Sham Squire, the sobriquet by which Higgins was known, met with a response heartier yet; whilst the cry for three cheers for "Magee, the man of Ireland," made the building shake.

Interference or protest would prove useless, the suspicion that either would be made roused the call of "Out with the lights, out with the lights," when a crashing of lamp glasses for an total darkness, during which the terrified audience sought to escape, though not without demanding the money it had paid.

Daly is said to have been driven frantic by these demonstrations, which continued week after week, month after month. The actors went on the stage in dread of having a bottle smashed on their heads, or in terror of being made a target for blunderbusses; and after a time no person of any respectability would venture within the playhouse. Under such circumstances the prosperity of the theatre rapidly declined.

The nobility and gentry, regretting the loss

of such amusement as the stage had afforded, resolved to provide a theatre for themselves, where such of them as pleased might perform. An amateur dramatic company was accordingly formed under the joint management of Lord Westmeath and Frederick Jones; the latter having first started the idea.

A man of position and means, he was born in Meath and educated at Trinity College. Years passed on the Continent had given a delightful polish to his manners and educated his taste for art. Over six feet high, his figure was finely formed, and his face remarkably handsome. Both abroad and at home he had associated with persons of the first rank and distinction. In a house which he rented at a thousand a year, he entertained with lavish hospitality.

The first thing necessary was to obtain a theatre; and a building which might be constructed into a playhouse was sought—the Smock Alley playhouse having fallen into ruin. On Jones consulting in this matter with a friend named Herbert, the latter suggested that the Fishamble Street music-hall might be obtained as a bargain because it had been

*ANOTHER THEATRE*

so long idle. Together they went to inspect the building, approved of it, and inquired the terms, when it was offered to be let on lease at eighty pounds a year.

Herbert tells us that his friend in a hasty manner protested at this sum, said sixty pounds was enough, and he would give no more ; and on his offer being as hastily rejected, he turned on his heel and went away. The more pacific Herbert spoke civilly to the proprietor, excused Jones, and added he would advise him to agree to the rent asked. Eventually the music-hall was taken, and prepared for the reception of a fashionable audience. Italian artists were employed to paint the ceiling and proscenium ; the seats covered with rich velvet ; the boxes inlaid with mirrors ; tragedy and comedy disported themselves upon the drop-act, and everything was arranged in elegant style.

All being ready, Fishamble Street Theatre opened its doors on the 6th of March, 1793, when a distinguished company of amateurs played in *The Beggar's Opera* and *The Irish Widow*, much to the satisfaction of themselves and their friends. This enterprise proved so satisfactory

that in the following year Jones obtained permission from Government to open a theatre in which for the space of seven years he might act "all interludes, tragedies, comedies, preludes, operas, burlettas, plays, farces, pantomimes of what nature soever, decent and becoming, and not profane and obnoxious ; with a proviso that he should not entertain a greater audience at any one time than the number which the private theatre in Fishamble Street could conveniently accommodate ; also, that he should not permit any person to be present for money, saving to him a power to receive subscriptions to defray the necessary expenses from such persons as he might think fit ; and that such subscribers might be present upon such terms as he and they should agree upon ; that he should not employ any male actors for hire, but that he might employ such female performers as he thought fit ; but if any immoral or improper play were performed, and not discontinued on receiving notice in the name and authority of the Chief Governor, this grant was to become void."

Richard Daly had been greatly injured by

*ANOTHER PATENT*

the continuous riots in his theatre, but even when they ceased, the rivalry of the Fishamble Street house, supported as it was by those who formerly had been his patrons, dealt him a heavy blow. The management fell into confusion, the theatre lost its repute, until finally we read it was "without scenery, without wardrobe, without music, without ornament; neither performers, nor tradesmen, nor creditors of any description were paid; it was sunk to the lowest state of degradation."

Seeing how successfully he had managed the private theatre, the nobility and gentry were eager that Jones should undertake the establishment of a public playhouse, and this desire rapidly gaining strength, they presented a petition in 1796 to Earl Camden, then Lord Lieutenant, soliciting a patent might be granted to him concurrent with that already given to Richard Daly. A like idea was supported by the general public, who had suffered much of late from the dearth of good entertainment; and a second memorial, numerously signed, was presented to the Viceroy, in which complaint was made of the want of public amusement owing

to the mismanagement of the national theatre, and in which it was prayed that a patent might be granted to Mr. Jones.

The Lord Lieutenant having promised to take these petitions into consideration, directed that their substance might be communicated to Daly, who immediately remonstrated against a patent being granted to another, and stated that as one theatre had been indifferently supported heretofore, the opening of a second would prove the ruin of both.

The matter was then referred by the Viceroy to the Attorney-General, that he might investigate and consider it. This he did with care and patience, when owing to the statements, backed by affidavits, made regarding the manager, he furnished a report to the Lord Lieutenant, when the latter refused any longer to heed Daly's protest against a second patent being granted. On being informed of this decision, Daly, knowing he could not hold his own against a new theatre, replied that as his management was not approved of, he would rather retire from opposition on a fair remuneration, than enter into an opposition

LETTER TO FREDERICK JONES

that he saw would bring ruin to both parties.

This seeming reasonable to Lord Camden, he suggested to Frederick Jones that he should "enter into accommodation" with Daly; which being done, the Hon. Thomas Pelham, Principal Secretary of State in Ireland, wrote, on the 10th of March, 1797, the following letter to Frederick Jones:—

"SIR,—I have received a letter from Mr. Daly stating that he finds himself so circumstanced that he agrees to the terms you have offered—viz. that you should settle upon him £800 a year for his own life, and £400 a year of that sum for the lives of his children, for which you are to give security to be approved of by the Attorney-General, upon consideration of Mr. Daly giving up to you his interest in the Dublin theatre and its premises.

"I am therefore directed by my Lord Lieutenant to desire you will wait upon the Attorney-General and lay before him the security you may be enabled to give for fulfilling the said terms, and as soon as the Attorney-General shall report that the security you offer is satisfactory, his Excellency will

order your Patent for opening a theatre in Dublin to be passed."

On the 25th of June, 1798, the patent passed under the Privy Seal which permitted Frederick Jones "to erect a theatre in the city or county of Dublin, for the term of twenty-one years, with power to keep so many players as he should think fit; to allow them what he thought fit; and to collect for that purpose the customary prices; no representations to be permitted reproachful to the Christian religion in general, or to the Church of England in particular, nor any abuse or misrepresentation of sacred characters."

Jones finally took possession of Crow Street Theatre, which was renovated whilst the patent was being made out; he having opened up capacious passages, built staircases of Portland stone, purchased a costly wardrobe, and had handsome scenes painted. The interior was decorated by Marinari and Zoffarini, and altogether upwards of twelve thousand pounds was spent in improving and embellishing the house.

This being done, Crow Street Theatre, now said to be one of the handsomest in the United

### *DISASTROUS DAYS*

Kingdom, opened its doors once more in the autumn of 1798; the receipts of one of its earliest entertainments being paid by its manager into the Treasury, as his contribution against carrying on the war with France. Alas, after a few weeks the theatre was obliged to close its doors; for in consequence of the troublesome state of the country, martial law was proclaimed, under which people were prohibited from appearing abroad after eight of the clock in the evening.

This necessarily proved disastrous to the new manager, who acting on advice, petitioned Parliament for compensation. Accordingly, on the 25th of February, 1799, his memorial saw presented to the House of Commons, in which he stated that since he had become patentee he had expended considerable sums in altering and embellishing the théâtre, "insomuch that in point of convenience, elegance, and decoration it was not exceeded by any theatre in Europe of its nature and extent.

"That since its opening he had been active and assiduous in procuring at a heavy expense every species of dramatic entertainment, which

from its celebrity in Great Britain and elsewhere promised to contribute to the entertainment of an Irish audience ; that on account of his known loyalty, and the exhibition of entertainments the produce of which was destined and appropriated to increase the fund for carrying on the war against the enemies of Great Britain, he could prove that a combination was successfully made by the leaders of the disaffected to prevent the usual audience from frequenting the theatre, to his great loss.

"That in consequence of the disturbance of the country he was necessitated to suspend all entertainments for eight weeks, though obliged to support the company during that period, at the end of which, when the house was opened, the uncertain state of tranquility operated against the attendance of the public at the theatre. He therefore prayed that the House would take his situation into consideration, and grant him such aid as might enable him to support those losses which had been brought upon him by the unexampled calamity of the times ; and to contribute as far as possible to the permanent improvement of the Irish stage."

*END OF THE CENTURY*

On the 6th of March, the Committee of Supply reported that according to their opinion a sum not exceeding £5000 should be granted to the manager, to repay him for the expenses he had incurred in providing so well regulated a theatre, and to compensate him in some degree for the heavy losses he had sustained in consequence of the recent rebellion.

On this resolution being read a second time, and the question being put to the House as to its agreement with the Committee, the motion was negatived ; and by the desire of Government, Jones refrained from further pressing his claims.

Under his reign Crow Street Theatre continued to entertain the public long beyond the close of the eighteenth century, a period to which this Romance of the Irish Stage is limited. As to Smock Alley Theatre, it was converted in 1790 into a storehouse by a firm dealing in whisky and flour. Later, on the site of this temple of Thalia and Terpsichore rose a church dedicated to Saint Michael and Saint John.

THE END.